

Japan: Hashimoto still under fire over his wartime sexual servitude remarks

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Five Nobel laureates slam Hashimoto over wartime sexual servitude remarks

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Five female Nobel Peace Prize laureates issued a statement in Northern Ireland on Thursday slamming Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto over his remarks on Japan's wartime system of military brothels.

The five winners, who gathered at a three-day conference of the Nobel Women's Initiative in Belfast on the impact of war on women, said they "condemn in the strongest possible terms the recent deplorable remarks" by Hashimoto.

The statement was issued by U.S. anti-land mine campaigner Jody Williams, Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi and Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee as well as Mairead Maguire, who worked to end violence in Northern Ireland, and Rigoberta Menchu Tum, who promotes the rights of indigenous people in Guatemala.

The laureates, who received their peace prizes between 1976 and 2011, said in the statement, "Sexual slavery in wartime is a form of gender violence and is today defined as war crime."

"The crimes committed against the 'comfort women' continue to cause terrible pain for individuals and their families, and contribute to the continued tensions, enmity and mistrust in East Asia today," the statement said.

The laureates called on Hashimoto to retract his remarks and "make a full apology" for his remarks. They also urged the Japanese government to take immediate steps to secure justice for the victims of sexual slavery and to promote the end of gender violence and rape in war.

Kyodo News, June 1, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130601p2g00m0dm007000c.html>

U.N. panel urges Japan to stop “re-traumatizing” wartime sex slaves

PARIS (Kyodo) — A United Nations human rights panel urged the Japanese government on Friday to take steps to eradicate any actions that “re-traumatize” victims of Japan’s wartime sexual servitude in light of recent controversial comments by the mayor of Osaka.

Japan was urged to “refute attempts to deny the facts by the government authorities and public figures and to re-traumatize the victims through such repeated denials,” the Committee against Torture said in a document.

The document was issued following Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto’s remarks earlier in May that the victims, euphemistically known as “comfort women” in Japan, were necessary to maintain discipline in the Japanese military, sparking anger including in South Korea.

During their May 21-22 meeting on the periodic report of Japan, committee members repeatedly mentioned Hashimoto’s comments.

The document compiled the committee’s evaluation of Japan’s second report in connection with its compliance with the provisions of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Japan first offered its views in 2007.

The committee said Japan should “publicly acknowledge legal responsibility for the crimes of sexual slavery, and prosecute and punish perpetrators with appropriate penalties.”

The Japanese government had said the issue was not covered by the U.N. convention, which took effect in 1987, as it related to events during the Pacific War.

The committee also advised Japan to compensate the victims and “educate the general public about the issue and include the events in all history textbooks, as a means of preventing further violations” of Japan’s obligations under the convention.

In its previous recommendations to Japan, the committee, which was set up in 1988, said the nation had not provided sufficient relief measures for victims of sexual slavery and violence.

Touching on other concerns, the committee also asked the Japanese government to “consider abolishing” Japan’s pretrial detention system, which allows for detention of a suspect for up to 23 days with limited access to a lawyer.

The committee called on Japan to provide “death row inmates and their families reasonable advance notice of the scheduled date and time of the execution” and urged the country to “consider the possibility of abolishing the death penalty.”

Kyodo News, June 1, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130601p2g00m0dm011000c.html>

Osaka Mayor Hashimoto cancels trip to United States

OSAKA (Kyodo) — Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto said Tuesday he has canceled his planned trip to the United States in mid-June, after causing outrage with his earlier remarks urging U.S. forces to use Japan's legal adult entertainment industry to prevent sexual offenses.

"I have decided to cancel it," Hashimoto told reporters at Osaka city hall, noting his trip would place a burden on the people he was planning to visit and would be of "no merit."

Hashimoto, who co-heads the opposition Japan Restoration Party, has been under fire since making remarks concerning the use of sex-related services by U.S. forces in Japan as well as the Japanese military's wartime brothels.

Hashimoto had planned to visit San Francisco, New York and other cities from June 10 to 16 to meet with U.S. officials as part of efforts to deepen city-level exchanges.

