

# **Ending the “lies” about the comfort women with the joint efforts of Japan and South Korea**

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A totally unimaginable and unprecedented movement concerning the comfort women issue, which has been the anti-Japan symbol in Korea, is developing now. It is the emergence of South Koreans who clearly respond with, “Lies are lies,” to the lies regarding the Japanese military comfort women which many South Koreans believe to be true. Many Korean women are participating in this movement.

Overseas, on the other hand, “comfort women” are still defined as “sexual slaves” and nothing has changed when it comes to the wrong perception of the Japanese military comfort women. The anti-comfort women education planting lies and hatred in children’s minds remains a grave concern. Initially, it was some Japanese that ignited the comfort women issue. In collaboration with the brave, new movement in South Korea, we must put a period to the comfort women issue.

## **Widely installed comfort women statues overseas in the 2010s**

A comfort woman monument was built for the first time overseas in 2010 in Palisades Park City, New Jersey, USA. It was the outcome of the local Korean American citizens’ movement for the installation. In the following year, 2011, a South Korean organization, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (presently the Council for Justice), installed the first comfort woman statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, Korea. A replica of this statue was first established overseas in 2013 in Glendale City, California, USA. This was also led by local Korean American citizens. At present, there are about 30 comfort women statues or monuments at both public and private sites overseas, in the United States, Canada, Australia and Germany. In Korea alone, there are reportedly more than 140 statues.[\[1\]](#)

The words inscribed on these statues and monuments are objectionable. Japanese military comfort women are described with lies such as “sexual slaves,” “forced abduction,” “comfort girls,” “two hundred thousand or several hundred thousand comfort women,” “the largest-scale human trafficking,” and “most of them were killed during the war.”

### **The emergence of South Koreans who say, “Lies are lies.”**

Then, in 2019, a totally unexpected incident occurred. Koreans who can say, “Lies are lies” appeared. In Korea, in July, the book *Anti-Japan Nationalism* became a best seller. And in December, a movement started against the demonstration by the Council for Justice that took place every Wednesday in front of the comfort woman statue, asking for the removal of the comfort woman statue. It was simply amazing that South Koreans themselves voiced “No!” against the comfort woman statue.

### **Brave actions taken by the Korean civil group led by Mr. Kim Byeong Heon and others**

One of the leaders of this movement to eliminate the comfort women statues is Mr. Kim Byeong Heon, Representative, Korean History Textbook Research Institute. He led the formation of the “National Action to Abolish the Comfort Women Act” and “The Alliance to End Comfort Women Fraud” and since 2019 he has led the protest movement asking for the elimination of the comfort woman statue for one hundred and fifty or so times. They proclaim, “What’s great about holding up signs of fraudulent claims of ‘Forced abduction! Sexual slaves! War criminals!’ and building comfort women statues everywhere in the world?” It is truly risky, and it can even endanger their lives to say these things aloud in Korea. And yet, the activities of Mr. Kim and his group are not limited only within Korea. They went to Berlin, Nagoya, and Tokyo. They sent a statement of protest to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, where they planned to install a comfort woman statue and made a statement to the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

Mr. Kim Byeong Heon published a book titled *Red Wednesday—Lies of Comfort Women Campaign Alive for 30 Years* in 2021. The Japanese version of the book was published in 2022 by Bungei Shunju-sha. What is common between the two books, *Red Wednesday* and *Anti-Japan Nationalism*, is the assertion that Korea must stop lying in order to become a trustworthy and respectable country.

## **Serious influence of school textbooks stating lies about the comfort women**

Regarding the comfort women issue, the most serious problem are the school textbooks. Mr. Kim Byeong Heon stated during the Japan-Korea symposium held in Tokyo in November 2022<sup>[ii]</sup>

In Korea, school textbooks from the elementary to high school state fallacies as established facts, such as abduction, rape and murder of comfort women by the Japanese military, and disseminate, wide and large, these fallacies and teach them to pupils and students. What is written in the textbook for South Korean children about the comfort women are all lies that help them embrace vague hatred against Japan, a friendly neighbor, which is a criminal act. To teach lies and hatred to the future generation yet to grow up is to sow the seed of struggle and conflict between Japan and Korea.

