

Return the House of Sharing to the Survivors and the Public!

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The <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> was opened under the leadership of the Jogye order monks in 1992 as a living space for the survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery. As of 2020, around 30 survivors have lived at the House of Sharing, and there are currently 5 survivors living there. As the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> was started under the leadership of the Buddhist community, two thirds of the board members are Jogye Order monks and the managers are all directly or indirectly related to the Buddhist community.

The <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> claims to work for the survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery, but that is not the case in reality. Despite collecting 5 billion won (~ 4 million USD) in cash alone, there has been only one nurse taking care of the survivors for the past 20 years, even when there were more than 10 survivors staying at the House of Sharing. There are also only 4 caregivers, who are working 48 hours shifts in pairs. These caregivers are not hired or paid with donations; the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family are hiring the nursing staffs for the survivors. In order to receive more financial support from the Ministry, the managers of the House of Sharing ordered the nurse to manipulate the documents.

In order to raise the quality of the survivors' lives, the employees suggested eating out at restaurants, going out for trips, and doing exercise programs, but every request was rejected, saying "Why would you do that when the House of Sharing does not have any money?" When the employees tried to buy the survivors necessary goods or tried going out with the survivors during their free time and using their own funds, they would be told "If the Halmoni (survivor) goes out today, will she not want to go outside tomorrow again? If the other Halmonis see that, will they not want to go outside as well? Can you take responsibility for that? You are spoiling the Halmoni's habits." They had to endure these remarks, which are beyond common sense, and received orders not to bond with or visit the survivors any further.

Since March 2019, the employees requested that the management and board members take proper care of the survivors and improve the situation of the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order>, which is receiving donations in the name of the survivors while being indifferent to the lives and health of them. The only response the employees received was the management looking to fire them and the board members scolding and saying they should sue them. The employees also had to witness a member of the board of the House of Sharing proudly ordering the managers to collect donations to buy land.

The board members of the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> say that the House of Sharing was built for the survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery, but in the plans for the business set in the articles of

the association, a specific plan for the survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery does not appear. While the House of Sharing received around 2 billion won (~ 1.6 million USD) of donations for the survivors' lives and welfare last year, there is no content mentioning the survivors in the articles of the association. In 2020, they even applied to change the articles of the association from the management of a "free" nursing facility to the management of a hotel-like paid facility for the elderly.

The board members of the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> have repeatedly revealed their negative perception of the survivors and donations in their meetings. 1. "It is good that the money, which was supposed to be used for the survivors, was not spent." 2. "Have you ever thought about the possible problems of not spending money that was supposed to support the survivors?" 3. "As there are no more survivors who can join the House of Sharing, money needs to be saved to build a hotel-like facility for the elderly. 4. Put the donations in a time deposit account to increase interest income."

There are many questions we would like to ask. Why were they not able to build a hotel-like facility while survivors were still alive? Why do they have to build a hotel-like nursing facility using the donations given to the survivors after their passing? Why is not spending the donations for the survivors something to be praised for? Why do they have to be concerned about the views from outside about the donations that are not used for the survivors? Why would a permanent member give his opinion at an official meeting of board members and give orders to the management? How could this be a personal opinion? Why do we have to increase the interest rate of donations?

The board members gradually changed the articles of the association so that donations did not need to be used for the survivors, and in reality barely any donations were given to the survivors. Instead, a monk who did not work fulltime was paid 100 million won (~80,000 USD) and a monk who never appeared at work was paid 53 million won (~44,000 USD), using donations. While the caregivers and nurse are not paid using donations, billions of won from the donations were used to purchase lands. Most of the constructions at the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> were made with private contracts.

On the other hand, the survivors signed an agreement with their thumbprint under the condition that they will receive 100.000 won (~ 84 USD) if they do not get involved with the donations, they were not able to go out on a trip as they liked, but had to attend every event of the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order>. Even hospital expenses, nursing expenses, and everyday necessities were generally paid with the survivors' personal funds. Whenever a person with a high rank visited the House of Sharing, the survivors had to come out and wait in the living room for them. When the survivors had any complaints about their lives in the House of Sharing, they were told to talk to the monks directly and threatened, "Hey, you misunderstand completely. You have to be grateful to the House of Sharing;

without us, you cannot live for even one day!" Also, the survivors' room and goods were removed against their will or neglected, leading to their damage. The survivors could have had the chance to spend their remaining years more happy and comfortable through the support and donations sent by the citizens, but they were deprived of this by the board members and management.

