

## *On Filipino Comfort Women*

The report of UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women Radhika Coomaraswamy and the McDougall Report on Systematic Rape, Sexual Slavery, and Slavery-like Practices disclosed that the Government of Japan, in its colonial occupation of Asia during World War II, organized the subjugation and kidnapping of young women for the sole purpose of sexual servitude. The enslavement of "comfort women" was officially commissioned and orchestrated by the Government of Japan to include gang rape, forced abortions, sexual violence, human trafficking, and other crime against humanity.

Tens of thousands of Filipino women, some of them as young as thirteen years of age, were either abducted from their homes or streets and brought to "comfort stations" where they were raped daily by Japanese soldiers.

In addition to the sexual violations, the comfort women suffered other bodily injuries due to constant beatings inflicted by the Japanese soldiers in the course of the rape. Chopping of women's breasts and forced abortion were also prevalent.

The judges of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal 2000 considered the crimes of rape and sexual slavery as "crimes against humanity".

The findings of the Tribunal was that the Japanese soldiers established and expanded a "comfort system" throughout its occupied territory, where women were forcibly kept in facilities for the purpose of providing the Japanese military with convenient sexual services. The scale of the "comfort system" was so widespread and highly regulated, and the operations of the station so consistent, that it can be concluded that the highest level of political and military officials must have known of the criminal nature of the system which they set in motion and sustained. Therefore, it could be inferred that the State of Japan is internationally responsible for the wrongful acts committed by its military forces, government officials, and those individual acting in their official capacity.

Almost fifty-six (56) years have passed since the abominable wartime sexual slavery, but the Japanese government still fails and refuses to acknowledge its legal responsibility to the Filipino comfort women, so the painful experiences and the psychological trauma suffered by the Filipino comfort women have remained unabated up to now.

The egregiousness of the offenses and the magnitude of the suffering inflicted to the Filipino comfort women during the war demand reparation by the Japanese government through legal compensation. It is high time to redress the grave affront to the honor and dignity of the Filipino comfort women through legal compensation so that they will finally claim and receive the justice they had been struggling for all these years, especially now that they are in the twilight of their lives.

The Honorable Senator Loren Legarda-Leviste introduced Senate Resolution No. 24 entitled: *"RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS WITH THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO PURSUE THE POST-WAR LEGAL COMPENSATION DEMANDED BY FILIPINO COMFORT WOMEN WHO WERE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY MEMBERS OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMED FORCES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR."*

The Commission on Human Rights fully supports the said Senate Resolution No. 24, and likewise urges the Philippine government to pursue the legal compensation by the Japanese government to the Filipino comfort women.

*Quezon City, 03 April 2003*