

→ Mark your confusion.

→ Purposefully annotate the article (1-2 mature, thoughtful responses per page to what the author is saying)

→ Write a 250+ word response to the article.

(If you are a teacher or student who would like to modify this Google Doc, go to File > Make a Copy. I cannot and do not respond to Share requests -- my apologies!)

## Japan Says Sorry for Its Crimes Against Wartime ‘Comfort Women’

By Krishnadev Calamur for *The Atlantic*, 12-28-15

Japan has apologized to South Korea and will pay about \$8.3 million as compensation for its use of Korean “comfort women” who were forced to work in Japanese brothels during World War II.

The deal—which was announced after a meeting in Seoul on Monday between Fumio Kishida, the Japanese foreign minister, and Yun Byung-se, his South Korean counterpart—could go a long way toward improving relations between the two countries that have been strained for decades over Japan’s wartime occupation of the Korean Peninsula. After the meeting, and a formal apology from Kishida, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe telephoned Park Geun-hye, the South Korean president, to repeat the apology.

“Japan and South Korea are now entering a new era,” Abe said later. “We should not drag this problem into the next generation.”

It’s unclear how many women served as sex slaves for the Japanese during the war, but estimates range from 20,000 to 200,000. What is clear, however, is that many of the women are now very old.

Park, the South Korean president, said Monday that nine had died this year alone. Forty-six are still alive in South Korea.

“I hope the mental pains of the elderly comfort women will be eased,” she said after the agreement was announced.

The reason why it has taken so long for the issue to be discussed is differing accounts of whether Japan had properly atoned for its wartime actions. Tokyo had long maintained that its payment of \$800 million in grants or loans to South Korea in 1965 settled the issue; South Korea disagreed.

On Monday, Kishida, the Japanese foreign minister, said the \$8.3 million payment was a project to restore the “dignity” of the women—a position some former “comfort women” criticized.

“I wonder whether the talks took place with the victims really in mind,” Lee Yong-soo, 88, told the BBC. “We’re not after the money. If the Japanese committed their sins, they should offer direct official government compensation.”

The BBC adds: “The dozens of surviving women have asked for a formal apology specifically addressed to themselves and direct compensation. They say past expressions of regret have been only halfway and insincere.”

Indeed, as the Korea Herald notes, the two sides are divided over whether, under Monday’s agreement, Japan took legal responsibility for its actions, and about whether South Korea would move the statue representing the women from near the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

## ‘Comfort women’ in South Korea who serviced U.S. forces seek justice

By Jeff Kingston for *The Japan Times*, MAR 4, 2017

On Jan. 20, the Seoul Central District Court partially affirmed the claims of Korean women who had been sex workers in “camp towns” adjacent to U.S. military bases in the 1960s and ’70s. The New York Times called it a “landmark ruling” because it was the first official acknowledgement that the legal rights of the

women who supplied sexual services to U.S. base personnel were violated.

The court pointedly referred to the plaintiffs as “comfort women,” drawing a parallel with Japan’s more notorious system of wartime sexual servitude. In their lawsuit, the plaintiffs argued it was hypocritical of the state to provide comfort women for U.S. soldiers while excoriating Japan for its corresponding system.

The court ordered the state to pay 5 million won (about ¥450,000) in damages each to 57 of the 122 plaintiffs, ruling that the government had no legal basis for forcibly detaining them to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in the 1960s and 1970s prior to enacting a law allowing this in 1977. At that time there were approximately 20,000 comfort women serving 60,000 soldiers.

University of Oslo scholar Elisabeth Schober, author of “Base Encounters: The U.S. Armed Forces in South Korea,” suggests that government officials understood that U.S. soldiers’ access to women was part of the deal and as such “silently exempted” the camp towns from the legal ban on prostitution and cooperated extensively with the U.S. military to manage STDs. Officials even gave motivational speeches and arranged English classes for the sex workers.

Interestingly, the court rejected the state’s claim that the case should be dismissed because the five-year statute of limitations had expired. The court argued that the plaintiffs “cannot be seen as having neglected to assert their rights in view of the authoritarian rule, exclusionary public sentiments toward U.S. military comfort women, and the male-dominated and patriarchal society and culture at that time.”

