

Annex 2. International Petition for Berlin Statue of Peace (signed by 31,317 individuals and 559 organizations)

We Will Not Tolerate the Pressure to Demolish the Statue of Peace in Berlin, Germany!

We Strongly Urge Bezirksamt Mitte to Resolve to Permanently Preserve the Statue of Peace!

At the Japan-Germany summit meeting on April 28, Japan's Prime Minister Kishida asked German Chancellor Scholz to remove the Statue of Peace in Berlin. The Japanese government waited 10 days thereafter to announce the demand as an exclusive report in the Sankei Shimbun on May 10, which was the day of the inauguration ceremony of the Korean president. It is highly unusual for one country's prime minister to publicly exert pressure for the removal of the Statue of Peace installed by citizens, at a summit meeting with another country's prime minister. At a press conference on the following day, May 11, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno reconfirmed the fact that Japan requested Germany's cooperation by saying, in essence, that 'Prime Minister Kishida considers it very regrettable that the Statue of Peace continues to stand.' Secretary Matsuno added, "We will continue to contact various stakeholders to persistently explain the Japanese government's position and demand that the Statue be promptly removed."

In an 'exclusive' report dated June 14, the Sankei Shimbun reported that "a Korean civic group formed to rectify the 'lie' of the comfort women issue will visit Berlin, Germany's capital, from June 25 to 30 to call for the removal of the Statue," adding that "Prime Minister Kishida now has an unexpected support

group.” This ‘End Comfort Women Fraud’ group (formed on Jan. 6, 2022) is led by: Joo Ok-soon, who also leads the ‘Mother Support Corps’, Lee Woo-yeon, who co-author of Anti-Japan Tribalism, and Kim Byeong-heon, who heads the ‘People’s Action for the Revocation of the Comfort Women Law’.

The key figures of the group have been holding counter rallies right next to the Wednesday Demonstration site in Seoul since the end of 2019. With a 30 year history beginning in January 1992, the Wednesday Demonstration is an occasion to commemorate the victims of wartime sexual violence and express a shared wish for peace, as well as a place for remembrance, human rights, and education for future generations. The ‘counter-protesters’ have consistently engaged in behaviors and expressions of misogyny while insulting the victim and defaming the participants of the Wednesday Demonstrations. In short, they regurgitate the position of Japanese far-right groups in their denial the history, alleging that ‘the comfort women are frauds,’ ‘no sex slaves existed,’ and demanding the ‘removal of the Statue of Peace,’ and more. Determining that such acts continue to disrupt the peaceful Wednesday Demonstrations and violate the human rights of the victims and participants, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea rendered an emergency relief decision in January 2022 and advised the police to actively intervene with the counter-protests.

The citizens around the world cannot help but feel devastated by the actions of the Japanese government and far-right historical denialists in Japan and abroad for exerting the pressure to remove the Statue of Peace in Berlin. This situation is tantamount to the perpetrators of the Holocaust and Holocaust denialists colluding with far-right citizens of the affected countries to pressure the demolition of a Holocaust monument.

The Statue of Peace in Berlin was installed to allow citizens around the

world to commemorate not only the horrors experienced by the victims of the Japanese military's 'comfort women' sexual slavery scheme but also the reality of wartime sexual violence that is still prevalent today and to make a commitment to prevent similar suffering from being repeated. It symbolizes the efforts and aspirations of citizens of the globe to learn from the past and consolidate peace in the hope of eradicating sexual violence caused at the juncture of sexism, racism, classism and war.

Now, the space where the Statue of Peace stands is becoming a symbol of peace and human rights, and of solidarity between the marginalized. It has established itself as a space for fighting against sexual violence and the killing of women, a space for Indigenous peoples and people of color to congregate to oppose racism and hate crimes, and a democratic space to commemorate the struggle of decolonisation.

