

United Nations
Commission on Human Rights
Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and
Protection of Minorities
Forty-Fourth Session

Oral Intervention
Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
World Council of Churches

Item 16: CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY
Representing the Position of KOREAN COUNCIL FOR WOMEN
DRAFTED FOR SEXUAL SERVICE BY JAPAN

Mr. Chairperson,

The World Council of Churches, representing here more than 300 member churches worldwide, welcomes this opportunity to address the Sub-Commission on a matter of grave concern.

The issue of Comfort Women is about some 200,000 Korean girls and women, who were drafted and used as sex slaves for Japanese army from 1932-1945. It also concerns women in some other Asian countries: Japan acknowledged that they also drafted comfort women from China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

The Realities of Sex Slavery

Since many government and military documents were destroyed by Japan, and since many comfort women were either killed or died during their sexual enslavement or at the time of Japanese army's retreat, it is nearly impossible to obtain full statistics on this gross violation of human rights. However, the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Sexual Service by Japan was created in 1990, and has been continuing to uncover facts from previously hidden or unknown documents and through statements of former comfort women. The Korean Council estimates that the number of comfort women reached up to 200,000. Even the most conservative estimation made by a Japanese is 80,000.

The Korean Council installed a hotline and encouraged elderly women survivors to come forth. About a hundred women, including those used as forced labor, responded and started to tell their experiences with unimaginable physical and psychological scars. Our government also undertook a nationwide survey. Some responded to both. According to the official report of Republic of Korea, 390 women--comfort women and forced labor--reported directly or through their families. Among them, 155 were comfort women, and 74 are still alive. In May 1992, comfort

women formed an organization, Mugungwha Sisters, and are meeting once a month.

Among 30 comfort women that the Korean Council undertook in-depth interviews with, about 40% were forcibly taken by either Japanese soldiers or MPs. (One of them, Ms. Keum-Joo Hwang, will arrive in Geneva early next week and will be present in this Sub-Commission session.) Fifty percent of our interviewees were deceived by lies, such as false promises of a factory job, and the rest were trafficked by brothel owners without their knowledge. After forcibly taken, they were forced to serve Japanese soldiers not only in Japan and Korea but in all territories occupied by Japan during the War, which covered Manchuria, China, Burma and the South Pacific Islands.

Korean comfort women were treated as "royal gift" from the Japanese emperor and as consumerables. They were kept in a small partitions and forced to serve 30-40 Japanese soldiers a day, and more in weekends, sometimes up to 100. Regular check-ups for venereal diseases were done, and shot 606 was injected. Most of the comfort women had to suffer venereal diseases but did not receive sufficient medical treatment. When attempted to escape, they were killed, wounded or tortured. Most of the survived comfort women have scars inflicted on their bodies and still suffer from the wounds. In addition to the unbearable atrocities in the army brothels, uncountable number of comfort women were killed or bombed by the Japanese army or simply deserted.

Involvement of Japanese Government and Army

Recently discovered military documents and statements of Japanese and Korean witnesses prove that the Japanese army was directly involved in the forcible recruitment of the comfort women. According to these evidences, the comfort women were kidnapped or taken from their homes, from the field or a well, as well as tricked with lies of employment opportunities in factories or as nurses. The Japanese Army was also directly involved with the installment and operation of army brothels--with written regulations. For example, there were set hours officers and soldiers can use the brothel, how long each rank can stay, prices, etc. The army set up brothels, within or near the camps, to "boost the morale of the soldiers, maintain the order in the army, and to prevent crimes and venereal diseases."

The Japanese government, in their announcement of July 6, 1992 on the result of their investigation, officially acknowledged the involvement of Japanese Army in the comfort women issue. Japan denied it initially, but with the newly-found evidences, was pressured to acknowledge the involvement of the Army and the government. Despite the claim that there is no evidence of forcible recruitment of comfort women, witnesses of Korean and other Asian comfort women themselves as well as former Japanese army personnel Yoshida Seiji prove that the recruitment was by force.

Requests to Sub-Commission

The Korean Council is demanding that the Japanese government should undertake a full, not superficial, investigation into all aspects of the comfort women issue. Then, based on the result of this full investigation, reparation as an expression of their

sincere apology for their crimes against humanity should be given to the victims and their families. The Korean Council also demands that these facts be correctly recorded in the Japanese school textbooks, and that all the materials and historical evidences be kept and displayed to the public, as well as a monument be erected in memory of the sufferings of the comfort women. The government of Republic of Korea also made the same demands. At this time, women from six Asian countries are holding the Asian Conference on Comfort Women in Seoul, and the resolution of the Conference will be available by the 12th.

In this situation, the Korean Council requests this Sub-Commission to take step-forward actions. First, we request that the Sub-Commission would take a strong resolution against sex slavery imposed upon Koreans and other Asian women. Second, we also request that the Sub-Commission would include in the resolution the following things.

1. That the Commission and other related agencies within the United Nations draw attention to the comfort women issue.

2. That an investigation team of experts be set up. This team would undertake investigations in Asian countries with victims of the sex slavery.

3. That the Sub-Commission sends related materials to the governments and NGOs of the countries involved.

4. That the Special Rapporteur prepares a recommendation on reparation and compensation for the victims of this gross violations of human rights.

5. That the Sub-Commission recommends the Commission to form a "Mediation Committee" on the issue of reparation.

6. And that these actions be reported to the Commission on Human Rights.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairperson.

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