

January 7, 2018

The Honorable Kyung Wha Kang
Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Korea
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
60, Sajik-ro 8-gil, Jongno-gu
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Joint Statement - A Call to Nullify the December 2015 "Comfort Women" Agreement between South Korea and Japan

Dear Honorable Minister Kang,

This is a joint statement issued by the undersigned human rights and education advocacy organizations. We collectively express our dismay at the findings of the recent report released by the Special Task Force on the 2015 "Comfort Women" Agreement between South Korea and Japan. This agreement was a result of collusion between the Park Geun-hye administration and the Abe administration and sells out the defenseless victims of the Japanese sex slave system. As human rights advocates, we find this secret agreement unacceptable and against the current international standard on human right issues. We strongly urge the current Korean government to overturn this shameful agreement without hesitation.

We find the following points of the 2015 agreement especially faulty:

1. The Japanese government did not acknowledge nor accept its role and responsibility for the military sexual slavery.
2. The victims' views and demands were excluded in the negotiation. The deal was mainly negotiated between Lee Byung-kee, a former Chief of the National Intelligence Service as well as Chief of Staff at the president's office under impeached Park, and Shotaro Yachi, the Director-General of the Secretariat for the National Security Council and Policy Adviser to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The deal was not even negotiated between the foreign ministries of South Korea and Japan.
3. Japan demanded that South Korea not use the term "sex slaves" when referring to women who were forced into sexual slavery to Japanese military personnel before and during World War II.
4. The apology from the Prime Minister Abe was indirect and vague.
5. The 1 billion yen for "comfort women" system victims was classified as an act of charity, rather than government reparation.
6. While the word "irreversible" was originally used to mean "irreversible apology," it was changed to mean "irreversible resolution or agreement".
7. The 2015 deal fails to include and acknowledge victims from numerous other Asian countries such as China, the Philippines, Indonesia and Taiwan.
8. Japan demanded South Korea to convince the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery to support the agreement. This is the support

group that was behind the installation of a “comfort women” statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

9. Japan demanded South Korea to cooperate by removing the Statue of Peace, often known as Statue of Girl or “Comfort Women” Statue, across from the Japanese embassy.
10. Japan demanded that South Korea not to provide support for other efforts to install statues or monuments related to “comfort women” in other countries.

The Japanese government committed a crime against humanity with the “comfort women” system. This agreement is a morally reprehensible attempt to avoid responsibility for a war crime.

Therefore, we request South Korean government to:

1. Nullify the secret and unbalanced agreement, which excludes the victims’ demands and views
2. Close the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation founded in 2016 with part of 1 billion yen charity money given to South Korea as part of the 2015 deal
3. Return the 1 billion yen back to Japanese government

If the South Korean government is serious about justice, these demands should be fully implemented in any new agreement.

Citizens and advocacy groups around the world oppose this deal. In a recent poll, about 70% of Koreans are opposed to the 2015 agreement, and advocacy groups for “Comfort Women” around the world have also raised the alarm. In a 2016 statement to the United Nations regarding the “Comfort Women” agreement the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) stated that “there has been an increase in the number of statements from public officials and leaders regarding the (Japanese) State party’s responsibility for violations committed against ‘comfort women.’” The statement went on to say that the “bilateral agreement with the Republic of Korea, asserting that the ‘comfort women’ issue ‘is resolved finally and irreversibly’ did not fully adopt a victim-centered approach;” (section C No. 28) Two months after their statement was released, the UN Committee Against Torture recommended revising December 28, 2015 “agreement”.

Instead of twisting and capitalizing on the suffering of “comfort women” for political gain, South Korea and Japan need to demonstrate their active and responsible commitment for serving justice to victims of a brutal form of military sexual slavery by Japan.

A joint statement by

1. Alliance for Preserving the Truth of Sino-Japanese War
2. Asian American Alliance of Marin
3. Association for Preserving Historical Accuracy of Foreign Invasions in China
4. Canada ALPHA (Alliance for Learning and Preserving History in Asia)
5. Education for Social Justice Foundation
6. Global Alliance for Preserving the History of WWII in Asia
7. New Zealand Action Committee Ex-Japanese War Victims (EJOS)
8. NJ-ALPHA (New Jersey-Alliance for Learning and Preserving History in Asia)
9. One Heart for Justice
10. Pacific Atrocities Education