

Taiwan: Exhibit, protest and demands on Japan Government over the issue of WWII “comfort women”

Sunday 29 September 2013, by [HIRANO Keiji](#) (Date first published: 14 August 2013).

Contents

- [Taiwan civic groups demand](#)
- [Exhibit highlights Taiwan sex](#)

Taiwan civic groups demand Japan compensate ex-comfort women

TAIPEI (Kyodo) — A coalition of legislators, college students and women rights groups staged a protest outside Japan’s de facto mission in Taiwan on Wednesday, demanding the Japanese government properly apologize and compensate former so-called “comfort women” forced into wartime sexual servitude.

Chanting “Japan apologize, compensate” and “Japan distorts history,” about 100 protesters gathered outside the Interchange Association, which is responsible for bilateral relations in the absence of diplomatic ties, to mark International Comfort Women Memorial Day.

They demanded that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, with parliamentary backing of his remarks, publicly apologize to the former comfort women and offer them or their families proper compensation.

They said the Japanese government should admit it did coerce women into sexual servitude before and during World War II and legislate against what they called “all distorted remarks about comfort women.”

Protesters, most of them university students, performed a skit condemning Japanese politicians for what they called improper comments on comfort women, including those by Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto who caused an uproar in May when he reportedly said the comfort women system was “necessary” to maintain discipline among Japanese soldiers during wartime.

Taipei Women’s Rescue Foundation Chief Executive Officer Kang Shu-hua said there are only six former comfort women alive in Taiwan and their average age is 88 years old.

“Our foundation will continue the campaign until the Japanese government makes proper apology and compensation to those grandmothers (comfort women),” she said. “If they don’t comply, we will come here every year.”

While a representative of the Interchange Association accepted their petition letter, protesters demanded a higher-ranking officer.

Before departing, protesters threw their white masks symbolizing hypocrisy of Japanese politicians into the compound of the association, which was cordoned off by security personnel and barricades.

Kyodo News, August 14, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130814p2g00m0dm059000c.html>

Exhibit highlights Taiwan sex slaves — Island's location made it a natural for exploitation

A Tokyo museum focusing on wartime sex slavery is holding an exhibition on how Taiwanese women exploited by the Japanese military have struggled to recover from their ordeals.

The Women's Active Museum on War and Peace, better known as WAM, has collected documents and testimony on the sexual exploitation of Taiwanese women "to hand down to the next generation," said Eriko Ikeda, the museum's director.

"The victimized women are aging, and the hardships they went through will be forgotten if we leave them lost in history," she said, referring to what she described as persistent efforts by detractors to gloss over Japan's past misconduct.

For the exhibition, dozens of panels show how Japan imposed its imperialist education on the island, ruled by Tokyo for half a century from 1895, and how Taiwanese women, including members of the indigenous population, were forced to serve as sex slaves, euphemistically known in Japan as "comfort women," in Taiwan and elsewhere in Asia.

"As Taiwan was the strategic spot for the Japanese army's southward advancement, many troops as well as military equipment and supplies went through there," Ikeda said. "And Taiwanese women were transported to the fronts with them."

One of the former Taiwanese sex slaves whose testimony appears on the panels is Lu Man Mei.

Born in 1926, Lu was brought to Hainan, China, at age 17 with around 40 females. She was supposed to work as a nurse, but she was instead confined in a row house with dozens of rooms where she was forced to have sex with around 15 soldiers a day.

"They queued up, saying loudly, 'Make it quick!'" according to her testimony.

Because some soldiers refused to use condoms, she eventually became pregnant, but her baby died after 38 days. After returning home, she married and had a boy, but her husband left her after he was informed of her past as a sex slave.

Huang A Tao was brought from Taiwan to the present-day Indonesia together with 23 women in 1943 when she was 20 years old, after she had applied for a job as an assistant nurse. She found her actual workplace was a "comfort station."

The women were told they had to make a contribution to the "home country" of Japan and that it would be impossible for them to escape.

Huang in 1992 became the first Taiwanese woman to come out publicly as a wartime sex slave.

"A South Korean victim of sexual slavery once told me it should not be us but the Japanese government who must feel ashamed. . . . I think that's so true and I hope Japan will take responsibility," she said before her death in September 2011.

A group of Taiwanese victims filed a lawsuit in Japan in 1999 against the government demanding an apology and compensation, but it was rejected by the Supreme Court in 2005.

The top court upheld a lower court's ruling that individuals can't seek redress and therefore the plaintiffs "had no reason to demand compensation for damage."

The exhibition shows how a Taiwanese group has tried to help the former sex slaves recover from post-traumatic stress disorder and put their ordeals behind them.

The group has encouraged them to perform in dramas and has arranged a program, in cooperation with various companies and government agencies, that allows them to experience for a day life in a job that they wanted to do, such as cabin attendant, police officer, postal clerk or singer.

The issue of wartime sex slavery drew attention again earlier this year when influential Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto drew harsh criticism for saying that the system was necessary to maintain military discipline.

Following the comments, the U.N. Committee against Torture urged the Japanese government to take steps to eradicate any actions that "re-traumatize" victims of wartime sexual servitude.

Japan needs to "refute attempts to deny the facts by the government authorities and public figures and to re-traumatize the victims through such repeated denials," it said.

Seeking the withdrawal of the remarks, WAM issued its own statement, arguing Hashimoto had violated the women's human rights by affirming sexual violence and the use of women as a tool of war.

Established in August 2005, it is the only museum in Japan dedicated to documenting wartime sexual violence against women. WAM has organized several exhibitions focusing on wartime sex slaves in China, the Korean Peninsula, East Timor and the Philippines as well as Okinawa.

It also touches on how some of the former Japanese soldiers have faced their responsibility as aggressors.

The museum in Shinjuku Ward is open Wednesday to Sunday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. The Taiwan exhibit runs until next June. For further information, call WAM at 03-3202-4633.

Keiji Hirano, Kyodo News, August 2, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/02/national/exhibit-highlights-taiwan-sex-slaves/#.UgtjI9gSrlc>
