

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Japan is undermining global efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflict

On the occasion of International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Amnesty International calls on the Japanese government to prove its commitments to the G8 Declaration on the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict by fulfilling its obligations to the survivors of its wartime military sexual slavery system in operation before and during World War II.

Earlier this year Japan joined with other member states of the G8 to support the Declaration which aims to prevent and end impunity for crimes of sexual violence committed during armed conflict. However, Japan's failure to provide truth, justice and full reparations to survivors of Japan's former military sexual slavery system not only undermines this initiative but also provides political cover for the failure of other governments to provide justice to survivors of sexual violence in conflict situations.

Women from throughout the Asia-Pacific region were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army from 1932 through the duration of World War II. The Japanese Imperial Army targeted women and girls who, because of age, poverty, class, family status, education, nationality or ethnicity, were susceptible to being deceived and trapped into the sexual slavery system. Others were abducted by force. All were detained and forced into slavery. Those who survived suffered, and continue to suffer, from physical and mental ill-health, isolation, shame and often extreme poverty as a result of their enslavement.

Contrary to the commitments in the G8 Declaration to raise awareness of crimes of sexual violence, remove barriers to justice, provide better support to victims and bring perpetrators to justice, Japan refuses to fully acknowledge and accept responsibility for the system of military sexual slavery and has repeatedly opposed survivors' calls and efforts to obtain justice, truth and reparation.

Amnesty International is particularly concerned by recent attempts of high profile Japanese politicians and officials to excuse or deny Japan's military sexual slavery system. Examples include comments made by the Mayor of Osaka, Toru Hashimoto, that Japan's military sexual slavery system was "necessary" and the statement by the Japanese government in their addendum to the Universal Periodic Review that the issue "should not be politicized or turned into a diplomatic issue".

In September at the UN General Assembly in New York, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called for a "global society in which all women shine". But until Japan provides justice to the survivors of its system of military sexual slavery, these types of calls will ring hollow. By meeting the call for justice, Japan would show leadership in substantiating commitments to preventing sexual violence in conflict and promoting women's rights.

Survivors from throughout the Asia Pacific region are now elderly and many have passed away without receiving truth, justice and full reparation.

It is urgent that the international community and particularly directly affected countries take up this issue with the Government of Japan in a comprehensive manner that encompasses truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition, including education, and that enables the active and meaningful participation of the survivors.

Further, Amnesty International calls on the Japanese government to act consistently with the commitments it made when adhering to the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict by providing justice without further delay to the survivors of Japan's military sexual slavery system.

In particular, Amnesty International calls on the Government of Japan to:

- Accept full responsibility, including legal responsibility, in a way that publicly acknowledges the harm suffered by these women and is acceptable to the majority of survivors;
- Apologize unequivocally for the crimes committed against the women and provide adequate and effective reparation directly from the government and in line with international standards;
- Ensure non-repetition by including an accurate account of Japan's military sexual slavery system in textbooks used in the Japanese educational system.

Background

Until this day, Japan has failed to acknowledge and accept responsibility and has opposed survivors' efforts to obtain justice, truth and reparation. The Japanese government has made a prolonged and determined effort to hide behind its legal position on the issue and continues to insist that any obligation to provide reparation was settled in the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty and other bilateral peace treaties and arrangements. Amnesty International believes the government's position is untenable, including because the named treaties and agreements did not cover acts of sexual slavery, and did not preclude individuals from seeking reparation.

The Asian Women's Fund (AWF), a private fund established by the Japanese government, failed to meet international standards on reparation and was perceived by the survivors as a way of buying their silence. Furthermore, the Japanese government continues to contradict earlier acknowledgements or expressions of remorse by denying or evading responsibility, including legal responsibility.

Inside Japan local city councils continue to pass statements calling on the central government in Japan to effectively address the unresolved issue of justice for the survivors of Japan's military sexual slavery system. On 26 March 2013, Kyoto Prefecture Assembly became the first Prefecture-level body to call on the central government to provide redress to the survivors of Japan's military sexual slavery system including compensation followed by Shimane Prefecture in June.

See also Amnesty International, "[Still Waiting After 60 Years: Justice for Survivors of Japan's Military Sexual Slavery System](#)", October 2005, ASA 22/012/2005

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