

My Little

Statue of Peace

Around the World



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On August 14, 1991, Kim Hak-soon courageously stepped in front of the television cameras. She was forced to be drafted by the Japanese military as a sexual slave at the age of 16.

” I’m Kim Hak-soon. I was
abducted by the Japanese
military and forced to become
a ‘comfort woman’. “

“The thought that there would be no one to talk about this issue after my death led me to speak out publicly [...]

Though I have now grown old, I am still horribly frightened by how the Japanese soldiers killed people. I shook so terribly.

I saw it so often, yet I was too afraid to talk about it. I desperately wanted to talk to somebody about it.”

July 1997, from the last interview with Kim Hak-soon before her death in December that same year

The public appearance of a survivor in 1991

On the 14th of August 1991, Kim Hak-soon found the courage to appear for the first time in front of a television camera and say, “I was a ‘comfort woman’ for the Japanese military.”

After this first public testimony, the war crimes and abuse of women’s rights by the Japanese military were gradually exposed. As a consequence, 238 women from South Korea testified against the Japanese government by saying, “I am Kim Hak-soon too.” Their long silence was finally broken, and not just by South Korean women. Women also spoke out from North Korea, Taiwan, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, East Timor and from the Netherlands, which held Indonesia as a colony at the time, whose relatives were abducted and taken to military brothels. In alliance with Germany and Italy, Japan waged the Asia-Pacific War (1937-1945), forcing an estimated 200,000 girls and women into sexual slavery. The exact number is not clear to this day.

Contrary to the claims of those affected over the past 30 years, the Japanese government has not assumed full responsibility for its war crimes nor issued any official compensation. Indirect cash payments into established funds and foundations merely helped Japan to rid itself of the



troublesome topic. Neither did the payments benefit the people affected, nor did they serve to actually address the problem. Above all, demands continue to be ignored to include these events in Japanese textbooks so as to promote a reckoning amongst the Japanese with their own history, and Japan's responsibility for its systematic exploitation has been maligned.









A statue of a girl for peace

The 1000th Wednesday Demonstration





On January 8, 1992, the first Wednesday Demonstration took place in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. On December 14, 2011, the Statue for Peace was erected in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul at the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration of former „comfort women“, in the hope of eliciting an official apology and compensation. More than 5,000 people came together on that day. Since the street was so tight, numerous demonstrators had to be sent home. Since then, at least 500 people gather each Wednesday in front of the Japanese Embassy.

Many young people join the Wednesday Demonstrations.

Meaning and symbolism of the statue

The girl in Hanbok traditional costume

Since admitting “I was a comfort woman for the Japanese military” in 1991, Japan has been accused of the brutality and crime of having forced young girls into becoming “sex slaves” for Japanese soldiers.

Many people thought only a few women suffered this oppression. They were not aware of the war crimes committed by Japan on many little girls from Korea and other countries. The Japanese government should raise awareness for the sexual violence perpetrated against the young girls and recognize these deeds in an honest manner. The statue captures the image of a young girl in traditional Hanbok costume in remembrance of the under-aged girls who were abducted and taken to comfort stations. The costume both represents the Korean victims as well as symbolizing the historical period and vulnerability of all women exploited in the Asia-Pacific region.



The old woman as a shadow

The figure depicts a young girl; however her shadow takes the shape of an aged woman. The shadow represents today's elderly women and the figure the young girls abducted long ago. The shadow symbolizes the time that passed without an official apology from Japan which has turned the girl into an old woman who still must live with no recognition of the crimes committed against her. One of the former "comfort women" Gil Won-ok said:

"Could I forgive Japan if it does everything we are asking for? Give me back my life!"

The time the women spent with sadness in their hearts cannot be turned back nor the violence they suffered compensated.

