The 3rd International Memorial Day for the 'Comfort Women' & The 1191st Wednesday Demonstration for the Resolution of the Japanese Military Sexual Slavery Issue

This year marks the 3rd International Memorial Day for the 'Comfort Women.' It was created 24 years ago on the 14th of August to honor the courage of Ms. Kim Hak-soon, the first survivor who came out breaking the silence, to remember the cruelty of the military sexual slavery, and to recover the dignity of the survivors. It is a global movement for peace, reflecting the survivors' cry that 'we are not free yet,' even on the 70th anniversary of independence from the Japanese rule. We all cry out for peace and justice.

We cannot allow Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's anti-peace and anti-human rights agenda on this historic year. The Japanese government have seriously and systematically distorted the history of colonialization and denied historical facts on war crimes. And now, it seeks to change its constitution to allow militarization, which can lead to initiation of war. The survivors of military sexual slavery are suffering even more deeply and the peace in the region is gravely threatened.

The Abe government and the right wing's movement is of serious concern for the Japanese civil society advocating for peace, East Asia and even the rest of the world. The international community is alarmed, especially as PM Abe will make a statement this year memorializing the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII. We are angered by ridiculous rhetoric by the government which is likely to be repeated, saying that they admit colonialization and reflect upon their deed but cannot apologize to the victims.

The content of the Abe Statement is clean cut. It must admit the criminal nature of the colonialization and sincerely and formally apologize for the numerous killings and other human rights abuse. It must officially admit the government's responsibilities on the military sexual slavery system and towards the victims, including official apology and legal reparations. Furthermore, it must accept and execute the recommendations submitted by the participants of the Asian Solidarity Conference for the Resolution of Military Sexual Slavery Issue, which includes the input of the survivors and civil society members.

The Japanese government cannot ignore the international community's voice anymore, demanding it to fulfill its responsibilities as the perpetrator of war violence from 70 years ago. It also must be mindful of the fact that without resolving the military sexual slavery issue, it cannot fully recover the relationship between Korea and Japan as well as the peace of East Asia.

Korean government also holds responsibilities as it did not address the issue of Japan's war crimes during the Treaty on Basic Relations between the Republic of Korea and Japan in 1965. The Korean Constitutional Court ruled in 2011 that it was unconstitutional for the government to not have taken proactive stance to address the issue, and such irresponsibility must not continue. Even after 8 high-level official meetings, the 'Comfort Women' issue is still far from being resolved. The current government appears powerless in front of the Japanese government's aggressive tactics, while the victims are passing away one by one due to old age. Such irresponsible diplomacy should end as soon as possible, along with the current political atmosphere which does not prioritize historical justice and democracy for the sake of economic development and national security.

The historical responsibility does not only lie in the hands of Japan, Korea and the victimized countries. The international community, including the UN and other international organizations, local and city councils of various countries, academics and the civil society, has already come

together to define the military sexual slavery as a war crime against international law and violence against women and to promote recommendations and parliamentary resolutions. We must act together to restore the dignity of the victims and repent of the cruel human history. No economic or security logic must prevail and indulge Japanese government. No armed conflict can bring peace and safety of people. Only the end of war and violence against women can bring genuine peace to the world.

Today as we initiate the 3rd International Memorial Day for the 'Comfort Women' along with global support for the resolution of the military sexual slavery issue, we would like to bring 'true independence' for the survivors and call for actions for more peaceful world without war. Our demands are as follows:

- To the Japanese government: Admit the forced nature of military sexual slavery crime during the colonial period, officially apologize and provide legal reparations to the victims!
- To the Korean government: Put in greater diplomatic effort and implement all possible measures. Investigate thoroughly the truth and provide historical education on the issue!
- To the international community: No country should allow Japan's strong denial of military sexual slavery crime and enhance militarization while the former Allied Forces should reveal all the data on the crime to put pressure on Japanese government for executing post-war responsibilities to the victimized countries. Urge Japanese government to accept and execute the recommendations and resolutions adopted by international organizations such as the UN and local councils of many countries! Put in effort to stop war and violence against women!

12th of August 2015

The Participants of the 3rd International Memorial Day for the 'Comfort Women' &
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