Kyodo News, May 29, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130529p2g00m0dm041000c.html>

Osaka city assembly rejects censure motion against Mayor Hashimoto

OSAKA (Kyodo) — The Osaka city assembly rejected on Thursday a censure motion against Mayor Toru Hashimoto over his remarks on wartime military brothels.

City assembly members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and other parties filed the motion after Hashimoto said earlier this month that anyone can understand that "comfort women," as they are euphemistically known in Japan, were "necessary" for frontline soldiers during the World War II.

After the motion was voted down, Hashimoto, who co-heads the Japan Restoration Party, told reporters he will not resign to run in a mayoral election as a way of eliciting public opinion on his remarks.

"I think what I said was right," Hashimoto said, adding he has no intention to retract his remarks. But he also said, "I made remarks that could be misunderstood. I feel sorry for the citizens."

The assembly members who submitted the motion, including those of the Democratic Party of Japan and the Japanese Communist Party, claimed that Hashimoto's remarks on such women caused disarray within the municipal government, and urged him to seriously reflect on the matter.

Hashimoto's party and the New Komeito party, the largest and second-largest parties in the assembly, opposed the motion.

Kyodo News, May 31, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130531p2g00m0dm034000c.html>

New Komeito opposed Hashimoto censure motion due to feared electoral repercussions

OSAKA — The New Komeito party changed positions and voted against a motion to censure Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto at the municipal assembly on May 30 for his remarks regarding so-called “comfort women”. The move was taken due to fears of possible adverse effects on the House of Councillors election this summer.

The New Komeito, a junior coalition partner of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in national politics, voted against the censure motion after Hashimoto, co-leader of the Japan Restoration Party (JRP), hinted that he would step down as mayor and call a mayoral election on July 21 to coincide with the upper house poll.

Although Hashimoto survived the censure motion, it is not clear how the JRP will fare in the upper house election.

New Komeito members of the Osaka Municipal Assembly initially demanded an apology from Hashimoto for his comfort women remarks, but he did not give a clear-cut response. Party members then decided to vote for the censure motion, which was to be introduced by assembly members from the LDP, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP).

The New Komeito party changed its mind and decided to vote against the motion, however, after Osaka Gov. and JRP Secretary-General Ichiro Matsui commented on May 30 that a mayoral election would be held July 21 if the censure motion was adopted.

The Osaka constituency is an important battleground for the New Komeito within which to field candidates and seek as many votes as possible in the proportional section of the upper house election. According to a senior New Komeito executive, Hashimoto would certainly prevail if a mayoral election were held. Specifically, Hashimoto’s candidacy in a mayoral election would have a synergetic effect on the JRP, which would adversely affect the New Komeito’s election campaign.

Mainichi Shimbun, May 31, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130531p2a00m0na016000c.html>

Hashimoto emphasizes need to apologize to ‘comfort women’, but stands by words

OSAKA — Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, facing bitter criticism for his remarks that the system of so-called “comfort women” was “necessary” for Japan’s soldiers during World War II to maintain discipline in the military, stressed on May 20 for the need to apologize to them.

“Putting aside the question of whether or not they were forcibly recruited, we must apologize to comfort women. That is the major issue.” Hashimoto, nonetheless, had made remarks in the past that could be taken to mean that there is no need for an apology if the women were not forcibly

recruited into sexual servitude. One week has passed since he made the controversial statement on wartime "comfort women" on May 13. While he remains under criticism from other political parties as well as other groups and individuals, Hashimoto has started to put forward his stance that stresses the need to apologize to wartime comfort women.

In his speech at the Japan Restoration Party's fund-raising party in Sakai, Osaka Prefecture, on May 20, Hashimoto tried to differentiate himself from other conservative politicians by saying, "Conservative politicians argued that Japan is not held accountable because there was no forcible recruitment." He repeatedly said that the militaries of other countries such as the United States must squarely look at what they did in the past because they also used women during World War II.

