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SCHOLARS APPLAUD PASSAGE OF HOUSE COMFORT WOMEN RESOLUTION 121

July 30, 2007: Washington, D.C. – The team of international scholars of Japan who assisted Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA-15) and other members of Congress better understand Japan’s wartime history and contemporary legislative process welcomed the passage today of H. Res. 121 in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Resolution calls upon Japan to apologize officially and unequivocally to the so-called “Comfort Women” who were sex slaves to Japan’s Imperial Forces during Japan’s colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the end of World War II.

The team’s coordinator, Asia Policy Point Director Mindy L. Kotler, said on behalf of this expert group today, “The resolution is a victory for strengthening global norms and international law against sexual violence and human trafficking of women, children, and even men; a victory for historical reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific; a victory for those in Japan who want their country to address the history issue more forthrightly and to make Japan a true international leader and model for human rights; and a victory for those who want to ground the U.S.-Japan alliance more firmly on shared democratic values and a shared democratic future.”

She continued, “most important, it is a victory for restoring the dignity of the Comfort Women. As it is a victory for the rule of law and reason in Japan. Through this resolution, Congress tacitly acknowledges that important diplomatic statements of Japan, such as an apology to the Comfort Women, must either be approved by a Cabinet Decision (*kakugi kettei*) or a Diet resolution to be considered official. Thus far, no Japanese apology to the Comfort Women meets either of these criteria.”

“It is unacceptable to view rape as merely endemic to war, or an incidental adjunct to armed conflict. Rape is a unique weapon focused on non-combatants and intended to instill terror in its victims and to demonstrate the power of the perpetrators. It is a truly uncivilized act, and Imperial Japan’s widespread use of rape during its Asian conquests was, and remains, beneath that culture’s better values,” Ms. Kotler concluded.

About Asia Policy Point

Asia Policy Point is a nonprofit membership research center that studies the U.S. policy relationship with Japan and Northeast Asia. APP is nonpartisan and does not lobby. Through its staff and members it provides objective information to the American policy community. APP publishes a weekly electronic report, *The Asia Policy Calendar*, that lists events, news, and documents relevant to the Asia-Pacific region.

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