

What Japan Needs is a Conscience, Not More Evidence

In an inquiry by a lawmaker into the forced mobilization of women by the Japanese military to serve as sex slaves during World War Two, the Japanese government issued a response saying, "In the records discovered by the government, there was no account directly showing forced mobilization by the military or government authorities." The latest response supported Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's comments early this month that there was "no evidence or testimony proving comfort women were forced."

If he's looking for testimony, there are plenty of it from surviving sex slaves who are still alive and breathing. Last month, during a hearing at the U.S. House of Representatives, not only Korean women, but a Dutch woman who lived in Indonesia, testified. The Dutch woman had been imprisoned in a Javanese jail and was dragged out of her cell upon orders that "all women over 17 must get in line outside the prison."

If Abe and the Japanese government insist on closing their ears, there are plenty of Japanese scholars and military documents to prove them wrong. In 1980, Yoshimi, a professor of history at Tokyo's Chuo University, discovered evidence showing the forced mobilization of sex slaves by the Japanese military. He wrote a book on it and said, "It is clear that comfort women were forcibly mobilized and all of the responsibility lies with the Japanese government." A scholar named Kurabashi wrote in his 1944 book, "Historical Research on Comfort Women," that between 1937 to 38, people from Joseon were the majority inside the comfort camps and from 1940, abductions for comfort women to serve as sex slaves became the main focus."

In a document called "In Reference to the Recruitment of Comfort Women," prepared by the conscription department of the Japanese Army in 1938, there is a segment that says, "For the establishment of comfort centers, the method of recruiting comfort women from the interior regions is similar to kidnapping." A report entitled "Investigation on Issues Related to Comfort Women," prepared in 1993 by a Japanese agency focusing on documents related to World War Two, says, "The Joseon Peninsula was under Japanese rule and the recruitment, transport and supervision of comfort women were by coaxing and force, against their will."

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