

Midori Sato holds 14th annual “Martyr Spirit Memorial Rally and Korea-Japan Joint Memorial Ceremony”

Jeong Soon Jo
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[Donga Weekly] [Interview] “Genuine Communication with Korea is Only Possible after Japan Apologizes for the Events of the Past”



The 14th annual “Martyr Spirit Memorial Rally and Korea-Japan Joint Memorial Ceremony” was held in the front garden of the Seodaemun Prison in Seoul on October 11th. The “Society of Japanese Praying for Peace in Korea” (Hereafter referred to as the Japanese Society) has held this event every year since 2001. This year’s event was especially meaningful, as it coincided with the announcement of the events of Japan’s past by the Abe administration.

Every Year at the ‘Seodaemun Prison

Japanese Society President Midori Sato visited Korea specifically for the event. In her opening speech, she said that “Forgiveness and reconciliation, as well as genuine peace, are possible only when we apologize for and correct the wrongdoings of the past. The spirit of patriotism and love of heaven held by the martyrs that we commemorate today is a spirit worthy of exaltation, a spirit that serves as a beautiful example to the world.” What could have motivated her to spend her own time and money to host this event at the Seodaemun Prison?

Mrs. Sato said, “14 years ago, when I first visited the Seodaemun Prison, I came to understand that the Korean people suffered greatly due to the crimes of Japan in the past—not only during Japanese colonial rule over Korea, but in the 1592 invasion of Korea by Japan under Toyotomi Hideyoshi as well. Upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent that there was no exchange between the two countries when Japan invaded Joseon. However, when Korea sent missionaries to Japan in the Edo era, the two countries enjoyed a healthy, peaceful relationship of exchange. If Korea and Japan are to genuinely reconcile and get along with each other peacefully, they need to exchange sincere, honest dialogue with each other.”

Not only is President Sato an expert in Korea-Japan relations, she also possesses a wide knowledge about Korean society. The event being held at the Seodaemun Prison is being held on October 12th in order to coincide with the anniversary of the death of patriotic martyr Kwan-Soon Yu.

The Number of Japanese Citizens who Sympathize with Korea Grows

President Sato found other Japanese citizens who resonated with her vision, and organized a movement

for the revival of Japanese-Korean relations, as well as the unity of North and South Korea. Last June, the Ministry of Patriots-Veterans recognized her contributions by awarding her with a plaque of appreciation.

President Sato's relations with Korea run deeper still—her four daughters are all married to Korean men. Her husband, Tamio Sato, serves as the Secretary General of the “Korea-Japan Undersea Tunnel Kumamoto Citizen's Assembly.” Presidents Roh Tae-Woo, Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun all conveyed the importance of the construction of the Korea-Japan Tunnel, and Japan agrees on the matter as well.

“The distance between Geoje Island of Korea and Tsushima of Japan is about 66 kilometers. If the two nations are connected by an undersea tunnel, we will be able to travel conveniently and quickly between the two by car, not by boat or by airplane, as we have been doing until now. When transportation between our nations becomes smoother and more convenient, the conflict between our countries will come to resolve itself as well.”.....