

Survivors' words: extracts from the Judgement of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal

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<https://archives.wam-peace.org/wt/en/judgement>

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Japanese Military Sexual Slavery: Survivors Speak Out

The Women's International War Crimes Tribunal for the Trial of Japan's Military Sexual Slavery was a forum where former 'comfort women', survivors of Japanese sexual slavery were able to tell in their own words either orally (in person or through video tape) or by affidavit of the atrocities committed against them. Even when women victims and survivors are able to testify in court proceedings, too often their voices are silenced or mediated by rules of evidence and procedure.

The following extracts are some of the words of the women themselves (translation at the Tribunal).

1. Wan Aihua, (Chinese victim-survivor)

I was taken into a hole. There was a room inside the hole, but I was taken into the back of the hole and I was raped there. It was a cave, sort of, then I was undressed suddenly, all my garments was taken off and they threatened me...they would kill me if I say anything, if I utter any words. So I was scared; I couldn't say anything....Five soldiers came in at the same time and they raped me...it was like gang rape....I was detained there for a while and every day I was raped....I felt I had no other choice but to obey them. Of course, I resisted but I had no other choice....I was tied to a tree and raped everyday. Everyday, Japanese soldiers came in and I was raped. ...

I was hit and they brutalised me....They tied my hands to the tree so I was sort of hanged from the tree.... So my hands were sort of pulled and I was hit upon all my body and after they raped me they put me into the river, into the water....It was winter time, perhaps in January. It was chilling cold, even the river got frozen....and I was sort of naked in the chilling cold.

2. Yuan Zhulin, Chinese victim-survivor).

A] local woman...praised to me that my baby was a very pretty child and she offered me a very profitable job, that is washing the dishes and clothing....[A]t that time I didn't accept the offer and then the woman told that I would regret it and...that she wouldn't lie to me because she was a Chinese woman....I was very poor and had to support five of my family members and I decided to accept the offer. On that same day, I took a car and I went out....[O]n arrival, it was the base of a Japanese Army and there were Japanese soldiers carrying guns on the sentry position and I was very scared and started to cry and told...the Chinese woman that she told me a lie....I said I didn't want to stay there and I begged her to let me go....[T]he Japanese soldiers and the person managing the comfort station came out and tried to take me inside and I resisted but...they started to abuse me and hit me. It was really terrible. ...

[O]ther Japanese soldiers were all very inhumane and they were very, very atrocious and some of the Japanese soldiers changed condoms four times during sexual intercourse with me and it hurt so much I could not even sit. I could not even lie down to sleep. I could not even sleep freely....[W]hen there was a long queue outside we were given medicine and

that medicine was a jelly sort of cream and she [the wife of the proprietor] said, if it hurt you, put some cream on to the condom and it can help you alleviate your pains....There was no way to escape so I just had to continue as a comfort woman.

3. Lin Shen-Chung (Iyang-Apay) (Taiwanese victim/survivor)

After working nearly three months, one day, the deputy captain, Nalida, Gunsho took me to the entrance of a cave, and told me to wait there. A Japanese soldier turned up and asked me to provide sexual service. I firmly resisted. But the Japanese soldier said "since you came to work here, this is part of your work too." He forced me to subject to his sexual request without payment. Everyday, the six of us would be taken to this cave one by one for this, serving as much as five soldiers each night. After each time, we got to rest for half an hour. The six of us were forced to provide sexual service in turns on a bed ten meters from the entrance of the cave. Those who forced us to have sex with them included Doctor Miyamodo, Captain Ela, and Deputy Captain Nalida....All I can do to such ordeal was to weep everyday.