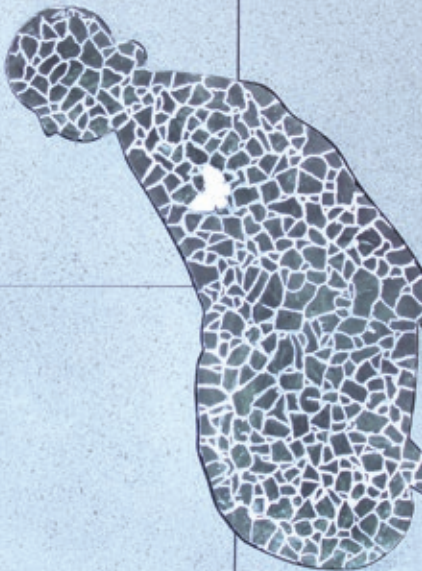
평 화 비

1992년 1월 8일부터 이 곳 일본대사관 앞에서 열린 일본군 '위안부' 문제해결을 위한 추모시위가 2011년 12월 14일 첫 번째를 맞이함에, 그 숭고한 정신과 역사를 일깨워 이 평화비를 세우다.

December 14, 2011 marks the 1000th Wednesday Demonstration for the solution of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery issue after its first rally on January 8, 1992 in front of the Japanese Embassy.

This peace monument stands to commemorate the spirit and the deep history of the Wednesday Demonstration.

1992년 1월 8일, 일본軍「慰安婦」問題解決のための水曜デモが、ここ日本大使館前で始まりました。
2011年12月14日、1000回を迎えるにあたり、その崇高な精神と歴史を引き継ぐため、ここに平和の碑を建立す。



The white butterfly

A white butterfly sits inside the shadow. The now aged women wait for an official apology from the Japanese government and demonstrate each Wednesday, come rain or snow. Many have died without having had their wish fulfilled or overcome their sadness. In Asia, butterflies symbolize rebirth. The artists placed a white butterfly inside the shadow to symbolize the hope that these women are reborn as butterflies and receive the apology they so longed for from the Japanese government.





The empty chair

The empty chair symbolizes past, present and future. It expresses the desire that the women who have passed away could still sit here today. People who encounter the statue now are invited to sit down next to the girl and consider what she must have felt back then. Thus, they are able to comprehend the current appeals and emotions of the now aged women. Lastly, this spot represents a promise. Onlookers can join the demands of the victims who nowadays are engaged as peace activists, taking a stand for a world without war. And last but not least, the empty chair also stands for all the unknown victims of the “comfort women” system.

The clenched fists and raised heels





The girl is barefoot. Her heels are raised and do not touch the ground. After the war, countless girls were not able to return home, those who made it, no longer felt they were at home. Innocent girls lived their entire lives with feelings of guilt, as though they had committed sins. In 1991, the now elderly women gathered their courage and went public with their fate. However, the South Korean government blamed foreign policy and kept quiet about the “comfort women’s” past. The government ignored the sorrow of South Korean civil society and paid no attention to abandoned girls who now had white hair. The country’s discomfort is expressed in the form of the bare, raised heels. The clenched fists represent a life full of shame and isolation, as well as the will never to give up in spite of the humiliation.



The hair

Korean girls at the time kept their hair well-groomed and would not have thoughtlessly cut it short. Yet the statue, upon closer inspection, reveals that the girl's hair is not just short, it is also lanky and disheveled. This reflects how the girls were violently taken from their families and abducted from their homeland.

The bird

The bird symbolizes peace and freedom. It can fly high in the sky but also live on the ground. Consequently, it is ascribed a role as intermediary between the dead and the living. The bird sitting on the girl's shoulder indicates that the dead are not entirely gone, they remain tied to us.



The Little Statue of Peace project in Germany

On 28 December 2015, an agreement was reached between South Korea and Japan regarding the “comfort women” issue. Among other things, it demands that the statue of peace be removed. Instead, Japan offered a billion Yen (approximately 7.5 million Euros) as “healing funds” to set up a foundation that would distribute the money among the victims and their families. Any further discussion of the topic was explicitly ruled out – both on the part of the Japanese and the South Koreans. The problem was considered finally and irreversibly resolved.

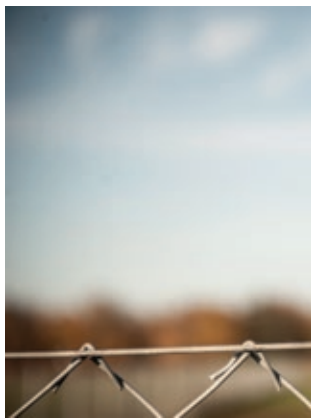
Many people in South Korea were outraged by Japan’s intention to remove the Statue of Peace, and in doing so suppress its history, as well as the ignorance of the South Korean government at the time. Our goal is to continue to promote the truth and implications of the “comfort women” issue, which is why we decided to launch a movement for the Little Statue of Peace.

