

NEW ACTION BY THE KOREAN COUNCIL: DEMAND FOR PUNISHMENT

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Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan

Since the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan was established in November 1990, the main focus of our activities has been, among others, first of all fact-finding, and second, demand for reparation from the Japanese Government. The issue of punishment has been an important part of our discussion, but we had not taken any specific action until recently.

In the beginning stage of our activities, the lawyers and international law scholars had reached a conclusion that it was possible to prosecute and demand punishment of those Japanese responsible for planning and implementing the system of military sexual slavery. The Korean Council, however, has been postponing the action until early February this year. It was because we had some hopes and expectations that this issue would be solved bilaterally between Japan and Korea as well as the victimized Asian countries.

However, since the Japanese Government issued its second report in August 1993, it has stopped its work for fact-finding. Also, with the apology from the Japanese Prime Minister Hosokawa in November last year, Japan thinks that the issue was solved. Although the Japanese Government partially acknowledged the involvement of the Japanese Army and its forcible drafting of "comfort women", it does not disclose important facts, such as who was responsible for the system and how many women they drafted by force, etc. Furthermore, it does not even mention about the legal responsibility, while it is clear even from its own report that the system of military sexual slavery was a serious crime against humanity, and against the Forced Labor Convention and the Convention against Trafficking in Persons ratified by Japan.

What made us angry is that while Japan ignores its legal responsibility for its gross violations of human rights and war crimes, it intends to solve this issue by offering some money in lieu of compensation. This comes from their unfaithfulness to hide the real nature of the issue and to finish with offering some money to express its sorry for the victims.

Therefore, just two weeks ago on February 7, 11 members of the Korean Council, including 6 surviving victims, went to the Tokyo District Prosecutor's Office to file a complaint signed by 27 survivors of the military sexual slavery. In the complaint, the victims demanded punishment of those criminals responsible for planning, implementing and managing the system of military

sexual slavery. The Japanese Prosecutor's Office, however, refused even to receive the complaint. We protested against their refusal and had demonstration in front of the Prosecutor's Office, with the support of Japanese lawyers and activists.

The issue of punishment was raised many times in this Commission on Human Rights. The surviving victims of sexual slavery by Japan are still having nightmares and suffering from the physical and psychological scars from the past. Unless the criminals are brought to justice, the hundreds of thousands of victims would never be able to close their eyes. Korean Council will pursue various ways to raise this issue of punishment.