On Aug. 24, 2012, Hashimoto said of the relationship between forced recruitment and apology, "If they were not forcibly brought in to work against their will, that is an issue of ethics. That is not an issue that needs an apology." He went on to say, "I don't think it's wrong to tell them, 'You had a hard time, didn't you?' on the assumption that they were not brought in by force. But sympathy and apology are different things." The tone of his remarks made last August is different from that of what he said about the core issue over the last several days.

Hashimoto made the remarks in August last year in response to then South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's landing on one of the Takeshima islets effectively ruled by South Korea. Citing the Japanese government's view that there is no direct evidence to prove that comfort women were forcibly recruited into sexual servitude, Hashimoto said, "I want the people of South Korea to show any evidence if it is there." On the wartime system of comfort women, Hashimoto said, "When we come to think about it now, the system may have been ethically problematic, but we must discuss what it was like in the context of the historical backdrop of the time."

Hashimoto still likens the wartime comfort women system to the modern-day sex industry. He said, "Even today, the adult entertainment industry is under the supervision of the National Public Safety Commission. Because of their nature, comfort stations needed to be put under state control." He went on to say, "It is a similar business category even in modern society. The adult entertainment business is in every country of the world."

Mainichi Shimbun, May 21, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130521p2a00m0na009000c.html>

Nippon Ishin expels rightwinger Nishimura over prostitute remark

OSAKA — Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) has expelled House of Representatives lawmaker Shingo Nishimura for making disparaging public remarks about the South Korean people, party Secretary General Ichiro Matsui said Monday.

The rightwinger had offered to leave the party after telling fellow lawmakers Friday that "There are swarms of South Korean prostitutes in Japan."

The decision was made Saturday and conveyed to Nishimura on Monday, said Matsui, who is also the governor of Osaka Prefecture.

Kyodo News, May 21, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/21/national/nippon-ishin-expels-rightwinger-nishimura-ov>

Hashimoto's meeting with 2 former sex slaves canceled

OSAKA (Kyodo) — Two South Korean women who were forced to serve as wartime sex slaves for Japanese soldiers canceled a scheduled meeting Friday with Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, saying it is “worthless.”

Hashimoto told reporters at Osaka city hall he is disappointed that the meeting was called off as he wanted to convey to them the true intent of his remarks that sexual servitude was “necessary to maintain discipline” in the Japanese military.

The mayor, who serves as co-head of the opposition Japan Restoration Party, also said he wants to apologize to Americans and the U.S. military for his other remarks urging U.S. military personnel in Japan to make use the country's adult entertainment facilities.

He has admitted having made an improper remark concerning the U.S. military.

While refusing to withdraw his remarks over wartime sexual servitude, Hashimoto has said it is necessary to apologize to women euphemistically known in Japan as “comfort women” regardless of whether they were forced to provide sexual services and had planned to open his meeting with the women to the media.

On Friday, Kim Bok Dong, 87, and Kil Won Ok, 84, who were scheduled to meet with Hashimoto, said in a statement they reject his “performance to apologize” and that it is pointless to meet with him.

Hashimoto said he will respect their wish not to meet him but maintained he has never approved of sexual servitude and refused to retract his related remarks or apologize over them.

The women's support group said at a press conference Friday morning that Hashimoto is trying to restore his reputation by meeting with the two women.

One of the supporters said, “We really toiled over this, but we have determined that he will never sincerely hear what former comfort women have to say and offer an apology.”

Last August, Hashimoto termed the 1993 statement issued by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono, which acknowledged the Japanese military's involvement in recruiting women and apologized to them, as the main cause of embarrassing ties between Japan and South Korea, prompting Kim to visit Japan to seek a meeting with the mayor.

But he was on leave at the time and rejected the request.

On May 13, Hashimoto said anyone can understand that such women were necessary for brave soldiers who had been at the front line of the war. Two days later, Hashimoto said what he meant was that people at that time believed such women were necessary.

Hashimoto has refused to withdraw the remarks, saying not only Japan but many other countries

used women at battlefields and that it is not fair that only Japan is criticized.

