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# Philippines, WWII: Former victims of sex abuses from Japanese Army protest in Manila

Tuesday 1 October 2013, by [Kyodo News](#) (Date first published: 27 July 2013).

## **“Comfort women” to Aquino: Sit Abe down**

MANILA — A women’s rights group in the Philippines has asked President Benigno Aquino III to bring up the “comfort women” issue with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe when the two leaders meet Saturday in Manila.

In an interview Thursday, Richilda Extremadura, president of Lila Pilipina (League for Filipino Grandmothers), expressed hope that Aquino, when he meets with Abe, will not forget the Filipino females who were sexually abused by Japanese soldiers during World War II.

“If it will not be on the agenda, it would show that President Aquino does not have any concern about the comfort women issue, particularly, for the grandmothers who are nearing the end of their lives but have yet to receive justice,” Extremadura said, noting 73 of nearly 200 members, former sex slaves for the Imperial forces, have already died. The latest death occurred July 12.

Abe, who by Filipino rights groups is perceived as unsympathetic toward the comfort women issue, was to arrive in Manila on Friday evening and meet with Aquino on Saturday, ending a three-day Southeast Asia trip whose first stops were Malaysia and Singapore.

Abe’s trip is said to be aimed at deepening Japan’s economic and security ties with fast-growing Southeast Asia amid tension with China over a territorial dispute.

“We pray that we will not slip from President Aquino’s mind when he meets with the Japanese prime minister. When he was still a congressman, he was very much aware of our issue. He would even approach us when we lobbied for our cause. He knows we are asking Japan for an unequivocal apology, for the historical inclusion of the realities of Japanese military sexual slavery in the Philippines, and for just compensation for the victims,” Extremadura said.

“I think the Japanese government should see that it is urgent that justice should be delivered to the victims because our grandmothers are dying over time. This year, three have died. Last year, there were four. They are dying without having peace because justice was denied to them,” she said.

Another woman belonging to Malaya Lolas (Free Grandmothers), a different rights group, died recently in Pampanga province, north of Manila.

Extremadura said she believes Abe has been issuing statements and policies contrary to her group’s cause, so no discussion about the comfort women between him and Aquino “will certainly make Abe happy.”

**Kyodo News**, July 26, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/26/national/comfort-women-to-aquino-sit-abe-down/#.UfWH3qxGTFw>

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## Sex slavery victims rally in Manila

MANILA — Six Filipino former sex slaves staged a rally Saturday near the entrance of the Philippine presidential palace as Benigno Aquino III held a meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

“Justice for the grandmothers! Shinzo Abe, we are here, proof of the Japanese military’s sexual slavery,” Virginia Villarma, 84, shouted. “President Aquino, this is your chance. If you truly support us, convey our message to your friend, Shinzo Abe.”

Villarma was 14 when Japanese forces housed her and her sister in a garrison in Manila’s port area, forcing them to wash soldiers’ clothes, cook food and cater to their sexual needs, she said.

“The trauma is immeasurable, and that experience remains fresh in my memory,” Villarma, a member of Lila Pilipina (League for Filipino Grandmothers), said.

Villarma said she received financial help from the Asian Women’s Fund in 1996 and has heard apologies offered by Japanese officials and people. However, it’s not the same as redress from the Japanese government, she said.

Villarma and her five fellow sex slaves, known colloquially as “comfort women,” are backed by family members and a women’s rights group. They continue to demand an unequivocal apology and compensation from the Japanese government.

They also want official acknowledgment of Japanese military sexual slavery in Japan’s historical accounts and books about the war.

“Many of us have died, and many of those still alive like me are already weak and sickly. But we will not give up on our struggle to get justice,” Villarma said.

Of the original 174 members in Lila Pilipina, 73 have died, the most recent on July 12. From the Malaya Lolas (Free Grandmothers) group, 55 women have died out of 92 original members.

“I am begging for the mercy of both the Philippine and Japanese governments. We suffered so much during the Japanese occupation because aside from raping women in my home place in Pampanga, the soldiers also separated the men and killed them and burned our houses,” Isabelita Vinuya, president of Malaya Lolas and a former sex slave, said in an interview.

Joms Salvador of the women’s rights group Gabriela, which joined the protest, expressed fear that a new generation of sex slaves may evolve even before the original ones get justice with the planned granting of access to Philippine military facilities for the U.S. military and Japanese Self-Defense Forces.

“We demand justice for the comfort women and we also denounce any expansion of Philippine-Japan-U.S. military cooperation, which will breed the next generation of comfort women,” Salvador said.

**Kyodo News**, July 27, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/27/national/sex-slavery-victims-rally-in-manila/#.UfW2IKxGTFw>

