

**Joint Statement by Associations of History Scholars and Educators in Japan
on the “Comfort Women” Issue**

Triggered by the retraction of articles in the *Asahi Shimbun* in August 2014, certain politicians and sections of the media have made statements which intend to cast doubt on the wartime issue of the “comfort women” and facts regarding their forced recruitment by the Imperial Japanese Army. In light of such injurious statements, associations of history scholars and educators throughout Japan have come together to jointly issue this statement, and to point out the following three problems with these unjust points of view.

Firstly, the Kono Statement, in which the Japanese government officially acknowledged the involvement of the Imperial Japanese Army in the establishment and operations of military brothels, including the forced recruitment of women, is not based on the retracted *Asahi* articles; nor does it rely on the testimony of Seiji Yoshida, a former member of a semi-governmental organization for wartime mobilization, which was cited in the articles. Accordingly, the retractions do not undermine the historical basis of the Kono Statement. The existence of forcibly recruited “comfort women” has been verified by many historical records and extensive research. It should be understood that forced recruitment of “comfort women” was not limited to cases of straightforward kidnapping (confirmed in Semarang, Indonesia and the Shanxi Province in China and testified to by many in the Korean Peninsula), but also included cases of recruitment against the will of the individual (widely confirmed, particularly in the Korean Peninsula).

Secondly, those who were made “comfort women” fell victim to unspeakable violence as sex slaves. As recent historical studies have shown, victims were subjected not only to forced recruitment, but also to conditions of sexual slavery which violated their basic human rights. Furthermore, the “comfort women” system was based on structures of institutionalized discrimination between the colonizer and the colonized that was a fundamental part of everyday, imperialist-Japanese rule. Therefore, even if there had been something such as a contract for sex trafficking, ignoring the systems of inequality and injustice which formed the backdrop to these arrangements, and thereby disregarding the political and social context of the time is to miss the full picture.

Thirdly, due to coverage by sections of the mass media which has intentionally overemphasized the “misreporting” of the issue, some academics engaged in the “comfort

women” issue, as well as their affiliated organizations, have been unfairly attacked with threats calling for their resignation or the cancellation of their lectures. This is a violation of academic freedom and must be emphatically rejected.

By continuing to take the irresponsible stance of denying the facts of wartime sexual slavery in the Japanese military, certain politicians and sections of the media are essentially conveying to the rest of the world that Japan does not respect human rights. This kind of attitude tramples further upon the dignity of the victims, who have already born terrible hardships. Thus, what is required now is— as declared in the Kono Statement—an attitude that seeks, through historical research and education, to remember the issues and never repeat past mistakes.

We renew our demand for all concerned politicians and media outlets to squarely face up to the damage that Japan inflicted in the past, as well as to the victims.

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16 associations of history scholars and educators in Japan

The Japanese Historical Council
Association of Historical Science
Association of History of Japanese Thought
The Historical Association of Senshu University
The Historical Science Society of Japan
The Historical Society of Fukushima University
The Historical Society of Tokyo Gakugei University
History Educationalist Conference of Japan
The Japan Association for Korean History (Committee)
The Japanese Historical Society
The Japanese Society for Historical Studies
The Kyushu Society of Historical Science
Osaka Historical Association
The Society for Historical Science of Nagoya
The Society for Research on Women's History
Tokyo Historical Science Association