14 January 2016

Letter of Demands to the Japanese Government

On December 28 2015, the Foreign Ministers of South Korea and Japan announced an agreement stating that it is a “final and irreversible” settlement of the Japanese military sexual slavery (“comfort women”) issue. President Park and Prime Minister Abe approved the Agreement via a phone call. Meanwhile, the Agreement is largely deemed as a diplomatic humiliation by the survivors and citizens.

The survivors of the Japanese military sexual slavery and many citizens wanted a rapid and just resolution of the issue, so that the victims can redeem their honor after more than half a century of pain and struggle. However, the settlement was not rightful but a poor, hastily done diplomatic collusion, hurting the survivors, who have waited for long, yet again.

First, the Japanese government expressed that it is aware of its responsibilities as the military was involved in the sexual slavery which hurt honor and dignity of many women at the time. However, the statement included a vague expression saying that the government “aware of its responsibilities,” and the “apology” was not executed directly by Prime Minister Abe but simply read by the foreign minister representing Mr. Abe. Such attitude makes us doubt whether the apology was sincere .The Agreement did not specify who led and managed the sexual slavery while it was executed systematically by the colonial Japanese government. This is not a just and rightful response to the survivors’ demands, requesting the Japanese government of its legal responsibility since 1992.

Second, the Japanese government did not directly provide reparation to the individual survivors. It only provided a fund to establish a foundation while pushing the responsibility of managing it to the Korean government. The fund is not a reparation in any manner. The 1 billion yen, which its purpose is vague, cannot lead to a “final” conclusion of the issue.

In addition, if the Japanese government truly wants the resolution of the military sexual slavery issue and hence sincerely apologizes for the war crime, it could not have demanded the removal of the Peace Monument in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. The Monument is a symbol of hope of the survivors and citizens, who wants the resolution of the “comfort women” issue and end of war

crimes.
Prime Minister Abe and Foreign Minister Kishida have said multiple times that "[they] understand that the Monument will be removed," pressuring the removal, but it is absurd.

An agreement which does not specify the responsibility of the Japanese government, the perpetrator, is not an "apology." The "apology" made only to the president, but not to the victims, is not a sincere apology. The agreement which demands the removal of the Peace Monument, a symbol of peace, is not a "resolution." As long as there is no specification on legal responsibilities, there is no "final resolution."

The Japanese government tries to militarize itself by distorting and hiding historical facts on colonial aggression, including getting rid of the facts on military sexual slavery from its textbooks. History distortion, repeating militarism, and demanding the international community not to raise opposition against such acts are continuous violence against the "comfort women" survivors.

The Japanese government must stop violating human rights of the victims for the sake of historical justice, and should come up with resolutions based on the demands of the survivors.

The survivors have continuously worked towards the resolution of the military sexual slavery issue. They are: 1. Acknowledgement of the war crime; 2. Truth finding; 3. Official apology; 4. Legal reparations; 5. Punishment of those responsible; 6. Recording in history textbooks; and, 7. Establishment of memorial statues and museums.

However, the recent agreement between the two governments does not contain any of the seven elements. Hence, we demand that the Japanese government and Prime Minister Abe to dismiss the Agreement and come up with a new settlement based on the seven demands to provide a fundamental resolution as soon as possible.

If the Japanese government decides to ignore the demands of the military sexual slavery survivors and the international civil society, we warn that it will have to face a strong opposition from the voices of justice.

Organizations and Individuals of the Nationwide Actions

Demanding Annulment of the Korea-Japan Agreement

on the Japanese Military Sexual Slavery Issue and Pursuing Righteous Resolution