4. Lu Mang-Mei (Taiwanese victim-survivor)

Only upon our arrival did we realise it was a comfort women station, rather than a restaurant. This station was managed by Japanese and looked like a Japanese styled dormitory. It was separated by wood boards into different rooms, floored with Tatami. Each girl had one room. This dormitory was situated on the hillside, surrounded with many palm trees. There were salt fields by the sea....There were about thirty-something girls at this station. Thirty of them were Taiwanese and there were some Japanese girls too. The Taiwanese girls had no contact with those Japanese girls. Soldiers were all Japanese. They came by car....The soldiers and military officers had to purchase their tickets from the Manager first and then they looked for the girls. I usually earned several (six or seven) hundred Yen each month. The Manager took a share of sixty percent each time. We have to provide service day and night. Some soldiers stayed overnight with us, in which case we could earn more money. We were not allowed to say no to the soldiers. No service, no money. We could take a walk around the station. They wore condoms. At the first time, I was so scared. I felt cheated to be there and left alone without any relatives or friends. I thought I should not do it and did try to resist....I told the 'customer' not to do it, but he replied "I already bought the ticket." Then I told him that I was supposed to work as a waitress and not 'this'. The 'customer' said "it is said so but it is not true." It was too late for us to realise the truth. All of us cried....I was once pregnant and wanted to go home. Nevertheless, I was still forced to provide service for more than eight months.

5. Teng Kao Pao-Chu (Taiwanese victim-survivor)

The unit's name was called Tatsu Butai. It was the headquarters of an army unit. The service was three yen for army officers and two yens for soldiers. We splitted the money with the person in charge by 4/6. For several times, I entrusted money to Japanese soldiers to be sent to my family, but there were several times that my family did not receive them. In the comfort center, they distributed 6 to 12 condoms each month. If that

was not enough, we had to wash them in the stream and recycle them. The army physician inspect[ed] our health once a week. I did not get pregnant, but if someone did become pregnant, she still had to work until six or seven months [of] pregnan[cy]. After she delivered the baby, she must work again. A comfort woman that can sing is treated better because she did not have to stay in the comfort center all day, and sing to the Japanese soldier[s] on a stage. The comfort centers were built by woods, with one bedroom for each of us like a dormitory. There were also comfort centers for Koreans and Cantonese. We work[ed] from nine a.m. to five p.m., with more customers during the weekends. During the day time, most of the customers were soldiers, and at nights, most of them were officers. All soldiers and officers must pay for a token to be served. We were forbade to provide service when we had our menstruation, for fear that our vagina or uterus will be infected. I did not want to provide services when I had my menstruation, but some soldiers would insist upon it. I would reject it with an excuse of stomach ache or for sanitary reasons. I prefer to keep them company by drinking and singing with them, rather than having intercourse. I missed my sister there. When I felt homesick, I would go to the mountain to sing alone. Day after day, and year after year, I was alone abroad and wondered and wondered what had become of my country. My sister and brother-in-law did not know about my life here. I often wept while I sang, like a bird trapped in a cage without freedom. Why did I have to suffer here? ...

I am very angry with the Japanese. They said they did it for their country. But for whom did we do it? For the Japanese? They took us by deception, and called us Chinks, which is most painful. Why didn't they recruit their own Japanese women, but recruited us! And the Japanese pretend that they know nothing, and we had to file our own lawsuit by ourselves! All my youth has been ruined like this! This is not to be endured! A lot of people knew that we have been there, nobody wanted us, and everyone all looked down upon us. Because I have sent money back to Taiwan, and my family did not receive them, I want the money back, and ask for an open apology from the Japanese government.

6. Pak Yong-Sim (Korean victim-survivor)

I became a 'comfort woman'. I was in a three-story building in Nanjing that was at the Kinsui-rou 'comfort station'. There I was called by the Japanese name 'Utamaru'. I had to service up to thirty soldiers every day. One day I was really in pain and when I didn't respond to the demands of one officer, that bastard beat me with his fists, kicked me with his boots, took a long knife and held it up against my throat and...cut me. The blood poured out and soaked my whole body, but that bastard officer went [on] to satisfy his lust. Other 'comfort women' who caught diseases and became malnourished were carted out or often dumped into the river to drown. I also saw two Japanese army privates stab a pregnant woman in the belly and kill her. I was there for three years.

--- I was there [in the comfort station] for two years and I was called "Wakaharu" there. The 'comfort station' was deep in the mountains and nobody lived in the area. The name of the 'comfort station' in Japanese was "Itakakuro." During the day I had to service about

ten army privates, and at night I had to serve the officers. The privates brought condoms. ... I had to service between thirty and forty army privates so I was always in real pain.

