

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Secretary General of Amnesty International pledges on-going support for justice for survivors of Japan's military sexual slavery system on the occasion of the 1000<sup>th</sup> Wednesday Demonstration**

On Wednesday 8 January 1992 Korean women who had survived Japan's military sexual slavery system and their supporters assembled in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, South Korea to hold a demonstration. After decades of silence these women came together publicly to call for justice.

Since that day, these women have gathered every Wednesday in front of the Japanese embassy to call for justice. Today marks the 1000<sup>th</sup> Wednesday Demonstration, which has been organised each week by the Korean Council for Women Drafted into Military Sexual Slavery by Japan.

Amnesty International is proud to have been able to attend and participate in some of these demonstrations.

"The determination of these women is an inspiration and their call for justice is loud and clear. What's needed now is an unequivocal apology from the government of Japan and an acknowledgement of the harm these women have endured. It is appalling that these women are still waiting for justice after all this time," said Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

From around 1932 to the end of World War II, women throughout the Asia-Pacific region were sexually enslaved by the Japanese Imperial Army. Survivors did not speak of their ordeal for over 50 years. The continued denial of justice prolongs the humiliation and suffering of the survivors. Amnesty International considers this a serious violation of their human rights.

"These women suffered the most appalling violence over 60 years ago, yet even in old age and to the end of their lives, they persistently demanded justice. Japan must honour its obligation to these brave women before any more of them pass away," he added.

On 30 August the Constitutional Court of South Korea ruled in a 6-3 vote that it is unconstitutional for the South Korean government to make no tangible effort to settle disputes with Japan over the Japanese government's refusal to compensate Korean women mobilized as sex slaves during its 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula. The Constitutional Court noted that the government violated the basic rights of the former "comfort women" with its inaction. So far the Japanese government has declined to meet with South Korea counterparts to discuss this issue.

Amnesty International urges the South Korean government to continue to press this issue with the Japanese authorities, and if Japan still refuses to meet to discuss this, to raise this issue in other international fora.

Amnesty International further calls on:

- The Japanese Diet to make a full unequivocal apology to survivors, including accepting legal responsibility for the crimes, acknowledging that the crimes amount to crimes under international law, and acknowledging the harm suffered by survivors in a way that is acceptable to the majority of the survivors

- The Japanese Government and Diet to review national laws with a view to removing existing obstacles to obtaining full reparations before Japanese courts and to ensure that Japanese educational texts include an accurate account of the sexual slavery system
- The Japanese Government to immediately implement effective administrative mechanisms to provide full reparations to all survivors of sexual slavery

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