



GLOBAL V-DAY CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE TO 'COMFORT WOMEN': SURVIVORS OF JAPAN'S MILITARY SEXUAL SLAVERY

August 2005 marks the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII. However, for those women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military between 1932 and 1945, there has been no escape from the war and no answer for its harm. In South Korea, the elderly 'comfort women' survivors have held demonstrations in front of the Japanese embassy every Wednesday for 13 years, calling for justice and reparations for the unanswered war crimes.

In support of these efforts, V-Day has joined with organizations across East and Southeast Asia to launch the Global V-Day Campaign for Justice to 'Comfort Women'. Given the 21st century's escalating armed conflicts, the precedent of impunity for wartime sexual violence cannot be tolerated. V-Day is proud to host the campaign's kick-off event on February 28, 2005, at the UN Millennium Plaza Hotel in New York City.

A Global Campaign

The Global Campaign will peak with simultaneous demonstrations held in front of Japanese embassies around the world on August 10, 2005. Celebrity benefit V-Day performances of "The Vagina Monologues" will be staged in Tokyo and Seoul to bring press coverage to the campaign's political pressure. A petition with one million signatures calling for Japan's accountability will be presented to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Finally, the Global Campaign will culminate in an International Spotlight on 'Comfort Women' at every V-Day 2006 benefit performance of "The Vagina Monologues" held at college campuses and community centers around the world.

The History of the 'Comfort Women'

The euphemism 'comfort women' was coined by imperial Japan to refer to young females of various ethnic and national backgrounds who were forced to offer sexual services to the Japanese troops during the Asia/Pacific Wars between 1932 and 1945. Some were minors sold into 'comfort stations'; others were deceptively recruited by middlemen; still more were detained and forcibly abducted. Estimates of the number of 'comfort women' range between 50,000 to 200,000.

In the early 1990s, Korean victims of Japan's military sexual slavery broke their silence and came forward nearly a half century after WWII, followed by other survivors in China, Taiwan, North Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and Timor L'Este. As the aging survivors are dying off one by one, the Japanese government still denies legal responsibility. There have been no formal apologies, and as recently as May 2001, no mention of the imperial army's system of sexual slavery during WWII has appeared in Japan's history textbooks.

On the Campaign Trail

The Global V-Day Campaign for Justice to 'Comfort Women' launches in New York on February 28, 2005, during the landmark session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women reviewing 10 years since the UN's World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The V-Day Campaign will culminate in a Global Day of Action on August 10, 2005, when simultaneous demonstrations will be held in front of Japanese embassies around the world as part of the observance of the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII. Leading up

to August 10, 2005, specific countries will carry out public activities to bring attention to the demands of the 'comfort women' survivors, such as:

- a global petition to be signed by 1 million and presented to the UN (South Korea)
- 60 days of demonstrations and survivors' testimonies leading up to the 60th anniversary of the war's end (the Netherlands)
- a street march and folk song competition featuring the survivors and national celebrities (Taiwan)
- photographic exhibits, film tours, testimonial books (Japan, Philippines, and Taiwan)
- campaign for 'comfort women' history in textbooks (Japan and South Korea)
- V-Day benefit performances of "The Vagina Monologues" with education about the 'comfort women' history and their struggle for justice (Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, South Korea)
- construction of museums to document the enslavement of civilians as 'comfort women' and their ongoing struggle for justice from the Japanese government (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan)

To draw a spotlight on the issue, the Campaign will feature V-Day celebrity benefit performances of "The Vagina Monologues" in Seoul, Korea, and Tokyo, Japan, in July 2005, featuring 'comfort women's' voices in a monologue written by Playwright/V-Day Founder Eve Ensler. With these benefit performances on behalf of the 'comfort women,' V-Day unites activism with performance art to open dialogue, draw international attention and support, and reverse efforts by nationalists in Japan to erase from history one of the most horrendous war crimes against women in the 20th century.

