

Remarks by Mr. Shinsuke Sugiyama, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

As stated in the written answer to the questions posed by the Committee, the Government of Japan conducted a full-scale fact-finding study on the comfort women issue in the early 1990s. That was when the issue started to be taken up as a political and diplomatic issue between Japan and the Republic of Korea. However, “forceful taking away” of comfort women by the military and government authorities could not be confirmed in any of the documents that the Government of Japan was able to identify in this study.

The reason behind the widespread belief that comfort women were “forcefully taken away” is a fabricated story by the late Seiji Yoshida in his book entitled “My War Crime” published in 1983. In this book, Yoshida illustrates himself hunting many women by order of the Japanese military in Jeju Island of the Republic of Korea. At the time, the content of his book was widely reported as if it were a true story by the *Asahi Shimbun*, a major Japanese newspaper. It eventually made a tremendous impact not only on public opinion in Japan and the Republic of Korea, but also in the entire international community. The reality is, Yoshida’s story has later been proven to be entirely a product of imagination by scholars.

In fact, the *Asahi Shimbun* later published articles several times including on August 5 and 6, and later in September, 2014, admitted having published erroneous articles, and officially apologized for it to their readers.

The truth is that the figure “200,000 persons” as the number of comfort women also lacks concrete evidence. The *Asahi Shimbun* clarified in its article dated on August 5, 2014 that “Women volunteer corps’ refer to the ‘women volunteer labor corps’ that were organized to mobilize women as a work force during the war in Japan proper as well as in the former colonies on the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan” and that “With the objective of using the women as a work force, the corps were different from comfort women who were made to serve as sexual partners for military personnel.” The *Asahi Shimbun* admitted that the figure “200,000” which it had reported was originated from its confusion with comfort women of the Women Volunteer Corps who were mobilized as a war-time labor force.

I would also like to point out that the expression “sex slaves” contradicts the facts.

*Source: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/josi/>