

Japan & WWII: Redress urged for East Timor sex slave victims

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A human rights group urged the government Friday to start talks on how to compensate victims of Japan's wartime sex slavery in East Timor, an initiative that comes just days after the 71st anniversary Wednesday of the Imperial army's invasion of the then-Portuguese colony.

In a statement signed by around 40 organizations and 350 individuals and submitted to the Foreign Ministry, the East Timor Japan Coalition said Japan should hold negotiations with the East Timorese government over the issue of former sex slaves, euphemistically known as "comfort women" in Japan, by the end of this year.

It also said Japan should start talks with the victims and their supporters on an apology and providing "appropriate redress."

While Japan has supported nation-building in East Timor, it has not yet clarified how to take responsibility for the Imperial Japanese military's seizure of Portuguese Timor and its human rights infringements and how to redress victims, the group noted.

According to the group, 19 former sex slaves have come forward so far in East Timor, but nine of them have since died "without hearing a single word of apology from the Japanese government."

The victims have "demonstrated their courage and it is a torch that is leading the new nation, East Timor, to achieve the rule of law, democracy and gender equality," the statement said. "These are the values that Japan is promoting globally, and it needs to demonstrate them by its own actions so it can earn the trust" of East Timor as well as the international community.

Past research shows the Japanese forces set up at least 20 brothels, or comfort stations, in East Timor where victims were forced to provide sex to soldiers, said Akihisa Matsuno, a member of the East Timor Japan Coalition.

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<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/02/23/national/redress-urged-for-east-timor-sex-slave-victims/#.USma-DfA55s>