Meanwhile, House of Representatives member Shintaro Ishihara, the other co-head of the Japan Restoration Party, held a political fund-raising party at a Tokyo hotel in a bid to restore the party's foothold amid the repercussions of Hashimoto's remarks ahead of the House of Councillors election this summer.

The first party of the kind which the former Tokyo governor has held since he returned to national politics in the general election last December drew about 300 participants, about half the number of people who gathered for similar events he held as governor, according to people close to him.

In his speech at the party that was closed to the press, Ishihara did not mention the comfort women issue and spent a good part of the time talking about maintaining Japan's territorial integrity, they said.

He also sought support for the party in the Tokyo metropolitan assembly election scheduled in June.

Kyodo News, May 24, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130524p2g00m0dm090000c.html>

Former comfort women call off Hashimoto meeting after he refuses to retract remarks

OSAKA — Two women forced into wartime sexual servitude canceled a meeting scheduled for May 24 with Osaka Mayor and Japan Restoration Party co-leader Toru Hashimoto, citing emotional and physical exhaustion following his earlier remarks that the so-called "comfort woman" system had been "necessary in order to uphold military discipline."

The South Korean women, 87-year-old Kim Bok-dong and 84-year-old Kil Won-ok, arrived in Japan on May 17 to begin a nationwide speaking tour on their experiences. They had requested the meeting with Hashimoto to seek an apology and a retraction of his remarks, but a citizen's group organizing the women's visit informed the Osaka Municipal Government earlier this morning that the women would not be calling on the mayor.

"If (Hashimoto) has no intention of retracting the statement, the women feel that there is no reason to meet with him," explained a representative of the group, which is known as the Ianfu ("Comfort Women") Issue Kansai Network.

Standing outside of Osaka City Hall on the morning of May 24, a network representative read aloud the following statement from the women: "We feel that Major Hashimoto should retract his imprudent remarks, which are almost equal to a crime, and offer a public apology. We also sincerely hope for his retirement from politics."

The network also submitted a letter of protest to Hashimoto regarding the issue, signed by some 5,000 individuals.

Network co-leader Bang Chung-ja explained that the two women had decided to cancel the meeting with Hashimoto since they felt there would be no reason to listen to an empty apology, and because they concluded they were likely to merely be used as political tools, she said.

Mainichi Shimbun, May 24, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130524p2a00m0na012000c.html>

Hashimoto to retract remark suggesting U.S. military use sex industry

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto said Saturday he will retract his remark suggesting that U.S. servicemen in Japan use the country's adult entertainment industry in order to prevent them from committing sex offenses against locals, adding that he will apologize to the U.S. people and military.

"My choice of words was inappropriate," Hashimoto, who co-heads the opposition Japan Restoration Party together with former Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara, said in a TV political debate program.

He said he would like to make the apology at a press conference slated for Monday at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo.

On Friday, Hashimoto told reporters that he wanted to apologize to Americans and the U.S. military for the remark, admitting that he had made improper comments.

He reiterated his excuse that it had been his intention to urge the U.S. military to "get serious about holding down the number of sexual offences" against locals in Okinawa Prefecture, which hosts the bulk of U.S. military bases in Japan, and against U.S. women soldiers.

Meanwhile, he did not retract his remark that the system to recruit women into sexual servitude "was necessary" to maintain discipline in the Japanese military during World War II.

Hashimoto reiterated his argument, saying, "It is necessary for each country to review its past, in which it used such women in the battlefield, and not just accuse Japan."

Kyodo News, May 25, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130525p2g00m0dm033000c.html>

Hashimoto's plan to apologize to former 'comfort women' goes awry

The cancelation of the scheduled May 24 meeting between Japan Restoration Party (JRP) co-leader Toru Hashimoto and two former South Korean "comfort women" forced into wartime sexual servitude has thwarted plans to portray Hashimoto appearing humbly before the women, leaving party members smarting from the blow.

