

The 31<sup>st</sup> Press Conference of the National Action to Urge Urging the End of the Comfort Women Fraud

May 19, 2021 <https://youtu.be/OHipKZDZpvA>

## **Does Japan really want to terminate the comfort women issue? If so, withdraw the Kono Statement**

Kim Byung-heon, Representative of National Action to Abolish the Comfort Women Act

Statement: Withdraw the Kono Statement, for it distorts the truth about the comfort women.

On December 1, 2020, the Assembly of Mitte Borough, Berlin, passed a bill agreeing to the eternal installation of a comfort woman statue at a park in Berlin, with 24 votes for and 5 votes against. The bill was in response to the recommendation to remove the statue by Mayor Stephan von Dassel.

Following the assembly's resolution, the Mayor accepted its decision and the statue in question avoided being removed. It is to stay there--for at least one year.

There were many underlying currents. Above all, the fact that the Mitte Assembly referred to the "Kono Statement" as a historical fact about the comfort women supposedly was a decisive factor in the Assembly's decision.

The core of the Kono Statement, announced on August 4, 1993, is:

"The recruitment of the comfort women was conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the request of the military... in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing, coercion, etc... at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments... The Korean Peninsula was under Japanese rule in those days, and recruitment, transfer, control, etc. were conducted generally against their will, through coaxing, coercion, etc..."

Thus written, the Kono Statement admitted to Japan's involvement and responsibility.

Cabinet Secretary Kono at the time acknowledged Japanese military coercion during the

press conference after he announced the Statement. During a discussion with former Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi held at the Japan National Press Club on June 9, 2015, Secretary Kono stated, “Referring to the record of Dutch women who were taken to comfort stations in Indonesia, we cannot absolutely deny that force was not involved.” He concluded, judging from the example of the Dutch women, that Japanese military forced abduction of Korean women was a historical fact.

Here, however, former Secretary Kono made an incredible error. He wrong-headedly confused the case of the Dutch women, who were actual war crime victims, with Japanese military comfort women, who were recruited and managed to prevent war crimes against women in Japanese-occupied regions.

The Japanese military comfort women were “legal prostitutes who provided sexual services, in exchange for payment, at comfort stations that were under the administration of the Japanese military.”

It was compulsory for women going abroad (leaving Japan and its colonies) to work as comfort women to conclude a contract with the comfort station master, report to the police station in person and have their identification verified.

During this process, it was absolutely necessary to obtain parental approval. Having their identification and after arriving at their destination, like Shanghai, women were required to obtain a work application, a copy of their family register, a personal background report, a seal certification and other papers and to submit them to the Consulate/police station for a business permit. Both Japanese and Korean underwent this procedure.

Before the start of the contract, women received an advance and put their seal on the contract. At the expiration of their contract, women were to return home immediately. However, some had their contract extended or moved to other comfort stations. Among these comfort women was Moon Okuju, who lived as a comfort woman near the Burmese front, earned a lot of money and sent money home.

This is one example of a legal comfort woman.

On the other hand, the Dutch women referred to by former Cabinet Secretary Kono were in a very different situation. Thirty-five Dutch women, who were confined in a civilian

women's internment camp, were forcibly abducted by the Japanese military, raped and coerced into prostitution at comfort stations in Semarang, Dutch East Indies. This episode was later known as the "Semarang Incident," a serious war crime.

In 1998, Gay McDougall submitted a report to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Its definition of war crimes included acts of sexual violence, including rape, committed during international conflicts by the enemy or occupation forces. The Semarang Incident then clearly constituted a war crime.

Consequently, after Japan's defeat in World War II, the Netherlands brought the twelve men involved in the incident before the Netherlands Temporary Court Martial at Batavia and punished them as Classes B and C war criminals.

