

The International Organizing Committee for Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery

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Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan

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Justice and Dignity to "Comfort Women"! Global Campaign 2000

Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery

December 2000 Tokyo

**We cannot create a 21st Century free of violence against women
Without responding to the cries of women victims of war**

Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery

December 8-10, 2000 Tokyo

The 20th century has been called a century of progress, but it has also been a century of violence. No previous century has witnessed such a scale of systematic destruction of lives through war and genocide, nor such an overwhelming number of women victimized by sexual violence as in this century.

Among the global violations of women's human rights, Japan's military sexual slavery, which is believed to have victimized 200,000 young women as "comfort women" during the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945), represents one of the most horrendous war crimes in this century. After the Second World War, however, sexual violence by the Japanese Imperial Army was hardly prosecuted by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (The Tokyo Tribunal), or by any other military tribunal in Asia.

In the last decade of this century, a new page of history has been turned as "comfort women" have broken their decades of silence to demand justice and redress. In response to their cry, "Our justice and dignity can never be restored until the perpetrators of the crimes against us are prosecuted," the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery will be held in December 2000 in Tokyo.

The proposal for the Tribunal by VAWW-NET Japan (Violence Against Women in War Network, Japan) is supported by women of the victimized countries, and women of other parts of the world struggling against wartime violence. The International Organizing Committee was formed in early 1999.

The Tribunal will be immediately followed by a one day public hearing on the current situations of sexual slavery and violence against women under armed conflict around the globe.

The Tribunal aims to recover justice to survivors, and to contribute to the global women's human rights movement calling for the elimination of violence against women in war and armed conflict. The Tribunal hopes to pave a way towards creating a 21st century of peace without violence against women -- a future where women's human rights are respected. International support is crucially needed for the success of this non-governmental tribunal by women.



International context

Objectives

In order to make the Japanese government take legal responsibility for the "comfort women" issue, the Tribunal must:

1. Clarify that Japan's military sexual slavery constitutes a war crime against women and a crime against humanity
2. Identify those responsible for the crime; both individuals and the state
3. Record the complete findings and proceedings of the Tribunal in history

Approach

1. As a women's initiative
2. In international solidarity
3. In partnership with experts
4. As a grassroots movement
5. From the perspective of "women's human rights"
6. Setting a precedent for the prosecution of war crimes against women
7. With a vision for a violence-free 21st century

At the very time "comfort women" came forward, thousands of women were suffering from mass-rape and other forms of sexual violence in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and in other situations of armed conflict. Owing to the global campaign for women's human rights, sexual violence was prosecuted for the first time, although inadequately, at the International War Crimes Tribunals for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The Statute of the International Criminal Court adopted in 1998 clearly defined rape, sexual slavery and enforced prostitution as a war crime and a crime against humanity.

The Platform for Action adopted by the Beijing UN World Women's Conference in 1995 stated that violence against women in war and armed conflict situations (including rape and military sexual slavery) constituted a war crime. It demanded investigation of offences, redress to victims, and the prosecution of perpetrators. The 1998 McDougall Report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on Sexual Slavery during Armed Conflict to the Sub-commission of the UN Commission on Human Rights emphasized the need to end the cycle of impunity for sexual slavery and recommended both state reparation and criminal prosecution by the Japanese government. The Japanese government, however, continues to deny any legal responsibility for military sexual slavery.