On the same day, a legislator belonging to the JRP sent a tweet wherein he criticized the women for canceling the meeting — further hindering the party's efforts to rebuild its damaged image in the wake of the ongoing debacle.

The citizen's group organizing the women's visit to Japan, which is known as the Ianfu ("Comfort

Women”) Issue Kansai Network, held a press conference in Osaka on the same day as the canceled meeting to publicize a statement from the women. They characterized Hashimoto’s remark that “the comfort women system was necessary” as being “almost equal to a crime.” The women called for the retraction of the statement and a public apology, in addition to Hashimoto’s retirement from politics altogether.

The JRP, meanwhile, had been envisioning a twofold scenario regarding how to handle the incident. First, on May 24, it planned to emphasize the party’s deferential stance toward the women through measures including an apology. Next, at a lecture that Hashimoto is scheduled to give on May 27 at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan, the JRP aimed to deliver the message that no evidence exists regarding the Japanese government having forced the women into sexual servitude — and that it is wrong to place blame only upon Japan with respect to this issue.

The party was coveting the chance to meet with the women, given its high hopes that Hashimoto’s public appearance with them would serve to put the conflict to rest. “We can turn the situation around by offering explanations to the women,” a top party executive had commented.

These hopes were crushed by the meeting cancelation, however, prompting a young lawmaker to say dejectedly, “We lost our chance to emerge positively from this situation.”

Hashimoto had told top party leaders that he viewed the meeting as a chance to “consider the matter of legal responsibility.”

While Japan’s official governmental view holds that the ‘comfort women’ issue has already been legally resolved, Hashimoto holds a broader view with respect to the matter of legal responsibility toward the women — thereby losing the opportunity to broach this issue with them as well.

Although Hashimoto denied that he would be making any definitive statements regarding the legal responsibility on May 24, he did reveal that it is still on his mind. “We need to continue thinking deeply about (the issue of responsibility),” he commented.

The Twitter remark in question was made by JRP lawmaker Nariaki Nakayama, who wrote on May 24, “The women were the ones who asked for the meeting, and who have been using the issue politically. I wonder whether they were afraid that Hashimoto would ask them pointed questions regarding the forced coercion? We were just at the point of seeing these ladies being revealed for who they really are. What a lost opportunity.”

The party continues to be divided regarding how to address public opinions with respect to the controversy, with no clear plan of action in sight.

Mainichi Shimbun, May 25, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130525p2a00m0na014000c.html>

Ex-sex slaves won’t meet Hashimoto — Korean pair refuse to be part of mayor’s ‘political game’

OSAKA — Two former South Korean “comfort women” canceled their planned Friday meeting with

Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) coleader Toru Hashimoto, saying through a representative that they did not want to become his political pawns.

Kim Bok Dong, 87, and Kil Won Ok, 85, are currently traveling around Japan and speaking about their experiences as sex slaves for the Imperial Japanese Army. They are due to address a public symposium Saturday in Osaka and had been expected to meet with Hashimoto, the city's mayor, to call him out over his May 13 remarks that the wartime comfort women system, which was believed started in the early 1930s during Japan's conquest of China, had been necessary.

But as the domestic and international backlash against Hashimoto escalated, he refused to apologize for his position, even as pressure on him to cancel the meeting from members of his own party grew. On Thursday, he insisted the meeting with Kim and Kil was still on.

"It's a real shame that I couldn't meet the former comfort women today. But their feelings are what is most important. The women probably had a lot of things they wanted to say to me, and want to say to Japan," Hashimoto said.

The mayor was notably more subdued Friday and softer in his choice of words than he has been in recent days, especially in front of numerous South Korean and other overseas media present at his press briefing. But he insisted the problem was one that both Japan and South Korea still had to resolve based on past treaties both had agreed upon.

He added that his remarks on the comfort women do not reflect the official policy of Nippon Ishin, and are his own thoughts.

Around 100 supporters of the comfort women gathered at a rally Friday morning in Osaka's Nakanoshima Park. A dozen or so rightwingers, including several young women, were seen near City Hall, waving signs saying the comfort women were not forced into prostitution. Police kept the two sides apart.