The project is part of the campaign for justice and recognition which works together with the “comfort women”. As the Little Statue of Peace is established around the world, we want to bear witness to their painful past and try to improve the situation of those affected.



The Little Statue of Peace at Tempelhof Field in Berlin.

Even if the Statue of Peace should be removed, this project will still underscore the meaning of the statue in Korea and transport its message to the world.





The fate of the “comfort women”

The term “comfort woman” (Japanese: ianfu) clearly conveys the purpose of the system of sex slavery: young, exhausted soldiers who went to war by order of the emperor allegedly were to be “comforted” by sexual services. It was a reward system that meant never-ending abuse for hundreds of thousands of women.

During the Asian-Pacific War (1937-1945), the Japanese military systematically abducted young women and girls and forced them into prostitution for their soldiers. An estimated 200,000 women and girls suffered that fate, mainly minors aged eleven and older. Women from across the entire Asian-Pacific region were affected. Until today, more than hundreds of the former comfort women from 13 different countries have come forward from Burma, China, East Timor, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. These women were supposed to “comfort” the soldiers. Their silence was not broken until 50 years after the end of World War II, uncovering the crimes of the Japanese military.



“Comfort women” who were captured by the Allies. Park Yeong-shim (far right) is pregnant. Burma, 1944.

Crimes against the “comfort women”

The Japanese army set up their own brothels in the early 1930s during the attack on China. The “comfort women” system was massively expanded seven years later when Japan again waged war with China and then when they expanded the war to the whole Asian-Pacific region. By



Soldiers waiting in a line in front of a comfort station. China.

setting up military-owned comfort stations, the military leaders hoped to increase soldiers' combat power and morale. They intended to prevent spontaneous mass rape and protect soldiers from infection by sexually transmitted diseases.

Rules and prices were put up in front of the comfort stations. Few soldiers minded the rules, so many women contracted sexually transmitted diseases and became pregnant. The military stamps symbolically paid to the women were worthless. According to witness reports, before the women were “deployed”, they were beaten, threatened and raped to make them “compliant”. If they attempted to escape, they were tortured or killed. They had to serve soldiers day and night under appalling conditions.

After the capitulation in 1945, the Japanese military killed the women on site or left them abroad, stranded and penniless. Only a few made it back to their homeland, many stayed behind in the formerly occupied territories. Many of the women did not dare to tell their closest relatives about their traumatic experiences due to feelings of shame and guilt. The nightmare of their youth stays with them until today.

Going public

At the start of 1980, Professor Yun Jeong-ok (born 1925) from South Korea went in search of women who had been abducted during the war. As a young schoolgirl, she herself witnessed how countless girls were forcibly recruited for the so-called “voluntary unit”, known as Jeongshindae. The girls were told they would work in munitions and textile industries, among others. When Yun heard about the soldiers and male forced laborers returning after the war but not about the forcibly recruited girls, she



Snapshot in front of a comfort station „Furusato (Hometown)“. China

decided to make further inquiries. This is how she discovered the sheer extent of the war crimes.

In 1990, 37 women's organizations founded "The Korean Council for the Women Drafted into Military Sexual Slavery by Japan" (hereinafter, The Korean Council) to help the "comfort women". After a number

of appeals on radio and television, scattered survivors called in on a hot-line. In 1991, The Korean Council called for the Japanese government to confront its past. However, the government rejected this call.

On 14 August 1991, Kim Hak-soon went public as the first “comfort woman” and contemporary witness. Following her brave example, hundreds of women from twelve other countries came forward.

Japan and the “comfort women” issue

Professor Yoshimi Yoshiaki from Chuo University in Tokyo discovered numerous military documents in 1992. The documents provided evidence of the Japanese army’s leading role in recruiting women and setting up comfort stations.

Despite many testimonies of affected women and the discovery of incriminating documents, Japanese officials repeatedly denied that women were forcibly recruited. Indeed, compensation for those affected turned out to be modest, while offenders were neither sought out nor punished.