## **Japanese who ignited the comfort women issue and continue to provoke the Koreans**

In the first place, it was Japanese that set fire to the comfort women issue and spread it to Korea, the United States and the international community. In 1992, at the United Nations Human Rights Committee (presently the Human Rights Council), a Japanese lawyer Mr. Totsuka Etsuro dubbed comfort women “sexual slaves” without much consideration. It was “just an idea,” but it was the very beginning of the comfort women fuss.<sup>[iii]</sup>

In the following year, 1993, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations submitted a statement “Counter Report by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations—Human rights in Japan are questioned,” to the examination meeting of the 49th session of the United Nations Committee of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.<sup>[iv]</sup> This was supposedly the first NGO statement regarding the comfort women issue submitted to the human rights treaty bodies. According to the statement, the Japanese military “took the policy of ‘Three Annihilation Operations of Kill All, Rob All and Burn All’ and invaded in the beautiful names of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere and the Liberation of Asia,” “forcibly mobilized people in the colonial and occupied regions into the war as soldiers, military employees and comfort women as well as workers at the war industries, causing them enormous pain,” and “as to the military comfort women issue, not only Korean and Chinese women, but also women in the occupied

regions in East Asia and civilian women from Netherlands and Australia were forced into sexual slavery, which caused many tragedies totally unforgivable in terms of humanity.” The statement was made by lawyers representing Japan. Who would think what was stated to be a lie?

And in October 2020, nearly 30 years after the event, I participated in the examination meeting concerning Japan of the 136th session of the Committee of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The same discussion went on and Japanese asserted, the same as ever, “Comfort women were Japanese military sexual slaves” and criticized “those who try to deny the history by attempting to erase the description from the textbook and removing the comfort women statue.” Thus, Japanese who had ignited the comfort women issue keep propagating the story of comfort women being sexual slaves even today.

### **For the future generation, put a period to the comfort women issue**

Mr. Kim Byeong Heon concluded his speech during the Korean Conservative Great Talk Rally held in Seoul, in January 2021:

Hopefully, on the day when the Council for Justice that has been consistently lying for thirty years disappear from here, justice will justly stand here and the Korea-Japan relationship, which is on the verge of bankruptcy, will recover and become as solid as an iron wall. For that bright day to come, let us all unite and make efforts together. The future of the Republic of Korea is in our hands.[\[v\]](#)

The comfort women issue is one of the causes of the troubled Japan- Korea relationship. There are brave South Koreans who fight to remove distortion and fabrication related to the comfort women issue. Comparing to the courageous actions taken by Mr. Kim Byeong Heon and others, I cannot help but feel angry at those dishonorable Japanese who gladly work to denigrate their own country. As for this matter, I feel totally sorry for our great ancestors.

Japan and Korea must cooperate in order to stop the lie that “comfort women were sexual slaves.” I believe that it is our generation’s responsibility to do so for our children on whom the future depends. As specific tasks, I am thinking of supporting the Korean civilian activities like Mr. Kim Byeong Heon’s, publishing the Japan-Korea

joint study and statement, holding international symposiums at home and abroad and working on the United Nations in our collaborated efforts.

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[i] *The Sankei News*, December 13, 2021. Comfort women statues, 160 statues in 10 years, Conflict over the statues in South Korea.

<https://www.sankei.com/article/20211213-NMKYUMBBGFIXBFUWU3SBZLVLGQ/>

[ii] Material from “Japan-Korea Joint Symposium” sponsored by the International Research Institute for Controversial Histories on November 16, 2022, at Bunkyo Civic Sky Hall, Tokyo.

[https://i-rich.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022.11.16\\_Symposium.pdf](https://i-rich.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022.11.16_Symposium.pdf)

[iii] *The Lie of “Comfort Women Being Sexual Slaves” Spread to the World by the United Nations—Report by the United Nations, Geneva, delegation*, published by Jiyusha, May 29, 2016

[iv] The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (counter report to the 3rd session) “Counter Report by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations: Human rights are questioned,” compiled and written by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, published by Kouchi-shobo (sold by Kiri-shobo), 1993.

[https://www.nichibenren.or.jp/activity/international/library/human\\_rights/library\\_report-3rd\\_jfba.html](https://www.nichibenren.or.jp/activity/international/library/human_rights/library_report-3rd_jfba.html)

[v] Mr. Kim Byeong Heon’s speech “Only when the Council for Justice and Remembrance disappears, the Korea-Japan relationship will be resumed” at the South Korean Conservative Great Talk Rally

<http://nadesiko-action.org/?p=17750>