The employees do not think the things that have happened at the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> are just the problems of the board members and management. The House of Sharing is not a corporation that was made one or two years ago. They have been doing this for more than 20 years and the authorities have done nothing to stop it. The removal of the livelihood and wellbeing of the survivors from the articles of the association was approved by the relevant authorities. Also, the employees have filed a civil complaint to the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Gyeonggi-do province, and the city of Gwangju, but their response was that there were generally no problems regarding the documents. Even when the employees submitted specific evidence and related documents, the officials did not even take the documents with them. A civil servant who came for the investigations did not even hesitate to say that the employees would not have had a reason to start the whistleblowing if the House of Sharing would have paid the employees more.

Rather than investigating the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> based on the civil complaint, they questioned the identity of the employees who filed the civil complaint, covered up the corruption, and put pressure on the employees who filed the complaint instead. The related officials neglected their supervision and even though the survivors experienced irreversible damage for a long time, they did not try to take responsibility for this. Rather, we strongly felt that they were trying to cover up the issue. We were recently told by a public official in charge of the city of Gwangju to negotiate with the corporation.

The problems at the House of Sharing are still happening. When the employees filed a civil complaint and gave press reports to the related authorities, the board members of the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> rapidly hired two new managers who worked for the social welfare organization. As soon as they arrived, they covered the CCTV at the office of the former secretary general, where a lot of evidence of misconduct could be found, and cleared the goods. Even now they are pressuring the employees who made public reports and even during this time of public attention, they do not hesitate to misuse the donations. One of the new managers is a relative of a Monk of the Jogye Order, they spread false information saying the whistleblowers were confining the survivors and occupying the residential

building. Also, last weekend the manager filmed employees taking a walk with a survivor without permission, startling the survivor. They continue to show incomprehensible behavior to this day.

The House of Sharing is not just a nursing facility. The House of Sharing is filled with records, relics, and memories of the lives of the survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery. The House of Sharing is a historical space which is more than just the survivors' living space, but representative of the lives and psychology of survivors, and the awareness and attention of society. Therefore, the House of Sharing should not become a hotel-like nursing facility, but become a place of history where we can learn about Japanese military sexual slavery issue and the lives of the survivors. Above all, the priority should be to generously spend the donations on the remaining survivors of the House of Sharing.

Therefore, we earnestly appeal to the president and his related officials as follows:

First, the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> has raised more than 11.8 billion (~9.8 million USD) won in the past 20 years without registering under the Donation Contribution Act. Even after deleting the needs of the survivors from the articles of corporation, the donations were collected for the stabilization and welfare of the survivors. Please investigate thoroughly whether these acts of donation recruitment and donation usage were illegal.

Second, the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> claimed they would change the articles of association according to the citizens' will, but the articles, which are supposed to be displayed, were not even made public by the corporation. Please make sure that donations from citizens are not used for the business of the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order>.

Third, the reason why the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> was able to do things lawlessly like this, was due to the assistance by Gwangju city, Gyeonggi-do province, and the investigative agencies. Even now, the city of Gwangju, Gyeonggi-do province, and investigative agencies are passing the responsibility of proof to us, the whistleblowers. They are pushing us, saying that we are liars and that we should prove the truth. We are hoping that you can show your responsibility to reveal the things, which we could not find out by doing a thorough investigation.

Fourth, please conduct a thorough investigation of the work of the related officials and punish those involved to prevent this from happening again.

Fifth, the board members of the <House of Sharing, Social Welfare Corporation of the Korean Buddhism Jogye Order> are putting all the responsibility on the two managers. Even now, there are two newly hired managers who are harassing the whistleblowers. The board members are responsible for all of this. They promoted themselves as great human rights activists, fulfilling a historic duty for the survivors, but in reality that was never the case. Please make sure that the ones with the most responsibility for this situation, who are waiting silently without remorse, cannot take hold of the donations again.