In 1995 under the direction of the then Prime Minister Murayama Tomichi, Japan founded a partially government-funded “Fund for Asian Women”. However, payments from this fund were declared to be “medical support and social welfare” instead of “compensation” for deeds committed during World War II. As a consequence, many “comfort women” rejected the Fund for Asian Women. The fund was ultimately terminated

in 2007, citing a “statute of limitations” as the reason.

In 1994, Japan decided to include the topic of “comfort women” in schoolbooks. However, this decision was short-lived. Conservative politicians enforced removal of all traces of this chapter of Japan’s war history from schoolbooks. A series of public apologies by politicians to the survivors ensued, however Japan’s responsibility for the war crimes was denied equally as often by leading politicians.

New hopes for acknowledgement and compensation surfaced when social democrats rose to power in Japan for the first time in 54 years, from 2008 to 2012. To this day, however, the government has taken no concrete steps in that direction. The more time that passes since the war crimes, the greater the hurdle it will be for Japanese society to confront its past.

In December 2015, the Japanese-Korean Agreement was signed. It establishes a fund of so-called “healing funds”, 7.5 million Euros to be paid by Japan to Korea for a foundation to be set up for the victims. Yet this does not acknowledge the Japanese government’s guilt in committing the war crimes”, merely mentioning the “involvement of the army at that time”. Nor were important requests from the survivors, such as incorporation of past events into Japan’s historical narrative or confronting Japan’s war history, fulfilled in any way, shape or form.

In a later report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Di-

scrimination Against Women from 31 January 2016, the Japanese government denies that the Imperial Japanese Army forced women into prostitution during World War II. Furthermore, they submitted a motion with the note that the “comfort women” were not sex slaves. This represents a step backwards from the Kono Declaration from 1993 in which the Japanese government expressly conceded to this.

The Korean-Japanese Agreement declared the issue of the “comfort women” to be “finally and irreversibly” resolved, yet much has to be done before this statement holds true.

Collective remembrance work

Currently there are two houses in South Korea where survivors are looked after. The women receive financial support from the Korean government and women’s organizations. At the moment, ten women are spending their old age together in the living and museum project, “The House of Sharing” in Kwangju near Seoul. Every Wednesday, they go demonstrate in front of the Japanese Embassy where they and younger people loudly demand an “apology and compensation”. In spite of their advanced age, they make an alert and open impression. On weekends they receive visitors, among them many young people from Japan.

Gil Won-ok was abducted and taken to China at the age of thirteen. She now wants to travel the world while she still can because, as she says,

“My youth can never be made good, but I don’t want the same thing to happen to other young women. The war is to blame for everything.” She made this statement in August 2010 in Berlin. The Japanese government does not have much more time to fulfill the requests of survivors and apologize properly. Due to their advanced years, more and more survivors are dying, still waiting for a sincere apology and compensation.

“Comfort women” like Gil Won-ok gather strength from collectively confronting their past. They have overcome their victimhood to become courageous advocates of human rights. These elderly ladies have long since become role models for countless young women who are exposed to sexual violence – not only in Asia, but all over the world.



Worldwide solidarity with the victims of sexual violence: Gil Won-ok, a former “comfort woman” (age 89), and the Yezidi woman Marwa Al Aliko (age 24) who was abducted by ISIS in 2014 and taken to Rakka where she was forced to work as a “sex slave”. They met in Berlin in May 2017 at the ceremony awarding the Butterfly Fund. The meeting was arranged by the work group “comfort women” of the Korea Verband in cooperation with Eziden Weltweit e.V.

Imprint

In protest of the Japanese-Korean Agreement of 28 December 2015, the artists Kim Seo-Kyeong and Un-Seong launched the project “The Little Statue of Peace”. This brochure is an edited version of the Korean edition which the artists published for the project in late March 2016..

Editor’s note: Our criticism is directed at those persons responsible within the Japanese government. We are neither against the country of Japan nor the citizens of Japan.

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Come sit next to me!

My Little

Statue of Peace

Around the World

The statue of the girl and her message of peace are to be set up all over the world. Donations are being collected in collaboration with The Korean Council for the Women Drafted into Military Sexual Slavery by Japan to produce the Statue of Peace and install it at the desired location. If you know a good location, please contact us at: mail@koreaverband.de

Donations can be made to:

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