

Hand in Hand against Sexual Violence – Justice for „Comfort Women“



On the occasion of this year's German Evangelical Kirchentag, the former "comfort woman" Gil Won-ok (born 1926 near Pyongyang) is visiting Germany. It is the peace and women's rights activists' third visit in Berlin. In 1940, at the age of 13, she was forced into prostitution by the Japanese military for several years. Because of Korea's division, she could never see her parents again.

Overview of the visiting program from 24 May to 29 May

The 1.284. Wednesday Demonstration in front of the Japanese embassy in Berlin

Wed. May 24, 3-5 pm: Starting point at Hiroshimastr. and procession to Potsdamer Platz,

Appearances at Kirchentag at Exhibition Grounds in Berlin, Charlottenburg

Markt der Möglichkeiten (Berlin ExpoCenter City, Messedamm 22, 14055 Berlin)

Thu. May 25, 2 pm: Reception from Miss Gil, booth Ev. Koreanische Gemeinde Berlin e.V. (1.1-E03)

Fr. May 26, 2 pm: Round table at the booth of DOAM and BMW (2.1-E10)

Centre Reformation and Transformation (CityCube, Ebene 1, Halle A6 (594 | E1), Messedamm 22)

Sat. May 27, 3-5 pm: Appearance at the Kirchentag „Minorities, Migrants, Comfort Women - Marching with the Marginalized in Korea and Japan“, (Event in English!)

Other appearances

Sat. May 27, 1.3 pm: Lunch table of the migration churches – Speech at Ev. Koreanische Gemeinde in Berlin (Han-In Community), Heilandskirche, Thusnelda-Allee 1, 10555 Berlin

Sun. May 28, 2-4 pm: „Shared time at different places“ – Encounter between Gil Won-ok and the survivor of IS-imprisonment Marwa al-Aliko, Nachbarschaftshaus am Lietzensee e.V., Herbartstr. 25, 14057 Berlin

Mo. May 29, 4:30-6:30 pm: Movie screening “The Apology” (R: Tiffany Hsiung, Kanada, 2016, 104 Min.), Haus der Demokratie und Menschenrechte (House of Democracy and Human Rights), Greifswalder Str. 4, 10405 Berlin

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Who are the so-called »comfort women«?

The term »comfort woman« represents an extremely grave case of systematic sexual violence during armed military conflicts. During the Asia-Pacific War, from the early 1930s to 1945, Japan forcefully mobilized girls and women for sexual slavery to boost the morale of their soldiers. Over a course of many years, women in these military operated brothels were raped, abused, tortured and even killed.

After their fate was unveiled in 1991, survivors have been demanding the Japanese government to **issue an official state apology, restore their human rights, admit to its crimes and reprocess them in Japanese society and provide legal reparations.**

The Korean-Japanese agreement of December 28, 2015

On December 28, 2015, the foreign ministers of Japan and South Korea suddenly announced a “final and irreversible” solution for the “comfort women” issue. The decades-long demands of former “comfort women” and their organizations were not included in the agreement at all, further humiliating the survivors.

South Korea's new government and the UNO for renegotiations!

South Korea's newly elected president Moon Jae-in promised the **annulment of the Korean-Japanese agreement** in his campaign. On 13 May 2017, the UN committee against torture also demanded both governments to renegotiate the agreement.

The signature campaign by *The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan* has set the objective to collect 100 million signatures in solidarity with comfort women. **Your sign supports the renegotiating for a solution of the problem, before the last survivors die! Sign here and take a stand against sexual violence in times of war: www.womenandwar.net**

About the fate of Gil Won-ok

Gil Won-ok is one of the former so-called »comfort women«, who were forced into prostitution during World War II by the Japanese military. She was only 13 years old when she was forced into sexual slavery in 1940. During her captivity, she was infected with a sexually transmitted disease, which made it impossible for her to work. After months of captivity, she was at last sent back to Korea. When she was 15, she was captured again and taken to China, where she was forced into sexual slavery in abhorring conditions until the end of the war. She was forcefully sterilized with an operation. After the war she was able to board a ship back to Korea, but by that time Korea was already divided, resulting in her never being able to see her family in the North again.

When she was 30 years old, she adopted her son, who gave her the strength to pull through. The fate of the former “comfort women” only became known in 1991 because of the brave survivor Kim Hak-soon. Gil Won-ok overcame her fear of publically opening up about her fate in 2003. Since then, she takes a stand for piece and helps other victims of sexual slavery. **Together with former comfort woman Kim Bok-dong, she came up with the idea for the butterfly fund:** They wanted to donate all the money, which they would get from the Japanese government for other victims of sexual violence. Because they did not know when they would be compensated by Japan, the butterfly fund was proclaimed and its collected donations support women and girls from Vietnam and Congo.

