

Civil society calls for truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition towards Japan's military sexual slavery during WWII

Oral Statement of Human Rights Now

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The institutionalized sexual slavery was established and administered by the Japanese military during World War II as it was proven with enough evidence and testimonies. The government of Japan is obliged (1) to publicly acknowledge legal responsibility for the crime and to offer an official apology; (2) to provide the victims and survivors full and effective redress and reparation; (3) to investigate the facts thoroughly and disclose related materials; and (4) to prosecute and punish perpetrators with appropriate penalties. However, none of these obligations has been fulfilled.

Human Rights Now (HRN) would like to express its grave concern about persistent and escalating attempts by the Japanese government to evade its obligations through continued denial of the facts, re-traumatization of the victims, and refusal to follow the recommendations made by the UN bodies and mechanisms. In fact, the attitude of the government of Japan has worsened recently. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has joined other politicians in claiming that there is 'no evidence' of forced conscription of women by the Japanese authorities. He even suggested that he would no longer stand by Japan's apology for its war-time aggression, saying there is no established definition of "aggression". Mayor of Osaka City has stated that 'comfort women' were "necessary" to maintain discipline of Japan's wartime troops and provide relief for soldiers. The Abe cabinet went further by officially announcing that there was no obligation to follow the treaty bodies' recommendations as long as they were not legally binding, when the Committee on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the Committee against Torture (CAT) urged Japan last May to take immediate and effective legislative and administrative measures to find a victim-centered solution to this matter.

HRN welcomes the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on the issues of relevance and hopes that Mr. Greiff will make a visit to Japan to investigate the situation. At the same time, HRN strongly feels the need to create an additional mechanism that will enable the Human Rights Council to effectively prevent UN member states, particularly the members of this Council, from concealing or denying the facts relating to sexual violence under armed conflict, from justifying the atrocities, from neglecting to provide remedies to victims, and from insulting and re-traumatizing victims through such acts.