As patterns of systematic rape and sexual violence continue today in places of armed conflict such as Sudan, Congo, and Iraq, the importance of recognizing the human rights atrocity committed against women during WWII is paramount. **The survivors' common wish is see an official apology and compensation from the Japanese government during their lifetime.**

Partner Organizations in the Global V-Day Campaign for Justice to 'Comfort Women'

❖ The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (South Korea)

http://www.womenandwar.net/english/menu_01.php

It is estimated that 80% of the 'comfort women' were forcibly abducted from Korea. Since 1991, when a Korean grandma gave the world's first testimony of the former 'comfort women' system during WWII, 215 surviving Korean victims have come forward. A coalition of 22 organizations, the Korean Council works directly with the aging survivors providing medical support, counseling, shelter, and local accompaniment by volunteers. Every Wednesday since 1992, survivors have held a peaceful demonstration in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul for the restoration of dignity and human rights of 'comfort women.' Each week, they are met by a row of riot police standing behind shields and helmets. Waiting for justice, 89 of the "grandmas" have died, still unanswered.

In 2004, the Korean Council broke ground on a War and Women's Human Rights Museum. During 2005, the coalition members are collecting 1 million signatures on a global petition to demand that Japan take legal responsibility for crimes of Military Sexual Slavery and to protest Japan's aim to become member of UN Security Council. Korean Council will present the signed petition to the UN High Commission on Human Rights, to the ILO General Secretary, and then to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Korean Council will host a celebrity V-Day benefit performance of "The Vagina Monologues" in Seoul in July, leading up to the Global Day of Action at Japanese embassies on Wednesday, August 10, 2005.

❖ Japan V-Day Steering Committee (Japan)

<http://www1.jca.apc.org/vaww-net-japan/english/>

<http://www.jca.apc.org/ajwrc/>

Efforts of Japanese groups to realize just remedies for the victims of the 'comfort women' system have been blocked by stonewall attitudes in the government and domestic courts and by harsh right-wing attacks. Apologies or expressions of remorse from the Japanese government have consistently avoided legal responsibility and have only been made to individual survivors who accepted the "atonement money" from the Asian Women's Fund (AWF), a charity set up by the government for 'comfort women' in response to public outcry in the 1990s. However, the actual money for the AWF was collected from individuals in Japanese civil society, not from the Japanese government. Amounts paid by the Fund have been unequal among the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Netherlands.

The behind-closed-doors efforts of the AWF have been unwelcome to many survivors in addition to the governments of Taiwan and South Korea, all of whom demand compensation to the survivors as a legitimate and legal remedy, not as charity. Furthermore, AWF has excluded China, North Korea, Malaysia, East Timor, Burma, Thailand, and Papua New Guinea from the “atonement projects.” In seven years, only 285 ‘comfort women’ survivors accepted the atonement money of the AWF, which will close operations in 2007.

To bring to Tokyo the Global V-Day Campaign for Justice to ‘Comfort Women,’ the Japan V-Day Steering Committee has been formed, sharing the goals to: (i) shame the Japanese government to address responsibility for the crimes; (ii) provide direct support to survivors by raising awareness and funds; and (iii), honor the courage and efforts of the survivors. In addition to the Global Day of Action on August 10, 2005, their activities will include a V-Day art event, symposium, press conference, and lobbying meetings with members of the Diet.

❖ **Asian Centre for Women’s Human Rights (Philippines)**

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Of the 300 or more Filipina survivors of Japanese military sexual violence who are still living, 200 were forced to serve as ‘comfort women’ and 100 were victims of the mass rape that occurred at Mananque in 1942. During the 1990s, ASCENT documented the experiences of Filipino comfort women, eventually filing a case against the Japanese government for its abuses. In 1998, ASCENT’s Executive Director addressed the UN at the historic conference establishing the Permanent International Criminal Court, urging it to act on the complaints of women survivors of rape and sexual slavery.

Today ASCENT is organizing several Filipina ‘comfort women’ groups into one coalition to unite their efforts for survivors. Together, the members of the coalition will: (i) provide advocacy and legal assistance to the victims in various justice mechanisms; (ii) establish a cultural museum and an archive of documents by and about ‘comfort women’; and (iii) provide welfare and assistance to the Filipina ‘comfort women’ survivors. In addition to the demonstration at the Japanese embassy on the Global Day of Action on August 10, plans in 2005 include an exhibition of artwork and paintings by ‘comfort women’ survivors, and local performance of “The Vagina Monologues.”

