

International Association of Democratic Lawyers

Speech of the representative of Japan (IADL)

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61<sup>st</sup> Session of UN Commission on Human Rights

Sub: Sex slavery

Chairperson,

Since the international organization became aware of the "Japanese military sexual slavery" for the first time in history- the most serious violation of human rights of women , ten years have passed. UN Commission on Human Rights and the U.N. Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights adopted several resolutions and recommendation during these years, in order to settle the issue appropriately. By 1996, Special Rapporteur Radhika Coomaraswamy submitted the report on violence against women with strong recommendation to the Japanese government, which was adopted by the Commission.

ILO concluded that Japanese military sexual slavery was violation of the ILO Convention No.29 which forbids the forced labour. ILO Stated, as Japan ratified the convention in 1930, Japan has responsibility to take appropriate relief measures. However, the Japanese government has taken no measures for resolving the matter.

Or more accurately, the government has coldheartedly kept its distance from its earlier position on the issue.

Today, we cannot but notice the systematic and official attempt to cover up the past crimes in tune with the extreme right wing tendency from accelerated militaristic nationalism in the Japanese society. Although Japan and the Government of Japan admitted its involvement with the crime of Japanese military sexual slavery in August of 1993, it still refuses to take the state responsibility under international public law.

In order to shake off the state responsibility off, the Government used the smoke screen of NGO, Asian Women's Fund was established in 1995, but this was regarded by many victims and international society as an inappropriate approach. Some Japanese Ministers and other major political figures were the first to make insulting remarks about the victims, distorting facts and whitewashing the crime.

In order to hide, distort and glorify the inhumane atrocity Japan committed, political pressure was on the mass media.

A while ago, NHK (Japan's National Public Broadcasting Company) produced a TV program about "2000 Women's International War Crimes Tribunal for Prosecution of Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law in association with the Japanese Military Sexual Slavery" with the support of citizen's groups. A scandal is recently revealed that Shinzo Abe of Liberal Democratic Party, the current party secretary general together with other right wing politicians pressured NHK to produce the TV film in such a way to conceal the crimes as well as

to make it look like that Japan has no state responsibility.

With regard to this episode, we emphasize the following point. Mr. Abe, in order to avoid the accusation that he politically interfered the mass media, he said as follows without any ground whatsoever. "Participants of the Tribunal from North Korea are undercover agents, and they were in Japan to make North Korea look victimized. The tribunal is part of their scheme and conspiracy. "

This is nothing but insult to the Women's War Crime Tribunal, which was supported individually by reputable lawyers, ridiculing the international efforts of citizens and legal experts. Moreover, it is also an open challenge to international judicial circles.

Today, the term "comfort women" are erased from the textbooks in almost all prefectures in Japan so that the crimes committed by old Japan may be kept secret and the information about them remain distorted. And the Government welcomes such trend and supports it openly. Such insensitive attitude of the Government caused again great damage to the health of a few survivors, shortened their lives, and increased anguish two to three times more.

More than the half of the North Korean survivors which testified the crime of Japan openly died in the last ten years. Yet, survivors alive are protesting against the position of Japan with their sharp tongue even today. They appeal to the Japanese government to make appropriate apology and compensation. They want to settle old scores, and to recover the lost dignity while they are still alive.

However, Japan turns a deaf ear to the demand of international society and victim-survivors. Japan is indulged in cheating itself by whitewashing its past crimes and glorifying the past behaviors. That is because Japan is aiming to build a structure on which Japan can advance abroad under the title of political and military super power.

Unrepentant of the sinful past, Japan makes a fuss about its share of the donation to the United Nations, and claims that Japan is qualified to be a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council because of large financial contribution.

Japan's attitude constitutes gross insult and contempt to countless victims killed by the atrocity of Japan. It is a great challenge for the United Nation to recover dignity and human rights of victims and to realize justice on a global scale and it requires honest and sincere efforts of all.

For the purpose of sounding alarm to the Japanese government which stubbornly ignores demand and recommendation of international society and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, and which avoid the responsibility for an apology and compensation to victims;

And for the purpose of recovering the dignity of the survivor victims who has very short time to live, we propose as follows;

The U.N. Commission on Human Rights,

1.; Investigate the present conditions of victims and the measures taken by the Japanese government for recovery of the damage done to all former Japanese military sexual slavery and adopt a resolution which urges Japan to follow the recommendations immediately in the report prepared by h the special Rapporteur on the violence against women at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

2. Adopt a resolution urging the Japanese government to include military sexual slavery in school textbooks as historical facts. :

3. Adopt a recommendation calling on the Japanese Government to take serious measures against the local activities to distort the essence of a Japanese military sexual slavery by derogatory remarks.

In order to give relief to the survivor victims who passed away one by one every year, we expect that the UN Commission on Human Rights plays a constructive role in resolving the comfort women issue.

Thank you for listening.