

January 31, 2007

**REP. HONDA CALLS ON JAPAN TO APOLOGIZE FOR WWII
EXPLOITATION OF ‘COMFORT WOMEN’**

**Introduces Bipartisan Measure Seeking Justice for
Victims of Wartime Sexual Slavery**

Washington, DC – Today, Representative Michael M. Honda (CA – 15) introduced a bipartisan resolution before the U.S. House of Representatives calling on the government of Japan to formally and unambiguously apologize for and acknowledge the tragedy that comfort women endured at the hands of its Imperial Army during World War II. More than 200,000 such women suffered gang rape, forced abortions, and other humiliations under Japan’s colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II.

Upon introducing the legislation, Honda noted, “I would like to emphasize in the strongest terms that the purpose of this resolution is not to bash or humiliate Japan,” he said. “This legislation, rather, seeks to achieve justice for the few remaining women who survived these atrocities, and to shed light on a grave human rights violation, that has remained unknown for so many years.”

The resolution is cosponsored by: Representatives Edward R. Royce (CA – 40), Christopher H. Smith (NJ - 4), Diane E. Watson (CA - 33), David Wu (OR - 1), Phil Hare (IL - 17), and Delegate Madaleine Bordallo (GU).

Rep. Honda’s statement, entered into the Congressional Record upon introduction of the measure, and the full text of the resolution follow:

**Rep. Honda Statement for the Congressional Record Regarding
Comfort Women Resolution:**

January 31, 2007

“Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the over 200,000 ‘comfort women’ in Asia who suffered unimaginable dehumanization by the Japanese Imperial Army during Japan’s colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II.

“These women, whose experiences were unprecedented in cruelty and were officially commissioned by the Government of Japan, endured gang rape, forced abortions,

humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death, or eventual suicide—and to this date, they have still not received justice from this tragedy.

“Their hope is a modest one: That the government of Japan acknowledges, apologizes and accepts full historical responsibility for this crime.

“Today, I am introducing a resolution which calls on Japan to formally and unambiguously apologize and acknowledge the tragedy which the comfort women endured under its Imperial Army during World War II. Not only should Japan’s Prime Minister issue a public apology, Japan must take responsibility unequivocally.

“Some question whether this resolution is necessary and warn that it could affect our nation’s strong friendship and alliance with Japan. Some even argue that Japan has already apologized, and this resolution fails to recognize that. It is true that Japan’s previous Prime Ministers have issued statements related to comfort women. However, it is clear that these statements are not viewed by the government of Japan with unequivocal respect, and the comfort women themselves do not consider them formal apologies. Japan has equivocated in its stance on this issue, which is made clear in their recent attempts to alter previous public statements and their school textbooks.

“For example, in 1993, Japan’s then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono issued an encouraging statement regarding Japan’s comfort women, which expressed the Government’s sincere apologies and remorse for their ordeal. Today, some members of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party strive to review and even possibly rescind Secretary Kono’s statement.

“Further, the Japanese government continues to seek to downplay the comfort women system in its textbooks. We must ask ourselves, if Japan has truly come to terms with its past in acknowledging what its Imperial Army forced upon these women, why are they suppressing the knowledge of this through education? Education on this tragedy is important to ensure that future violence against women, especially in conflicts, should not be tolerated or repeated. Textbook suppression, coupled with efforts to revise Secretary Kono’s 1993 statement, is disheartening and indicates that Japan wavers in its apology to these women.

“I want to make it clear that I recognize and value the importance of our strong friendship with Japan. I appreciate Japan’s efforts to provide monetary compensation to surviving comfort women through the Asia Women’s Fund, a government initiated and largely government-funded private foundation whose purpose was the carrying out of programs and projects with the aim of atonement for the comfort women. The Asia Women’s Fund is to be disbanded on March 31, 2007, and while I agree that the Asia Women’s Fund was important, the reality is that the majority of surviving comfort women refused to accept these funds, and that without an unambiguous and unequivocal apology from the government of Japan, the money was not significant to them.

“The purpose of this resolution is not to bash or humiliate Japan. This is about achieving justice for the few remaining women who survived this atrocity. We must recognize this grave human rights violation, which has remained unknown for so many years.

“Further, this resolution is intended to encourage and provide for reconciliation, as the U.S. Congress did when it passed H.R. 442, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which was a formal apology made to U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry who were unjustly put into internment camps during World War II. As someone who was put into an internment camp at a young age, I know firsthand that we must not be ignorant of the past, and that reconciliation through government actions is long lasting.

“I would be remiss if I failed to recognize the efforts that my good friend and former colleague Lane Evans made to push this issue forward in Congress. I am proud to be carrying the torch that Lane passed on, and commend him for the hope he has instilled in the comfort women and the communities that have worked so hard on their behalf by bringing this issue to Congress.

“Madam Speaker, to put it frankly, the few surviving comfort women in the world who live with this burden are dying. We must help them achieve some peace of mind by moving this resolution forward. For the women who survived this brutality, this resolution demonstrates that our nation supports them and hears their voices calling for justice.”

Text of Honda Comfort Women Resolution:

110TH CONGRESS

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Force’s coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as “comfort women”, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II.

Whereas the Government of Japan, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, officially commissioned the acquisition of young women for the sole purpose of sexual servitude to its Imperial Armed Forces, who became known to the world as *ianfu* or “comfort women”;

Whereas the “comfort women” system of forced military prostitution by the Government of Japan, considered unprecedented in its cruelty and magnitude, included gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death, or eventual suicide in one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century;

Whereas some new textbooks used in Japanese schools seek to downplay the “comfort women” tragedy and other Japanese war crimes during World War II;

Whereas Japanese public and private officials have recently expressed a desire to dilute or rescind the 1993 statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the “comfort women”, which expressed the Government’s sincere apologies and remorse for their ordeal;

Whereas the Government of Japan did sign the 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children and supported the 2000 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security which recognized the unique impact of armed conflict on women;

Whereas the House of Representatives commends Japan’s efforts to promote human security, human rights, democratic values, and rule of law, as well as for being a supporter of Security Council Resolution 1325;

Whereas the House of Representatives commends those Japanese officials and private citizens whose hard work and compassion resulted in the establishment in 1995 of Japan’s private Asian Women’s Fund;

Whereas the Asian Women’s Fund has raised \$5,700,000 to extend “atonement” from the Japanese people to the comfort women; and

Whereas the mandate of the Asian Women’s Fund, a government initiated and largely government-funded private foundation whose purpose was the carrying out of programs and projects with the aim of atonement for the maltreatment and suffering of the “comfort women”, comes to an end on March 31, 2007, and the Fund is to be disbanded as of that date: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved,

That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan —

(1) should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Force’s coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as “comfort women”, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II;

(2) should have this official apology given as a public statement presented by the Prime Minister of Japan in his official capacity;

(3) should clearly and publicly refute any claims that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the “comfort women” for the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces never occurred; and

(4) should educate current and future generations about this horrible crime while following the recommendations of the international community with respect to the “comfort women”.