

Call for Solidarity by Korean "Comfort Women"

Until Violence Against Women Ends and Justice Triumphs We Will Continue Fighting!

As victims who were dragged into a war that we did not start and forced against our will to be sex slaves of Japanese soldiers ... even after our "freedom," we still live with the anguish and scars of our horrific pasts. The memories of the living hell we experienced continue to haunt us today, and frankly, they are experiences we would prefer to take to our graves without having to think or speak about them. The nightmare did not end as we returned to our hometowns after the war – like criminals, we were forced to live in silence. However, as we witnessed how the Japanese government continually attempted to hide the truth of the crimes they committed against us, we had to speak up.

Be it rain or snow, we have been actively participating in the weekly demonstrations in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul together with the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery in Japan, be it rain or snow, starting in 1992 and to this day, demanding a resolution to the Japanese wartime "comfort women" issue. We had high hopes for 2005, the 60th anniversary of the end of World War 2. Instead, the Japanese government further distorted the truth; far from introspection and reflecting on their past wrongs, there were in fact overtures of gearing up for another battle. Sadly, we also had to say farewell to 17 of our friends who passed away in the last year. These were moments for those of us who are still alive to wonder how long, in fact, we had left to live to continue to stand our ground.

In spite of our advanced ages as many of us are past 80 we still continue to fight passionately, every Wednesday before the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. Our hope and resolve remains unchanged.

Our hope and request is this: that the Japanese government acknowledge the crimes they committed against us in the past, and offer a sincere, official apology and provide reparations. However, this hope of ours is not only for ourselves, as victims of these particular crimes.

We are the victims of war. Even today, when we hear stories of wars raging around the world, our heart aches. This is because we know, only too well, that the greatest casualties of war are the women and children who are powerless and vulnerable to the violence.

Through this fight, we want to ensure that there will never again be daughters of this land that have to experience the agony and the injuries we have had to bear; we give what we can, how ever much it is, to make this hope a reality.

As we are upon our 700th weekly Wednesday demonstration, we are disappointed by the Japanese government's irresponsible attitude and the fact that they have not attempted to hear our request or resolve this situation for the past 15 years, we still hold onto our hope. People around the world have heard our cries and we hear that those supporting us and joining us in our fight are growing in number, by the day.

We do not forget the emotionally moving day in August 2005 when countless people joined us in calling for a resolution to the Japanese military "comfort women" issue. Once again, we want to express our deepest gratitude to those around the world who support and encourage us.

Again, as we call for solidarity for the end of violence against women in wartime and for justice to be served, we send you our warmest regards and deepest love.

March 15, 2006

Victims-now-survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery, who have participated faithfully in 700 weekly Wednesday protests for the resolution on the Korean "Comfort Women" issue