❖ **Taipei Women’s Rescue Foundation (Taiwan)**

<http://www.twrf.org.tw/>

In 1992, 66 ‘comfort women’ survivors in Taiwan started their movement to demand justice from Japan, and participated in a joint lawsuit against the Japanese government. Estimates in Taiwan indicate that at least 1,200 women—Taiwanese, Hakkanese, and aboriginal—were victimized as ‘comfort women’ between 1938-1945 and sent overseas to Japanese military stations. The Taipei Women’s Rescue Foundation successfully lobbied the Taiwanese government to provide financial support to survivors for housing, a monthly subsidy, and reimbursement of medical expenses. For seven years, TWRF has also maintained home visits, telephone calls, and group therapy to all the “grandmas.”

Currently, 32 survivors are alive today, age 83 on average. Seventy percent have medical problems related to their suffering and age, including urinary and gynecological diseases. Poverty is a shared trouble for all the grandmas. Nonetheless, the survivors go to high schools across Taiwan to speak out on the history of Japan’s wartime ‘comfort stations’ and the victimization of women. In addition to constructing a memorial museum that documents the ‘comfort women’s’ experiences and women’s human rights, the Taipei Women’s Rescue Foundation plans: (i) a folk song competition featuring local celebrities and survivors; (ii) a photo exhibition in Taipei of the former ‘comfort women’s’ experiences, to tour next in three cities of Japan and be published in book form; and (iii) a street march of ‘comfort women’ survivors and supporters, going from the photo exhibition to the Japanese embassy for a demonstration.

❖ **FOKUPERS – Communication Forum for East Timorese Women (Timor L’Este)**

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FOKUPERS works to support and empower East Timorese women who became victims of violence as a result of the oppression and occupation of the Indonesian or Japanese military, including ex-political

prisoners, war widows, and the 'comfort women' survivors of the WWII era. FOKUPERS began working with 'comfort women' survivors since 2000 when they wrote an indictment for the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery, and helped two survivors attend the final decree in The Hague in December 2001.

To draw attention to the past history of Japanese occupation, FOKUPERS with 11 other NGOs refused the presence of the Japanese Defense Force in Timor L'Este in 2001. Seeking justice for the 'comfort women' victims, FOKUPERS addressed a letter to President Xanana Gusmao and held a meeting on the matter with the Prime Minister in 2002. In addition to demonstrating on the Global Day of Action on August 10, 2005, FOKUPERS hopes to focus public awareness on the struggle of 'comfort women' survivors through a televised talk show, publication of a book of oral histories, or by obtaining funding for a documentary film.

❖ **Indonesian Women's Association for Justice (Indonesia)**

<http://www.lbh-apik.or.id/exsum-pemb.htm>

After founding the Indonesian Women's Association for Justice, called APIK, Nursyahbani (Nur) Katjasung became the prosecutor for the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery. In March 2001, the Japanese Federation of Bar Associations ruled on APIK's complaint and recommended to Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi that the apology be made and measures taken to provide the 'comfort women' survivors with reparations for the harm inflicted. APIK has translated both the Tribunal judgment and "The Vagina Monologues" into Bahasa language for wide dissemination.

Today Nur is a member of the National Assembly and veteran performer of "The Vagina Monologues," which has been performed in several cities and by a cast at the Islamic University. In 2003, APIK brought a 'comfort woman' survivor before President Megawati, but she did not act on the issue before the end of her term in office. In addition to holding a hearing with Parliament and a demonstration on the Global Day of Action for 'comfort women' on August 10, 2005, APIK is celebrating International Women's Day with a V-Day performance of "The Vagina Monologues" and launching a yearlong campaign against violence against women.

❖ **Stichting Japanese Ereschulden - Japanese Honorary Debts Foundation (The Netherlands)**

<http://www.jesinfo.org>

During the Japanese occupation of former Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) from 1942 to 1945 some 300,000 Dutch citizens suffered from the brutal and systematic violation of human rights by military and civil servants of the then Japanese Government. Many of the victims were locked up in concentration camps, where death penalties and starvation were common practice. Women and boys were conscripted as sex slaves. Most of these victims disappeared and were never found. Today there are approximately 300 Dutch 'comfort women' survivors, only 70 or 80 known publicly.

Since 1994, the Foundation of Japanese Honorary Debts (JES) has held monthly demonstrations at the Japanese embassy in The Hague calling for acknowledgment from the Japanese government in the form of a public statement of regret and compensation to men, women, and children sent to the concentration camps. Leading up to the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII and the global demonstration for 'comfort women' on August 10, 2005, JES will mobilize 60 Days of Action in front of the Japanese embassy in The Hague, coupled with weekly testimonies from survivors published in Dutch newspapers.

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