Before the trial began, one of the defendants, a Colonel leading the South Army officer candidate training unit, committed suicide to avoid trial and punishment, leaving behind a statement: "With the permission of the 16th Army Headquarters, I ordered a certain Major leading the Semarang Occupation Unit to gather fifty to sixty Dutch women from the female internment camp and send them to comfort stations. This order was executed, and these women were forced into prostitution at the comfort stations. A month later, a warning came from the authorities in Tokyo and the comfort stations were closed." Twelve Japanese Army soldiers were charged with abduction, forced confinement, rape, coercion into prostitution and so forth and found guilty. One was sentenced to death and the rest received prison sentences. The incident was a war crime committed by the Japanese Army against women of an enemy country.

Despite clear differences, former Cabinet Secretary Kono viewed Japanese military comfort women who worked at legally managed comfort stations in the same light as the Dutch women who were war crime victims.

If former Cabinet Secretary Kono's assertions are right, then Korean, Japanese and all other women called "Japanese military comfort women" are war crime victims. For the past 30 years, the group previously known as the "Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan," currently known as the "Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan," has continuously demanded punishment of those responsible for war crimes committed by the Japanese Army, an apology and legal compensation at their "Wednesday meetings,"

which first began on the occasion of Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi's visit to South Korea on January 8, 1992. In any event, it all started with the "Kono Statement."

Many old women, like Kim Bok-dong, Lee Yong Soo and Gil Won-ok, who used to be comfort women, have now morphed into "human rights" activists. As such, they tour conflict areas, calling for an end to "war crimes", mixing in Japanese "war crimes" as well. Their astounding acts are all because of the Kono Statement.

I have heard that Japan referred to the testimonies of Korean comfort women who were forcibly abducted in the book published by the "Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan" in preparing the Kono Statement. However, out of the 19 women, who stated in the book that they were forcibly abducted by the Japanese Army or that the same things done to the Dutch women were done to them?

Such is the situation in the Republic of Korea. The comfort women issue is distorted and full of fabrications. Elementary through high school textbooks, best-sellers, magazines, movies, various cultural contents and the media all deal with the comfort women issue, but all of them distort facts and gloss over the truth.

Kim Hak-sun and a Dutch woman, Jan Ruff-O'Herne, appear in a certain high school textbook surrounded by words such as "peace" and "human rights". Teachers have students write letters of protest and demanding an apology to the Japanese Government.

Elsewhere in another textbook, a photo of former Cabinet Secretary Kono accompanies the Kono Statement. Beside these appears Kim Bok-dong's words, "If a war ever breaks out again, how can we be sure that what we have experienced will never happen again?"

South Korea teaches its children: "The Japanese military comfort women were war crime victims and the perpetrators were the Japanese Army."

That is not all. In a lawsuit demanding compensation for former comfort women filed by twelve women on January 8 of this year, the judge ruled for the plaintiffs and unfailingly mentioned the Kono Statement as the basis for his judgement.

Thus, the comfort women issue in the Republic of Korea triggered conflict and discord among its community members and disrupted diplomatic relations between South Korea

and Japan. Because leftist scholars within South Korea fabricated lies about the comfort women, the mass media reported the same lies, civil groups instigated false claims, Ministries and Agencies implicitly agreed to wrong-headed policies and political groups mobilized to take advantage of the situation.

However, the very ringleaders behind the distortion of the comfort women as war crime victims within South Korea are none other than Japanese intellectuals, civic groups and politicians. The base of all these actors is the ghost-like Kono Statement still very much alive and influential.

Here, I declare, so as long as the Kono Statement is alive, the resolution of the Japanese military comfort women issue will be beyond our reach and Korea-Japan relations will never recover or return to normalcy.

Amid such a quagmire, we, of National Action, strongly demand:

If Japan retains the Kono Statement as it currently is, then recognize former Korean comfort women for the Japanese Army as war crime victims in the same manner as the Dutch women of the Semarang Incident and punish those responsible for the crimes and implement legal compensations.

If Japan does not recognize former Korea comfort women as war crime victims, then withdraw the Kono Statement immediately! Immediately withdraw the Kono Statement!