

The commission was launched in December of 2005 and eventually came to an end in 2010. However, the final report is only available currently in Korean; the only English language one being a preliminary report entitled “Commission Report on the Activities of the Past Three Years” released in May 2009

The report itself contains an introduction from the president, six sections, and appendices.

The six sections contained are:

1. Historical Background of Korea’s Past Settlement
2. Introduction to the Commission
3. Procedure for Investigation
4. Extra-Investigation Activities
5. Analysis of Verified Cases
6. Major Achievements and Further Agendas

The objective of the commission as stated in section 2 was to foster national legitimacy and reconcile the past for the sake of national unity, as well as exposing the truth of incidents of human rights abuses, violence, and massacres occurring from Japanese rule to the present. There were specific areas that were investigated:

1. Anti-Japanese movements during Japanese rule as well as “immediately preceding movements”
2. Koreans residing abroad and their efforts to protect Korea’s sovereignty and enhance Korea’s position against Japanese rule spanning throughout the colonial period until the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
3. Massacres occurring from August 15th, 1945 to the Korean War period
4. Incidents ranging from August 15th, 1945 to the end of the authoritarian regimes, including disruption of constitutional order, unjust use of public power, significant human rights abuses, allegations of manipulation, etc.
5. Terrorist acts, human rights abuses, massacres, suspicious deaths by groups that **opposed the legitimacy or were hostile to** the Republic of Korea spanning from August 15th, 1945 to the period of authoritarian regimes
6. Other incidents that are historically important and deemed necessary by the Commission that fits within their intent

The **mandate** was that the Commission could independently address matters that fell within the purview of its authority, with the President of the Commission being able to recommend a government bill to the President of Korea in relation to its work. Commissioners exercised authority independent from any outside intervention or orders, and could not be dismissed against their will.

The commission was intended to operate for two years with a two year extension being possible if needed, and had the ability to conclude before the end date if it felt it was unnecessary to continue

There were **15 members of the commission** with 8 recommended by the national assembly, 4 appointed by the President, and 3 members nominated by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. They were given two year terms with the possibility of appointment, and could be prohibited if they were found to be an

offender or victim in a case under investigation by the commission, were involved in any criminal investigation or trial procedure with respect to the relevant investigation by the commission, if the commissioner participated in the investigation as an agent of the party concerned, or if they received a refusal request from a petitioner or respondent.

President of the Commission was Byung-Ook Ahn

The three standing commissioners were Young-Jo Lee, Dong-Choon Kim, and Jun-Gone Kim

The remaining commissioners were Il-Sook Choi, Jae-Geun Chung, Soon-Kwon Hong, Byung-Joon Jung, Byung-Seok Jung, Oe-Sook Kim, Kee-Yuk Lee, Sang-Hoon Park, and Yo-Chan Park

Ultimately, 241 staffers were used in the Commission, organized in different departments including the Bureau of Massacres, Policy and PR Team, and the Bureau of National Independence. 84 of these staff were dispatched from central and local governments.

The estimated budget in the final year was 19.7 billion KRW; the following chart details financial operations (in 1000 KRW):

Division	'05 Year Budget	'06 Year Budget	'07 Year Budget	'08 Year Budget
Total	2,416	9,410	12,519	19,657
Personnel Expenses	65	5,092	4,668	9,844
Operating Expenses	2,351	4,318	7,851	9,813

A total of 10,860 petitions were received by the commission. The categorization was assigned as such:

	No. of Cases	Ratio
Total	10,860	100.0
Committee on Independence Movement	1,975	18.2
Anti-Japanese independence movement	274	2.5
History of Korean expats during colonial times	14	0.1
Groups opposing the legitimacy of the ROK	1,687	15.6
Committee on Massive Civilian Sacrifices	7,922	73.0
Massacres	7,922	73.0

Committee on Human Rights Abuses	612	5.6
Human rights violation	612	5.6
Others	351	3.2

In the background section, it is noted that experiences of other nations such as Germany, South Africa, Spain, and Argentina provided guidance for “past settlement activities”, and that by examining areas such as the legacy of collaborationism with Japanese colonialists, ideological division and conflict on the peninsula, and the various military governments in the south.

It was also noted that the fact finding mission had a sense of urgency, as many of the people who could provide first hand accounts of events were elderly, with 42% of petitioners over 60 years old, and 24% above 70. Nearly all the petitioners were above 50.

