

Minister of Foreign Affairs
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Minister
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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Japan

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Dear Minister,

I write with regard to Japan's recent consideration under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council.

Japan has indicated that it will consider all of the recommendations made to it by other states during the review. It must indicate its position of support or rejection before the adoption by the Council of the review outcome at its 22nd session in March 2013. In particular, I want to draw your attention to the recommendations on ensuring justice for the survivors of Japan's military sexual slavery system, euphemistically known as 'comfort women', and I urge you to indicate Japan's support of these recommendations and commit to their urgent implementation.¹

Women from across the Asia Pacific region were sexually enslaved by the Japanese Imperial Army from around 1932 until the end of World War II. The Japanese Imperial Army violated the human rights of women and girls who, because of age, poverty, class, family status, education, nationality or ethnicity, were susceptible to being deceived and trapped into the

¹ The recommendations on military sexual slavery were as follows:

147.145. **Recognize its legal responsibility for the issue of the so-called 'comfort women' and take appropriate measures acceptable to the victims, as recommended by the relevant international community (Republic of Korea);**

147.146. **Face up to and reflect on its past and present a responsible interface to the international community by making apologies on the issue of comfort women and giving compensation to its victims (China);**

147.147. **Acknowledge its responsibility for the issue of "comfort women" used during World War II, and take steps to restore the dignity of victims and compensate them adequately (Costa Rica);**

147.148. **Accept legal responsibility for and address, once and for all, the Japanese military sexual slavery and other violations committed in the past in other Asian countries including Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea);**

147.158. **Ensure that future generations continue to be informed of all aspects of their history, by taking measures such as the introduction of the topic of comfort women in textbooks for school children (The Netherlands)**

sexual slavery system. The vast majority of them were under the age of 20; some girls were as young as 12 when they were abducted. Survivors continue to suffer from physical and mental ill-health, isolation, shame and often extreme poverty as a result of their enslavement.

Despite international pressure from UN human right bodies and from numerous governments, during the UPR the Japanese government continues to deny justice to the survivors of its former military sexual slavery system and to insist that any obligation to provide justice have been settled through peace treaties and other arrangements which precluded further reparations. However, compensations offered by the government of Japan do not meet international standards on reparation and are perceived by survivors as a way of buying their silence. These women are by now elderly and many have passed away without seeing justice.

A 90 year old survivor says “I want to receive apologies from the Japanese government myself. I am not doing this for money. I just want the Japanese government to regret their actions, to take responsibility for what they did, apologize to all of us, and respect our human rights”.

I urge the Japanese Government to accept full responsibility, including legal responsibility, for these crimes and to issue an unequivocal apology for the crimes committed against these women. I also urge you to provide adequate and effective reparations to the survivors in line with international standards and to include an accurate account of the sexual slavery system in Japanese educational textbooks on the Second World War.

Yours sincerely,