

[REDACTED]

Urgent

Dear [REDACTED]:



This letter is marked urgent because I sincerely believe it addresses a matter of national importance for both our countries and for our bilateral relationship.

I understand that H. Res. 121, regarding comfort women, is scheduled for mark-up on Tuesday June 26th. For the reasons explained below, adoption by the House of this measure will almost certainly have lasting and harmful effects on the deep friendship, close trust and wide-ranging cooperation our two nations now enjoy. I would like to report to you, for example, that the Japanese Diet has just passed the extension of the Special Measures Law on Iraq for another two years, which enables Japan to continue to work for the restoration of peace and stability as well as the reconstruction of Iraq as a responsible member of the world community. Whatever position one might have on the proper policy regarding Iraq, we believe Japan's role—emphasizing humanitarian and logistical support—is indispensable.

The point of H.Res.121 is to demand that Japan formally apologize and take responsibility for its actions regarding the former comfort women. In fact, Japan has done just that. Every Prime Minister of Japan since 1993 has expressed our nation's formal and official apologies. A sample of a letter from then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is attached. By the time the projects to atone them conducted by the Asia Women's Fund were completed in September 2002, similar letters had been sent by the successive Prime Ministers to as many as 285 former comfort women.

These official apologies have been expressly reaffirmed by current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. In fact, he publicly stated at the Joint Press Availability with President Bush at Camp David, on April 27th:

"... both personally and as Prime Minister of Japan, my heart goes out in sympathy to all those who suffered extreme hardships as comfort women; and I expressed my apologies for the fact that they were forced to endure such extreme and harsh conditions. Human rights were violated in many parts of the world during the 20th Century; therefore we must work to make the 21st Century



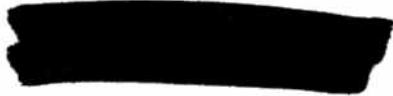
a wonderful century in which no human rights are violated. And the Government of Japan and I wish to make significant contributions to that end."

You will recall that Prime Minister Abe mentioned the same thing when he met with you in the Congress on April 26th. Full detail on all of Japan's official apologies can be found at www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/english/html/cw1.htm.

The adoption by the House Foreign Affairs Committee of H. Res. 121 would suggest that the Committee has adopted the contention that Japan's past apologies are for some reason not "official." This contention is absolutely groundless. As one can see from the attached letter, the apology is *on its face* official. The operative paragraph begins, "As Prime Minister of Japan, I thus extend anew my most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women..." Moreover, Japan's apologies are official because the Government of Japan has so stated, many times. Prime Minister Abe confirmed that Japan's apologies, including his own, are official. I should be puzzled if the House of Representatives intends to adopt a measure that implicitly disagrees with or does not believe the Prime Minister of Japan about a basic, technical matter that is certainly within *his* competence and authority to decide.

There are some media reports suggesting that the decision to mark up H. Res. 121 was impelled by the paid advertisement regarding the comfort women matter that appeared in the June 14 *Washington Post*. The Government of Japan is not involved in any way in this advertisement, as we have made clear in the Embassy's website homepage (www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/english/html/cw0607.htm). Like the United States, Japan is a democracy, and individuals, including elected officials, are free to express their views. The policy of the Government of Japan to accept responsibility for the comfort women matter remains unchanged.

Before adopting, in 1993, its current policy of accepting responsibility and apologizing, the Government of Japan undertook an exhaustive, comprehensive study of the facts and circumstances regarding the comfort women matter. The facts exposed by this study are complex. This is understandable; history is rarely neat and simple. However, the Japanese Government accepted responsibility, and has extended formal and official apologies to all former comfort women.



Former Ambassador to Japan and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield said many times that ours is the most important bilateral relationship “bar none.” In fact, our alliance based on shared values such as freedom, democracy and respect for human rights is indispensable for not only regional but also global peace and prosperity. Congress’s decision to move H.Res.121 will only serve the purposes of those who wish to undermine the Japan-U.S. relationship. I hope you will not allow that to happen.



Respectfully yours,



Ambassador of Japan



Attachment: A sample of a letter from Prime Minister to the former comfort women



Attachment

Letter from Prime Minister to the former comfort women

Page 1 of 1

(Translation)

Letter from Prime Minister Koizumi to the former comfort
women

The Year of 2001

Dear Madam,

On the occasion that the Asian Women's Fund, in cooperation with the Government and the people of Japan, offers atonement from the Japanese people to the former wartime comfort women, I wish to express my feelings as well.

The issue of comfort women, with an involvement of the Japanese military authorities at that time, was a grave affront to the honor and dignity of large numbers of women.

As Prime Minister of Japan, I thus extend anew my most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women.

We must not evade the weight of the past, nor should we evade our responsibilities for the future.

I believe that our country, painfully aware of its moral responsibilities, with feelings of apology and remorse, should face up squarely to its past history and accurately convey it to future generations.

Furthermore, Japan also should take an active part in dealing with violence and other forms of injustice to the honor and dignity of women.

Finally, I pray from the bottom of my heart that each of you will find peace for the rest of your lives.

Respectfully yours,

Junichiro Koizumi
Prime Minister of Japan