Members of Nihon Gun Ianfu Mondai Kansai Network (Japanese Military Comfort Women Problem Kansai Network), the nongovernmental organization that brought Kim and Kil to the region, read out two statements, the first from the two women and a second saying the group was not going to engage in a media performance and that it was seeking Hashimoto's resignation as mayor.

"As two comfort women survivors, and in advance of this summer's Upper House election in Japan, in order to call for a solution to the comfort women problem, which has once again arisen among Japanese people and in the political world, we're traveling to Fukuyama (Hiroshima Prefecture), Okinawa, Hiroshima, Okayama, Osaka and Nara to convey the truths of history to Japanese society," network spokeswoman Pang Chung Ja said on behalf of Kim and Kil.

"We understood that Mayor Hashimoto himself would withdraw and apologize for his comment, and agreed to meet them on the morning of May 24." On May 19, we heard clear reports that Nippon Ishin no Kai had agreed not to censure Hashimoto over his comments that the comfort women were necessary. After this, he continued his position of denying (the comfort women) were forced (into prostitution by the government).

"According to the information received from Japanese reporters during our tour, Hashimoto was preparing to use the media for an apology performance. We cannot exchange the continued pain of the victims or the facts of history for an apology performance by Mayor Hashimoto. It's not necessary to get trampled again."

To Hashimoto, the group also had a message: "We are seeking an apology and a retraction of your

comments, and we will not approve of the victims being used politically,” said Sumiko Nishimura, also of the network. “The victims are criticizing Hashimoto by asking him how he can say there is no proof when they experienced the comfort women system and firmly assert the past cannot be changed through (his statements).” There is no other path left for but for you (Hashimoto) to resign,” Nishimura said. During their tour of Japan, Kim and Kil spoke to audiences about the horrors they experienced as young sex slaves in China, serving the Japanese military in Canton, in Kim’s case, and in Harbin, in Kil’s. Though Kim was only 14 and Kil 11, they have testified that they were beaten and made to serve as sex slaves. “Could Hashimoto force his own daughter to become a sex slave out of necessity? The past cannot be changed by false claims,” Kim said in a rally in Okinawa earlier this week.

Hashimoto meanwhile claimed Friday that he had never said he favored the comfort women system, and that his comments were misreported abroad.

“This is what I wanted to tell the former comfort women today. I, personally, never said we needed the comfort women system and I never said I approved of it. I was talking about it in the context of the time, the Second World War, and the fact that various countries’ armies used women,” he said, repeating what he previously iterated.

Both Japan and South Korea had a responsibility to make clear what happened, Hashimoto said, suggesting a bilateral group of Japanese and South Korean scholars be set up to take testimony and to research the historical archives to clarify what happened.

Yet while Hashimoto will not retract his remarks regarding the comfort women, he said that he did owe the American people an apology for his remark that U.S. military personnel in Okinawa should use more sex establishments as a way of controlling their sexual energy.

“That remark was inappropriate,” he said.

Hashimoto over wartime sexual servitude remarks

Eric Johnston, *Japan Times*, May 25, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/25/national/ex-comfort-women-citing-political-game-cancel-meet-with-hashimoto/#.UaL58tiz640>

Osaka mayor denies he views “comfort women” as needed by Japan military

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto denied on Monday that he views the “comfort women” system of enforced sexual slavery during World War II as necessary for the Japanese military, in attempting to explain his opinions to the foreign media in Japan.

“It was wrongly reported that I myself thought it necessary for armed forces to use women and that I accepted this when I made the remark against a historical background,” Hashimoto told a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan in Tokyo in a bid to stem the outrage caused by his comments on the issue of Japan’s system of wartime military brothels.

Hashimoto’s comments regarding women euphemistically known in Japan as “comfort women” were

widely reported by the Japanese and foreign media and sparked criticism both in and outside Japan.

