

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: ASA 22/001/2010
13 January 2010

Japan: 'Comfort women' mark the 900th anniversary of the 'Wednesday demonstration'

Amnesty International calls on the government of Japan to apologise fully and unequivocally to the survivors of Japan's military sexual slavery system on the occasion of the 900th Wednesday demonstration in Seoul, South Korea.

An estimated 200,000 women from 1932 to the end of World War II were forced into sexual slavery. The Japanese Imperial Army preyed on women and girls who, because of age, poverty, class, family status, education, nationality or ethnicity were most susceptible to being deceived and trapped into the sexual slavery system. These women suffered a range of abuses including abduction, gang rape, and forced abortions. Many of the victims are still suffering from the consequences of these abuses.

Since January 1992, "Wednesday Demonstrations" have taken place every Wednesday outside the Japanese embassy in South Korea. Survivors of the sexual slavery system, human rights activists, students and people from all over the world, have been attending these weekly demonstrations to show their solidarity and support for calls for justice.

South Korean survivor, Kim Hak-soon, who was the first to speak publicly of her ordeal, has inspired many others to break their silence. These courageous survivors continue to work vigorously to campaign for justice and the promotion of human rights.

The survivors and supporters have travelled around the world speaking to politicians, governments, parliamentarians, students and human rights activists. There is now an international movement of survivors, family members and supporters calling for justice.

Since 2007, the USA, Canada, the Netherlands, South Korea, Taiwan and the European Parliament, which represents the 27 member states of the EU, have all passed resolutions calling on the government of Japan to accept responsibility and apologize for the crimes committed against these women.

In Japan the city councils of Takarazuka, Kiyose, Sapporo, Fukuoka, Mino-o, Kyo-Tanabe, Koganei, Mitaka, Ikoma, Sennan and Kokubunji have all called on the government of Japan to resolve this issue.

Amnesty International is proud to be part of the movement calling on the Japanese government to provide justice for the 'comfort women' and urges the Japanese government to take action immediately to end this on-going violation of human rights.

However, time is running out as most of the survivors of the 'comfort women' system are now elderly and many have passed away. The government of Japan must act immediately to provide redress to those who have suffered.

Amnesty International calls on the Government of Japan to:

- accept full responsibility for the “comfort women” system in a way that publicly acknowledges the harm that these women suffered and restores the dignity of the survivors.
- apologize fully and unequivocally for the crimes committed against the women.
- provide adequate and effective compensation to survivors and their immediate families directly from the government.
- include an accurate account of the sexual slavery system in Japanese educational textbooks on World War II.

ENDS/