



August 14, 2019

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

International Joint Statement Applauding the Dissolution of the Contrived “Reconciliation and Healing Foundation”

Dear Minister Kang:

This is an international joint statement issued by the undersigned human rights and education advocacy organizations. We, the undersigned human rights and education advocacy organizations, applaud the dismantlement of the contrived 2015 “comfort women” agreement between South Korea and Japan during the corrupt administration of South Korean President Park Geun-hye that specified the establishment of the “Reconciliation and Healing Foundation” and a fund of one billion Japanese *yen* to develop the foundation and to provide compensation to the “comfort women.”

The victims—survivors of the Japanese military sexual slavery—were never consulted in the 2015 agreement. Rather than a transparent and inclusive process that would have initiated reconciliation and healing, the agreement was instead a convenient business deal between politicians that called for silencing and sanitizing history. This betrayal only brought deeper pain and suffering to the victims, many kidnapped as minors and now in their late eighties and nineties.

The victims and their supporters have been unrelenting in the demand to dissolve the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation since its establishment in July 2016. Justice would be a formal apology and an acknowledgment of evidence-based history by the Japanese government. Justice would be reparations established and ratified by the Japanese government. Justice would be a formal agreement with terms agreeable to the victims and approved by the Japanese Diet. That these politicians thought some one billion *yen* (approximately US\$8.3 million in 2015) could buy the silence of the victims is unconscionable and a grave injustice.

The 2015 agreement proved flawed and problematic to many members of the U.N., with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women noting that it “did not fully adopt a victim-centered approach” and the U.N. Committee Against Torture recommending that South Korea and Japan revise the agreement to provide the surviving victims with redress and reparations. Just before the closure of the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation was announced, on November 19, the U.N. Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) reported that there has been “a lack of adequate reparations for the victims” and called on Japan to report accurate data on the number of victims of military sexual slavery for an investigation to uncover the truth and to offer reparations to the victims. In 2010, even before the 2015 agreement, Rashida Manjoo of the U.N. Human Rights Council stated, “Adequate reparations for women cannot simply be about returning them to where they were before the individual instance of violence, but instead should strive to have a transformative potential.”

We condemn the July 5 statement made by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasutoshi Nishimura, declaring that the Japanese government “can never accept” the dissolution of the foundation. His statement indicates a failure on the part of the Japanese government to acknowledge the most basic international and universal principle of reaching an agreement involving victims to apply a victim-centered approach. Furthermore, his statement fails to include and acknowledge victims from other Asian countries, including but not limited to China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Framing the victims and the South Korean government as the parties responsible for “breaking the agreement” fails because the victims themselves never played a part in or ever agreed with the 2015 agreement.

We find it preposterous that the Japanese government expects the South Korean government keep the flawed agreement, an agreement that never involved the affected parties—the victims. It’s time that the Japanese government humbly accepts and listens to the voices of the victims, the international community, and history. It’s time that the Japanese

government finally acknowledges that an official apology and reparations to the victims of Japanese military sexual slavery are the two most basic steps necessary in reaching a just agreement on the issues of Japanese military sexual slavery.

In commemoration of the 7th International “Comfort Women” Day, we are reminded that the dissolution of the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation teaches all of us an empowering lesson from history that no government can stand in the way of restoring the human rights of and justice for victims of Japanese military sex slaves. This redress movement is also a significant reminder to the perpetrators and the victims of sexual violence in the past and today that crimes associated with sexual violence will not be tolerated and that justice lives.

We understand that because the two key provisions of the 2015 “Comfort Women” agreement—the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation and the fund—have been annulled, the 2015 agreement is, therefore, nullified.

Signed by:

- Alliance for Preserving the Truth of Sino-Japanese War-----Cupertino, California, USA
- Channing and Popai Liem Education Foundation-----Brookline, Massachusetts, USA
- Education for Social Justice Foundation (ESJF)-----San Francisco, California USA
- Friends of “Comfort Women” in Sydney-----Sydney, Australia
- GABRIELA Alliance of Filipino Women-----Quezon City, Philippines
- KAN-WIN-----Chicago, Illinois USA
- Korea Policy Institute-----Berkeley, California USA
- Nabi Fund Los Angeles -----Los Angeles, California, USA
- Nabi USA Washington, D.C.-----Washington, D.C., USA
- Nikkei Resisters-----San Francisco Bay Area, California USA
- Pacific Atrocities Education-----San Francisco, California USA