He also stressed that Japan must reflect on its own offenses against women during the war but urged other countries to look at similar actions by their own troops, saying it is unfair to blame Japan alone for the “comfort women” system.

Hashimoto has claimed that other countries, including the United States, Britain, France and Germany, also had military-run brothels for their troops during the war.

He also apologized to the U.S. military and its people for his earlier remarks urging U.S. forces to use Japan’s legal adult entertainment industry to prevent the recurrence of sex offenses reported in Okinawa and said he retracts such comments.

The mayor, who co-heads the Japan Restoration Party and is known for his outspokenness, said he was giving the press conference at the FCCJ in order to provide a “thorough” explanation of his views and comments, which he said were taken out of context.

When asked whether he intends to step down from his post as co-head of the Japan Restoration Party, he indicated he will seek a public mandate in the upcoming upper house election and that the outcome will determine whether he stays on in his post.

Kyodo News, May 27, 2013(

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130527p2g00m0dm072000c.html>

(Full text of Osaka Mayor Hashimoto’s speech:

[//www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/27/national/full-text-of-osaka-mayor-hashimotos-speech/#.UaQaDtiz640](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/27/national/full-text-of-osaka-mayor-hashimotos-speech/#.UaQaDtiz640)

South Korea’s foreign minister raps Hashimoto’s remarks as ‘shameful’

SEOUL (Kyodo) — South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung Se on Monday rapped Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto’s latest remarks on the so-called comfort women issue as “embarrassing and shameful” and said Japanese politicians “retrogressive words and deeds” pose obstacles for high-level bilateral exchanges with Japan.

“By making such remarks, Japan will be further isolated in the international community,” Yun told a press conference when asked to respond to Hashimoto’s suggestion, made earlier Monday in a press conference in Tokyo, that the comfort women issue be settled at the International Court of Justice.

“Many see such remarks as being far below common sense, embarrassing and shameful. If he made such remarks at the U.N. General Assembly or the U.S. Congress, that would cause serious damage to Japan’s many conscientious people,” Yun said.

“It’s considerably disappointing to see various developments in Japan, and more recently, retrogressive words and deeds are pouring cold water on our government’s will to improve friendly ties with Japan,” he added.

“Unless this atmosphere is improved, not only the top-level, but other various high-level exchanges

will not be easy to be made.”

Yun lamented that the Japanese government has not responded to Seoul’s call for bilateral talks on compensation for comfort women.

South Korea views women who provided sex to Japanese soldiers in so-called comfort stations in military facilities during World War II as sex slaves, but the Japanese governments insist there is no evidence that the women were coerced.

However, Yun also stressed the importance of deepening cooperation with Japan in the economic, private-level and cultural areas in the wake of souring of bilateral ties over issues relating to Japan’s 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

Yun said Seoul will remain in close contact with Tokyo in dealing with North Korea-related issues, while dealing “resolutely” with issues related to history.

In a related development, four South Korean female lawmakers earlier Monday departed for Japan to protest against its rightwing politicians’ suggestions that the Japanese military was justified in using comfort women during World War II, Yonhap News Agency reported.

“These reckless remarks on sex slaves recur because the Japanese government has not fundamentally repented for its colonial rule over Korea,” You Seung Hee, a lawmaker from the main opposition Democratic Party who is among the four, told Yonhap by phone.

“We will strongly urge the Japanese government to apologize and provide legal compensation,” she said.

You, a member of a parliamentary committee on women and family affairs, will visit Japan together with Kim Hee Jung, Ryu Ji Young and Kim Hyun, all of whom are lawmakers from the ruling Saenuri Party and members of the same committee.

The lawmakers plan to present Japanese lawmakers with a resolution You submitted to the National Assembly last week that condemns the Japanese politicians’ remarks on comfort women and calls for an official apology.

They also plan to visit the Philippines later this week to meet with Filipino victims of Japan’s sex slavery and meet with Philippine lawmakers over ways to jointly handle the issue.

Kyodo News, May 27, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130527p2g00m0dm081000c.html>