7. Kim Bok-Dong (Korean victim-survivor)

There was a corridor in the middle of the building with rooms running along each side. There were thirty rooms. Each woman was assigned a room. The rooms were separated only by plywood and it was possible to hear someone breathing in the next room. The rooms were very small and contained only a bed thrown down on some wood assembled on the concrete floor. Each room was marked by a number on top and the comfort woman's name beneath....Inside the 'comfort station', it wasn't just names that became Japanese; I had to use the whole Japanese language too. ,,,

Frightened, I tried to escape out back and hide but he [a Japanese medical officer who tried to rape her] caught me and slapped me sharply across both cheeks. It was hard enough that my whole face went numb. He told me to do as he ordered, and I couldn't but hear him. I guessed that if I tried to resist, I would be the only one to suffer, so I resigned myself to doing as he said. But because it was my first time, it was utterly unbearable. I bled between my legs and it hurt as if I had been ripped open. My vagina swelled, and burned so much I could not urinate. The next day I and two other women talked about killing ourselves. ...

Fifteen soldiers usually came each day, but on the weekend the number often exceeded fifty. The enlisted soldiers came between noon and 5pm, on Saturdays and from 8am to 5pm, and on Sundays, they had to be gone by 5pm when the military police came to check on the station. Officers arrived after 7pm, many of whom slept there and then left. If my vagina was swollen and it was hard to penetrate, the soldiers put an ointment on the condom and forced themselves in. If I didn't know that my menstruation had started and a soldier saw the blood, he would get angry, and slap my face and hit me.

8. Kim Gun-Ja (Korean victim-survivor)

Soldiers started coming from about two or three days after my arrival. At first I refused, and they gave me a hard hit on my right ear that ruptured my eardrum. They just let it bleed, and I still can't hear very well. The soldiers came from about 2 or 3 pm on Saturdays, and there was an especially large number of them between 9am and 7pm on Sundays. There weren't many who came alone, and they came on a truck or on foot, led by officers. The soldiers passed through the office and waited in lines in front of the rooms. The halls were swarming with more than a hundred of them. I couldn't walk, and I wasn't allowed to rest during menstruation. On weekdays there were only officers who came, slept, and then left. On Saturdays and Sundays officers came only at night. When there were a lot of them, I had to service up to forty at one time, and I couldn't wash at all, causing additional pain. The soldiers brought condoms which tended to break so some men didn't use them. Every Friday night we were examined for sexually transmitted diseases. We all got on a truck and went to the military officer who examined us. We were the only women in the

barracks hospital. I contracted syphilis and was given the 606 injection. I also got pregnant, but miscarried. I was called “Kumiko” or just my room number “nine.”

9. Ha Sang-Suk (Korean victim-survivor)

The ‘comfort station’ had two stories, and was the third house in...[the] village. There were about twenty rooms, all with tatami floors. First, three Japanese soldiers came in, and after that, it was only soldiers. Usually, ten to fifteen soldiers came each day. If the soldiers gave money to me, I gave it to the owners in exchange for condoms and tissue. The amount was about one or two Chinese yuan, and the managers kept record of it in an account book. On Sundays the soldiers waited in lines outside. Each soldier was allotted about one hour. When I refused to allow a soldier to go twice, I was sometimes beaten. Some soldiers showed up drunk and threatened to kill me. I fought with those who refused to wear a condom. If a soldier was dissatisfied with any of the women, he complained directly to the proprietor who then beat and kicked the woman....There was a bathhouse. After servicing a soldier, I went to the bathhouse and washed with medicated water. Every Monday I went to a hospital in Jokgyong village and was checked for sexually transmitted diseases....The owner hated it if anyone had contracted a disease so they [the women] covered cotton wool with dust and swabbed themselves. This way, even if there was an infection, it was possible to pass the examination. Women who contracted syphilis were hospitalised and treated with the 606 injection. They usually recovered within fifteen days.

10. Song Shin-Do (Korean victim-survivor)

It was at this point that I who had left my home and come so far to work and be independent, first received the inexpressible shock of what I was about to do. . . . I refused to get on the board and struggled against the medical officer, but he forcibly stripped off my clothes and examined me.

