

# War victims demand an apology

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The battle will not be over for the individuals victimized by the Japanese military before and during World War II until the government officially acknowledge their plight more than 47 years ago and sincerely apologizes for the atrocities inflicted on them, some of the victims said in Tokyo Wednesday.

More than 800 people gathered to hear the testimony of the victims from six countries at Wednesday's International Public Hearing Concerning Postwar Compensation of Japan, the first event of its kind.

The victims include former "comfort women," forced laborers and prisoners of war from countries such as North and South Korea and the Netherlands.

A panel asking questions of the witnesses included Theo van Boven, an expert on international law and human rights and special rapporteur of a United Nations subcommittee on protecting minorities. He said he would like to know the circumstances under which the comfort women were taken to frontline military brothels and how many women were forced to provide sex to Japanese soldiers.

The Imperial Japanese Army "ruined my young life, took my freedom, dignity, family and possessions," said Jeanne O'Hearn, 69, a Dutch woman who was forced to service high-ranking military officers.

In 1944 she was taken with other six young women to a military brothel from a labor camp. Both facilities were in Java in what was then the Dutch East Indies.

O'Hearn and the other six "were forced to provide sex day and night" until they "were exhausted physically and mentally."

"Now I forgive the Japanese, but I will never forget the fear I experienced," she said. "I hope that these crimes will not be committed

again."

At least 35 Dutch women were forced to provide sex in Java, according to the records of an international tribunal held in Jakarta in 1948.

Kim Yong Sil, 68, a former comfort woman from North Korea, called for the Japanese government to frankly admit and apologize for "the barbarous crimes committed by the Japanese imperialists."

After Kim's testimony, former comfort women from South Korea rushed onstage, wept and shouted to express their pain and anger.

More than 123 former comfort women have claimed that they were forcibly taken by the Imperial Japanese Army to the northeastern part of China in the early 1930s, said Ho Sok Til, a researcher in North Korea.

Maria Rosa Luna Henson, the first Filipino to publicly describe her experience as a comfort woman, was also at the hearing.

Lourdes Indai Sajor, coordinator of the Filipino Task Force on Comfort Women, reported that the group has confirmed 30 claims by women that they were forced to provide sex for soldiers.

The Philippine group plans to file a lawsuit against the Japanese government to secure compensation for the victims next March or April.

Both North Koreans and Filipinos demanded that the Japanese government issue history textbooks containing descriptions of human rights violations of foreigners during the war.

A Chinese former comfort woman, Wan Aihua, 64, fainted onstage while recalling her experiences.

Wan said she was taken to a military brothel when she was only 15. She said she is now 20 cm shorter after being tortured when she tried to escape.

Reports and information on war victims were distributed to members of the guest panel.



IN AN OUTPOURING of emotion, traditionally garbed South Koreans forced to be "comfort women" gather around North Korea's Kim Yong Sil, 68, in a Tokyo hall Wednesday after Kim described her experiences in a Japanese military brothel in China. TOSHIKI SAWAGUCHI PHOTO

## Display to recall germ warfare unit

A citizens' group is planning a yearlong nationwide tour of an exhibition of items connected with the Imperial Japanese Army's Unit 731, a biological warfare unit known for using human guinea pigs for experiments in China.

Unit 731, which was set up in December 1936, was located in the suburbs of Harbin in northeast China, then the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo.

The unit reportedly conducted experiments using 2,000 to 3,000 Chinese, Koreans, Russians and Mongolians. It also, in cooperation with Nanjing-based Unit 1644, spread germs in several places in south China from 1940 to 1942, leading to the deaths of more than 100 people.

About 130 items related to Unit 731 will be displayed in the exhibition, which will go on tour next July, according to the Executive Committee of the 731 Unit's Exhibition.

The main features will be

written statements from former members of the unit on experiments and military operations in which biological weapons developed by the unit were used, said Noboru Watanabe of the committee.

Most of the statements were taken by Chinese authorities investigating after World War II in preparation for war crimes trials.

Documents that former officers of the unit handed over to the U.S. after the war and those the Soviet army confiscated from the Kwantung Army, a Japanese army unit deployed in northeast China, will also be exhibited, he said.

The committee consists of lawyers, historians, writers and citizens.

It said in a statement that to unravel war crimes by Japanese apart from the official position of the government is the first step toward the nation taking full responsibility for the war.

The government has been

silent on the activities of Unit 731.

From Dec. 2 to Saturday, members of the group visited China and reached a basic agreement with the Chinese side over the opening of the exhibitions in Japan.

Also on display will be photographs, miniature models, maps, diagrams, charts and biological test equipment. About 40 percent of the exhibits will come from the Japanese side.

The first exhibition will be held at Shinjuku, Tokyo, in July, before moving to such places as Tachikawa and Fuchu in Tokyo, Kawasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, Chiba, Chiba Prefecture, and Maebashi, Gunma Prefecture.

It will also be held in Hokkaido, Okinawa and Hiroshima.

Local committees to hold the exhibition have been or will be set up at about 30 places across the nation, Watanabe said.