

Comfort women

European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2007 on Justice for the 'Comfort Women' (sex slaves in Asia before and during World War II)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in 2007,
 - having regard to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children (1921), to which Japan is a signatory,
 - having regard to ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour (1930), ratified by Japan,
 - having regard to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security,
 - having regard to the report by Gay McDougall, UN Special Rapporteur on Systematic Rape, Sexual Slavery and Slave-like Practices during Armed Conflict (22 June 1998),
 - having regard to the conclusions and recommendations of the 38th session of the UN Committee Against Torture (9-10 May 2007),
 - having regard to the Report of a Study of Dutch Government Documents on the Forced Prostitution of Dutch Women in the Dutch East Indies During the Japanese Occupation, The Hague (2004),
 - having regard to the resolutions on the comfort women adopted by the US Congress on 30 July 2007, and by the Canadian Parliament on 29 November 2007,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the government of Japan, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s until the end of World War II, officially ordered the acquisition of young women, who became known to the world as *ianfu* or 'comfort women', for the sole purpose of sexual servitude to its Imperial Armed Forces,
- B. whereas the 'comfort women' system included gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death or eventual suicide, in one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century,
- C. whereas the dozens of 'comfort women' cases brought before Japanese courts have all ended in the dismissal of plaintiffs' claims for compensation, despite court judgments acknowledging the Imperial Armed Forces' direct and indirect involvement, and the State's responsibility,
- D. whereas most of the victims of the 'comfort women' system have passed away, and the remaining survivors are 80 or more years of age;

- E. whereas over the past years numerous high-ranking members and officials of the Japanese Government have made apologetic statements on the 'comfort women' system, while some Japanese officials have recently expressed a regrettable desire to dilute or rescind those statements,
 - F. whereas the full extent of the sexual slavery system has never been fully disclosed by the government of Japan and some new required readings used in Japanese schools try to minimise the tragedy of the 'comfort women' and other Japanese war crimes during World War II,
 - G. whereas the mandate of the Asian Women's Fund, a government-initiated private foundation whose aim was the implementation of programmes and projects to compensate for the abuse and suffering of the 'comfort women', came to an end on 31 March 2007,
1. Welcomes the excellent relationship between the European Union and Japan based on the mutually shared values of a multi-party democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights;
 2. Expresses its solidarity with the women who were victims of the 'comfort women' system for the duration of World War II;
 3. Welcomes the statements by Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono in 1993 and by the then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama in 1995 on the 'comfort women', as well as the resolutions of the Japanese parliament (the Diet) of 1995 and 2005 expressing apologies for wartime victims, including victims of the 'comfort women' system;
 4. Welcomes the Japanese Government's initiative to establish, in 1995, the now-dissolved Asian Women's Fund, a largely government-funded private foundation, which distributed some 'atonement money' to several hundred 'comfort women', but considers that this humanitarian initiative cannot satisfy the victims' claims of legal recognition and reparation under public international law, as stated by the UN Special Rapporteur Gay McDougall in her above-mentioned report of 1998;
 5. Calls on the Japanese Government formally to acknowledge, apologise, and accept historical and legal responsibility, in a clear and unequivocal manner, for its Imperial Armed Forces' coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as 'comfort women', during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s until the end of World War II;
 6. Calls on the Japanese Government to implement effective administrative mechanisms to provide reparations to all surviving victims of the 'comfort women' system and the families of its deceased victims;
 7. Calls on the Japanese parliament (the Diet) to take legal measures to remove existing obstacles to obtaining reparations before Japanese courts; in particular, the right of individuals to claim reparations from the government should be expressly recognised in national law, and cases for reparations for the survivors of sexual slavery, as a crime under international law, should be prioritised, taking into account the age of the survivors;
 8. Calls on the government of Japan to refute publicly any claims that the subjugation and enslavement of 'comfort women' never occurred;

9. Encourages the Japanese people and government to take further steps to recognise the full history of their nation, as is the moral duty of all countries, and to foster awareness in Japan of its actions in the 1930s and 1940s, including in relation to ‘comfort women’; calls on the government of Japan to educate current and future generations about those events;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, to the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Japanese Government and Parliament, the UN Human Rights Council, the governments of the ASEAN States, to the governments of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, the People’s Republic of China, Taiwan and Timor-Leste.