The proprietor of “World View” was a short Korean man....There were a dozen or so ‘comfort women’ at “World View,” and we were all Korean. We were not allowed to speak Korean, and even speaking familiarly among ourselves was prohibited. Of all the women, I had the hardest time at “World View.” I was so young I had not even begun to menstruate yet. The first time I was forced to service a soldier, I didn’t know what I was supposed to do. I couldn’t stop crying, and I ran out. The first man to come in to my room was an officer named Takahashi, and when he saw me run away crying, he didn’t do anything and left. That officer reported it, and someone from the office exploded with anger at me. In the ‘comfort station’ office, I got very frightened. Since I didn’t know where I was, I didn’t speak the language, I had no money and no idea how to take the train, and the area was surrounded with soldiers, escape was impossible. Even so, when the soldiers came into my room, horrifying and terrifying me, and I cried and tried to run away. The manager slapped my cheek until my nose bled, withheld my food and shut me up in a narrow room. However, complete escape was impossible, and while crying, I became a tool for the sexual appetites of the soldiers....I was forced to service dozens of soldiers

every day. Rest was not permitted during menstruation. Especially on Sundays, there were a lot of soldiers, and some of them demanded dominant and barbaric sexual acts....If the comfort women were too exhausted and tried to refuse the soldier's demands, they were threatened with knives, beaten, and subjected to all sorts of violence.

Since I didn't know where I was, I didn't speak the language, I had no money and no idea how to take the train, and the area was surrounded with soldiers, escape was impossible. Even so, when the soldiers came into my room, horrifying and terrifying me, I cried and tried to run away. The manager slapped my cheek until my nose bled, withheld my food and shut me up in a narrow room. However, complete escape was impossible, and while crying, I became a tool for the sexual appetites of the soldiers.

11. Kim Yong-Suk (Korean victim-survivor)

I was only 12. I didn't know what that meant....I was frightened, but he was literally forcing me on the ground and he cut me open with his sword. Then I was bleeding and then he completely took off his pants and he raped me. He raped me to the point where I was bleeding and I was crying....[T]here was another soldier, Kanemura, he came in and called me names for being a Korean woman....He stripped me naked and he also cut me with his sword and he hurt my breast area. If you see my body, I am full of scars. He hurt me all over my body.

12. Moon Pil-Gi (Korean victim-survivor)

They tried to rape me. They were forcing me. They were treating me as a slave and they kicked me [and] hit me when I was not very good to them. And also they...burned my skin....[T]here was a red, burning, scorching, iron bar, and you know I have a scar, still underneath my arm.

13. Tomasa Dioso Salinog (Filipina victim-survivor)

The soldier placed his hands on my thighs and other parts of my body. Then he grabbed my body. . . and we fell. He fell on top of me. I wanted to get up. I struggled against him, wanting to get up but I could not. I was pinned down. I struggled and he got mad. Then he hit my head with a hard object. . . then they left the room. When they came back they brought some water and washed my body, and then that evening they came back and abused me. They took turns abusing me ...

When I woke up the next morning, the soldiers were no longer in the room. For three days they left me alone but then the Japanese soldiers started raping me again. I fainted so many times that I do not remember how many soldiers raped me. I only remember that two to five soldiers a day came into the room to rape me. Often I was continuously raped from afternoon till late at night. . . . In the big house I was served only two meals. . . . There were even times when I was only served breakfast. I slept during the day-time as I had nothing to do being locked up inside the room. I hated for night to come as I know that soldiers will enter the room to rape me. I wanted to die. The soldiers' body odour was very bad. In particular, those who came back from the mountain smelled extremely bad

since they came straight into the room without washing. . . . Some of the soldiers visited and raped [me] repeatedly. Some were waiting on vacant beds for their turn while I was being raped by another. Those soldiers from the mountain patrols had been drinking tuba [a local coconut wine] and were brutal. . . . After about a month, I was allowed to go out of the room and walk around the house but never outside the building. . . . While being held captive in the big house, I had medical check-ups but not for venereal disease. No one used a condom.

13. Maxima Regala de la Cruz ((Filipina victim-survivor)

[A] Japanese soldier entered my room. He told me to lie down on the bed. I refused and he forced me to lie down. I screamed and struggled until he drew his sabre and pointed it at me. I was so scared that I fell silent. He then pushed me to the bed and raped me. I cried for help and pleaded with the soldier to stop but he did not listen to my pleas. Since that first time I was sexually abused, I became extremely nervous. Every time a Japanese soldier armed with a sabre would enter the room and touch me, I would faint. That is why I cannot recall the exact number of times that I was raped. I knew that I was raped though because I felt aches and pains all over my body especially in my private parts. After that day, my mother and I were kept imprisoned in the house. During the day, while the soldiers raided the villages, my mother was brought to my room where we were locked in. A soldier guarded us and was present even when we had to go to the bathroom. At night, we were placed in separate rooms where the soldiers who came back from their military operations would sexually abuse us.

