

# The Statue of Peace in Berlin-Moabit Should Remain Permanently in Place!

## Residents' Petition

Representatives: Jana Schäfer, Michiko Kajimura, Gernot Wolfer

### Explanation:

The "Statue of Peace" which stands on the corner of Birkenstraße and Bremer Straße in Berlin-Moabit, commemorates the courage of the so-called "comfort women" and reminds people to stand up against sexualized violence. Immediately after its installation, the Japanese government's attempt to remove the peace statue made headlines. In October 2020, civil society was able to prevent its removal through massive protests. Now the peace statue is under threat again. The Governing Mayor of Berlin Kai Wegner (CDU) announced in May 2024 during his visit to Japan that he was "holding out the prospect of a solution for the controversial comfort women monument in Berlin" and was committed to "ensuring that there is a monument against violence against women, but a one-sided representation must no longer take place." The Japanese ambassador would be involved in future talks about a new memorial. In June 2024, it also became known that the district mayor Stefanie Remlinger (Alliance 90/The Greens) wants to remove the statue by September. At the moment, the peace statue is only being "tolerated," although the district council (BVV) has already decided several times that the peace statue should be permanently preserved in its current location.

With this residents' petition, we are advocating that the BVV call on the Berlin-Mitte district office to implement the permanent preservation of the peace statue at its current location.

### Justification:

The peace statue is not only a monument to past suffering, but also a reminder of the courage of the survivors who fought for a fairer world. It is a universal symbol for present and future generations, reminding us to be courageous and to remain vigilant against all forms of sexualized violence. The peace statue has become a living place of remembrance and learning.

During the Asia-Pacific War from 1931 to 1945, Japan abducted an estimated 200,000 girls and young women from several countries. They were forced into sexual slavery on all fronts of the war. The Japanese government concealed these crimes until the silence was broken in the early 1990s by survivors who spoke out to the public. They demanded that the Japanese government admit its crimes, issue a state apology and pay rightful compensation. Human rights organizations, such as the UN, named Japanese military slavery as a war crime and a crime against humanity and urged Japan to comply. Japan officially acknowledged its guilt in 1993, but refused to address the crime publicly and in schools. On December 28, 2015, the South Korean and Japanese governments agreed on the "comfort women" agreement. This took place without the consent or involvement of the survivors and did not reflect the demands of the international community. With the agreement, Japan and Korea declare the issue "finally and irrevocably" resolved.

The peace statue is not only a monument to the history of the "comfort women," but also to the numerous anti-colonial and ongoing struggles of FLINTA\* (women, lesbians, intersex, non-binary, trans and agender people) against sexualized violence, femicide and silence worldwide. This is proven time and again when the Statue of Peace is chosen as a meeting place in Berlin to give voice to anti-racist and post-migrant communities. The statue has long since become a decolonial and feminist monument in the neighborhood. It is indispensable for a democratic politics of remembrance in public space!

Since the Statue of Peace has been in Berlin, there has been no deterioration in diplomatic relations between Germany and Japan. Korean and Japanese communities also continue to work closely together in civil society. Ari is loved and appreciated by neighbors, Berliners and people from all over the world. In addition, the Korea Association and the "Comfort Women" working group are doing important educational and awareness-raising work with the peace statue and the "Museum of Comfort Women" (MuT) as a starting point: Students, scientists and artists deal with the topics of sexualized violence, colonialism and the culture of remembrance.

This multifaceted significance and important commitment must be recognized and the peace statue must be permanently preserved as a monument!

#### You can sign the Einwohnerantrag if you...

...are at least **16** years old.

...are registered in the Mitte district with your sole or main residence.

This includes the zip codes: 10115, 10117, 10119, 10178, 10179, 10435, 10551, 10553, 10555, 10557, 10559, 13353, 10555, 10557, 10557, 10785, 10787, 13347, 13349, 13351, 13353, 13357, 13359, 13407, 13409, 13347, 13353, 13355, 13357, 13359, 13409

...come from all over the world. You do **NOT** need German or EU citizenship.