Nevertheless, the Statue of Peace in Berlin has withstood all kinds of hardships since its installation in September 2020. Despite the installation being led by Korea Verband, the association of Koreans residing in Germany, and the power of the citizens of Berlin, the Bezirksamt Mitte ordered the Statue to be removed within two weeks of its installation due to the protest from the Japanese government and attacks from the right-wing. In response, not only Koreans but also many civic groups across Germany came together to protect the Statue of Peace, and civic groups from overseas such as Japan and the U.S. also contributed to this effort. Former German Chancellor Schröder also criticized the Bezirksamt Mitte for rendering "a counter-historical decision to forsake the pain of the 'comfort women,' now the elderly women, who suffered as victims of brutal violence." Thereafter, the district council of Mitte adopted a resolution to permanently install the Statue. However, the Statue is facing the danger of being demolished unless the Bezirksamt Mitte approves the extension every year.

Meanwhile, the Korean Yoon Seok-youl administration has been signaling a 'grand bargain,' 'comprehensive solution' and a 'top-down process' to solve both historical and security issues simultaneously since before the inauguration is attempting to revive the '2015 Korea-Japan Agreement' which overlooked the principle of centering victims and use security alliances as an excuse for political negotiations. The Japanese government's pressure campaign to demolish the Statue of Peace is not unrelated to this context. On 28 December 2015 the Korean and Japanese Foreign Ministers held a joint press conference to make a shock announcement about the politically-motivated '2015 Korea-Japan Agreement': in exchange for Japan's vague statement of regret, 10 billion yen as a 'consolation funds' instead of legal reparations and the establishment of the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation, the Korean government agreed to 'co-operate on the problem' of Statue of Peace outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, refrain from criticism among the international community and regard the agreement as a 'final and irrevocable' solution. Behind closed doors, it also contained the duplicitous promises which favoured the Japanese government's position including "convincing victim support organisations, Statues of Peace outside of Korea and Japan and the terminology of 'sex slaves'. It is on the basis of this agreement that thoroughly ignores 30 years of the survivor's calling for acknowledgement of responsibility, an official apology and legal reparations, punishment of perpetrators, remembrance and commemoration, inclusion in history textbooks and other preventative measures, that the Japanese government is claiming that this issue is resolved.

Fabian Salvioli, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, visited Korea on June 8 and held a press conference on June 15 before his departure. There, he clarified the fact that the issue of the Japanese military's 'comfort women' is 'a serious human rights violation and violation of the laws concerning

humanitarianism by a third country (Japan)' and urged related countries to ensure that victims have access to the truth, including disclosure of records, and to cooperate for truth, responsibility, reparation and remembrance. In particular, by recalling that international human rights organizations have appealed for the revision of the 2015 Korea-Japan Agreement, which was concluded without the victims' consent and failed to meet the demands for truth, justice and full reparation, the Special Rapporteur urged the government to take an effective and urgent response for the victims in Korea who are already advanced in age.

The issue of the Japanese military's 'comfort women' is not merely an issue between Korea and Japan but has been widely recognized by the international community as symbolizing the ongoing issue of wartime sexual violence and the universal goal of women's human rights that all citizens worldwide shall work together to achieve. If the Statue of Peace in Berlin were to be demolished, its memory will be diminished to a symbol of conflict between Korea and Japan, while the voices and existence of the victims who suffered unimaginable pain will be buried in darkness. Furthermore, it will leave an indelible stain on the history of Germany, which has faced and acknowledged the crimes of the Nazi regime based on sincere reflection for the victims and made concerted efforts to learn from the lessons of history.

We will not yield to pressure from the Japanese government and far-right extremists, who are denying history by attempting to remove the Statue of Peace in Berlin. We will continue to make every effort to eradicate wartime sexual violence, protect victims' human rights, and restore their honor. We demand the following, believing that the Bezirksamt Mitte of Germany will also join in the steps of citizens around the world towards peace and human rights.

One. We demand the Bezirksamt Mitte to not give in to the pressure from

the Japanese government and the far-right historical denialist group and proactively protect the Statue of Peace.

One. We demand the Bezirksamt Mitte to render the decision to permanently retain the Statue of Peace, standing firm in the tradition of German citizens who have been steadfast in facing the truth of history against imperialists, the colonialists, and those who try to deny history.

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Number of Signatories: Individuals: 31,317 Organizations: 559

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