14. Rosalind Saw (victim-survivor from Malaya)

Everybody for one room. . . . We cannot make friends. You didn't run away. Ha! Then the Japanese cut your head off. Not only army soldiers but also some other soldiers. Everybody the same. Morning 20 person[s], afternoon 20, night 20. One day, 60 men. Not all the time could you sleep on the bed, sitting down again. No holiday for us. . . . For three years, many soldiers would not use condoms. At night, all the officers very wicked....Pulled my hair. . . . After they kick you. They drag you around. . . . [H]e threatened me, to cut my throat. I said "no, please don't cut."

15. Mrs X (victim-survivor from Malaya)

At the comfort station, the life I led was inhumane. Everyday, I was raped by 10-20 Japanese soldiers. I suffered often from stomach cramps. . . and bleeding of the vagina. Sometimes due to the pain, I could not co-operate in the sexual acts and was beaten and kicked by the Japanese soldiers. Our every move was monitored and we were not allowed to go out of the house. Nor could we communicate with each other.

16. Ms. Mardiyem (victim-survivor from Dutch East Indies)

[I] was required to work at least 10 hours a day and sometimes throughout the night: If I tried to refuse, well, you know yourself that I would face torture or abuse, so there wasn't anything that I could do. Everything kind of worked by the clock, so from 12 o'clock noon

until 5 o'clock I would have to do work. . . . [T]here would be a break, but the entire evening, from 7 o'clock until midnight, again we'd have to work. So you can count yourself how many hours that this would go on. Sometimes from 12 o'clock night until morning, there would be someone who would spend the entire night.

17. Jan Ruff-O'Herne (Dutch victim-survivor from the Dutch East Indies)

The house was all surrounded by fencing and barbed wire, so we could see straight away that there was no escape possible from the house. . . . Before long we were told that we were in this house for the sexual pleasure of the Japanese military. It was as if my whole world collapsed from under my feet when I heard this.

We were all virgins. . . . I wanted to be a nun. . . . We were given Japanese names, and these Japanese names, they were all names of flowers. . . . He dragged me up from under the table, and immediately I kicked him and fought him, but he was so strong. He dragged me into the bedroom, and in the bedroom again I started to fight with him. . . . He threw me on the bed and tore off all my clothes. . . . He ran the sword over my body, starting at my neck, right down my body, right up my legs, and just playing with me like a cat would do a mouse. . . until he eventually brutally raped me. ...

I cut off all my hair. . . real close to my scalp. . . . I thought nobody would want me, but it only had the opposite effect. I became a curiosity object, and everybody wanted to have the girl who cut off her hair.

18. Esmeralda Boe (victim-survivor East Timor)

He took off his clothes and took my clothes off. I was so young I had no idea what he was doing. And he pushed me to his bed and then that's when he start[ed] to rape me. . . . [H]e did the sexual intercourse through my vagina and also my anus.

They would send the men back home and the women they would keep in the place. [There] were four houses full of women. Some of the women, they would take to the bushes and they rape in the bushes. Some of them died. They destroyed everything.

19. Marta Abu Bere, (victim-survivor East Timor)

During the night the Japanese. . . entered my room. At that time I was so young I didn't know what was happening, my clothes were stripped with force and I was pushed to the bed. I was forced to service 10 men; I was treated like an animal. They told me not to yell, [that] if I yell they would kill me. In the morning I couldn't walk because I was in pain. Since my friend and I were chosen as comfort women, our work was only to service the Japanese army, on the morning and the night. During the day I had to service 4-5 men. When they entered the room they wore civilian clothes and their gun[s] were kept away. I had to service them for 3 months.

First of all, there were ten men who raped me. One got off and the other would replace him. They would do it all over again. We were treated like animals. We could not do

anything. If we do something, we would be choked. I could not walk. How could I walk if I was raped by ten men?