However, the court went on to reject the plaintiffs’ claims that the state violated the law by facilitating prostitution. The plaintiffs assert that they were deceived by job placement agencies and that they were coerced into service under conditions of debt bondage. The women also testified that the government urged them as “patriots” to earn more U.S. dollars for the good of the nation.

While acknowledging that some women were trafficked, the court ruled that “it is impossible to conclude that the victims were in a situation where they did not begin engaging in prostitution within the area of their own free will or could not leave.”

The women have appealed the verdict because they want an apology and recognition of their government’s involvement in the sex trade.

Wellesley College political scientist Katherine Moon, author of “Sex Among Allies,” criticizes the court because it did not rule that the women’s human rights had been violated. She found that “many women were chronically trafficked, raped, beaten and otherwise coerced by private citizens (traffickers and pimps, bar owners, managers) as well as U.S. servicemen, while the ROK [Republic of Korea] government, namely the local police and camp town officials, turned a blind eye or facilitated the system of sex commerce that abused women.”

Walter Hatch, professor of government and director of the Oak Institute for Human Rights, Colby College, contends that the ruling “exposes the hypocrisy of Seoul in advancing the claim that Japan was uniquely horrible in its treatment of comfort women during World War II. Why should gijichon (camp towns) for U.S. troops be different from comfort stations for Japanese troops?”

Regarding what he views as a double standard on comfort women culpability, Hatch adds, “I am astounded by the hypocrisy of Korean government officials and American critics of Japanese wartime behavior.”

Moon, however, argues there are key distinctions, as “abuse of women’s bodies for forced or coerced sexual ‘service’ to men has occurred for millennia throughout various cultures, but Japan is the only country or state that had systematically developed an institution of forced sex as part of its military organization and operations.”

In 2007 she wrote, “The Japanese system of sexual slavery was first and foremost an atrocity perpetrated on women, not nations,” adding, “Regrettably, comfort women politics serves as an occasion for mutual nationalist bashing and counterbashing rather than an opening for governments and people around the world to engage sincerely in the quest for what might constitute and advance women’s human rights and the protection of civilians during wartime.”

University of Connecticut historian Alexis Dudden, currently a Fulbright fellow at Yonsei University in Seoul, asserts that “The denialists and apologists of Japan’s history of militarized sexual slavery continue to will away the abundant evidence pertaining to that particular history by shouting, ‘Look!! The Americans continued the system during the occupation with their special brothels!’”

She asks, however, “Do American GI practices today spanning from Okinawa and Yokosuka to Guam and Pisa and Manila and Baghdad make the history of what happened to up to 200,000 women, girls and young men during the 1930s and 40s under the auspices of the Japanese government any less awful? No.”

It’s complicated, Dudden adds, because “victims of these separate histories want to have their lived experiences recognized for their particularities and not cheapened by being measured in light of other examples; yet, at the same time, many articulate the need to understand significant historical resonances.”

Organizations that support comfort women who served the Japanese military have not made common cause with those advocating for the U.S. comfort women.

A Korean journalist, speaking on condition of anonymity, explains: “The advocates for the Japanese comfort women are not working with or for these women. If anything, they (and South Korean officials) are unhappy with this lawsuit for fear that the Japanese government will use this case to try to downplay the whole comfort women controversy, essentially saying ‘See, other countries did this sort of unfortunate thing.’”

According to Moon, “Most Koreans don’t care much about the gijichon women. Only when ‘anti-American’ sentiments flare up, they become used as an issue. The Korean government and comfort women activists see the gijichon issue as ‘getting in the way.’ And in truth, conservative Japanese media have tried to use the camp town issue to throw mud back at Koreans’ faces.”

In my view, these cases should be mutually reinforcing and underscore the ongoing need to hold Tokyo, Seoul and Washington accountable in ways that address the traumas and indignities endured.

### **Response Options:**

- What should be done for the comfort women mentioned in both articles?
- What do you make of claims that US soldiers used “comfort women” during the 1960s and 1970s?
- Many arguments are presented in the second article. Summarize them and respond with your own argument.