Division	Total	20 ~ 29 Yrs	30 ~ 39 Yrs	40 ~ 49 Yrs	50 ~ 59 Yrs	60 ~ 69 Yrs	70 ~ 79 Yrs	80 ~ 89 Yrs	Over 90 Yrs	Un- known
Total	10,860 (100)	26 (0.2)	186 (1.7)	616 (5.7)	2,173 (20.0)	4,591 (42.3)	2,612 (24.1)	530 (4.9)	24 (0.2)	102 (0.9)
National Independence	274	-	1	25	31	88	73	31	4	21
History of Overseas Koreans	14	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	10
Massacres	7,922	21	154	409	1,631	3,548	1,771	332	13	43
Massacres by Groups Opposing the Legitimacy of the ROK	1,687	1	17	76	294	702	479	104	5	9
Human Rights Abuses	612	2	11	81	154	133	173	42	2	14
Others	351	1	3	25	63	118	115	21	-	5

Breakdown of cases brought forward and their status as of February 28th, 2009:

Range of Investigations	Total	Verified Cases						Investigating	Pre-Investigation	Reservation
		Sub-Total	Verified	Unverified	Dismissed	Withdrawal	Transferred			
Grand Total	10,992 (100.0)	4,974 (45.2)	3,444 (31.3)	28 (0.3)	1,092 (9.9)	313 (2.9)	97 (0.9)	5,969 (54.3)	21 (0.2)	28 (0.3)
National Independence Movement	273	231	18	19	184	10		23	1	18
History of Overseas Koreans	16	6	5		1				10	
Groups Opposing ROK Legitimacy	1,659	626	467	1	135	22	1	1,033		
Civilian Massacres	7,818	3,120	2,882			234	4	4,698		
Human Rights Abuses	624	391	72	8	245	41	25	215	8	10
Others	602	600			527	6	67		2	

By and large, the most cases investigated were involving Massacres, with around 8,000 petitions filed and around 1,500 investigated.

The main objective of the commission was to clarify and reveal the truth about historical wrongdoing, it also was involved in making recommendations to the government for the purpose of national unity and reconciliation. It should be noted that these recommendations were not legally binding and could not be enforced and were effectively dependent on the will of the government.

The commission did such things as conducting on-site examinations and field surveys, as well as exhumations on various sites in 2007 and 2008. These sites included:

- the Cobalt mines in Gyongsan. 3,500 people were known to be buried inside, who were inmates of Daegu Penitentiary and members of the Bodo League in the Gyeongsan and Cheongdo areas.
- Bunteogol in Cheongwon. A total of 1,000 inmates from Cheongju Police Station/Cheongju Penitentiary, as well as members of the Bodo League in the Cheongju and Cheongwon areas were thought to have been massacred here in July 1950.

- Bongseong Mountain in Gurye. Around 70 civilians detained at Gurye Police Station were executed on November 9th, 1948, immediately after the Yeonsu-Suncheon Incident. [NOTE: this was a civilian uprising occurring after government suppression of the Jeju uprising in the southwest of the ROK.¹]
- Golryeonggol in Nangwol-dong. Seven prospective exhumation sites were available, but only four were inspected due to disagreements with the landowner. Victims were inmates of Daejeon Penitentiary, members of the Bodo League, and victims of preventive detention. Approximately 1,800 people were believed to have been killed in July 1950, with some estimates placing the death toll at 7,000.
- Galmegi Island. Approximately 500 civilians were killed at Galmegi Island by the South Korean police in July 1950 and left unburied for around six decades. Bodies from there and the previous areas were exhumed.

The commission noted that the government should address amending relevant laws in relation to exhumation work, simplifying administrative work for exhumations, and preparing long term facilities for preservation of exhumed remains

NOTE: The Bodo League was the name given to individuals arrested by the government on suspicion of communism, sympathizing with the DPRK, or other far-left beliefs. These individuals were summarily executed during the initial retreat of ROK and US forces during the opening stages of the Korean War. Unfortunately, there are not many sources on it and the one academic text I have on the Korean War, Allan Millett's *The War For Korea, 1950-1951*, contains only brief mention of executions by the police forces and even then only specifically mentions counterinsurgents captured between 1948-1950. Here is a shitty AP flash thing containing video and documents discussing the massacres:

http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/_international/korea_masskillings/index.html?SITE=AP

Complementary research:

- Massacres were not limited to any particular region, requiring a nationwide investigation regarding the identity of the victims
 - A survey investigating the location and type of victims was conducted in 2007, and said "Categorized by each region, the surveys found: 356 victims in Ganghwa-gun, 385 victims in Cheongwon-gun, 365 victims in Gongju-si, 373 victims in Yecheon-gun, 517 victims in Cheongdo-gun, 283 victims in Gimhae, 1,880 victims in Gochang-gun, 2,818 victims in Youngam-gun, and 1,318 victims in Gurye. Divided by the type of damage, the survey found: 1,457 leftist guerilla victims of the South Korean army or police forces, 1,348 Bodo League victims, 1,318 local leftist victims, 1,092 victims from the Yeosu Incident, and 892 victims accused of being North Korean collaborators."
- Various things in the news and investigations are discussed, such as then President Song saying that Korea lacked a confession culture
- International networking included signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chilean HR Commission to develop a collaborative relationship, holding a public lecture on historical

¹ <http://www.britannica.com/event/Yosu-Sunchon-Rebellion>

memory involving victims of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime, and inviting a truth-finding expert from Indonesia

- Various symposiums were held on topics such as civilian casualties by the US, massacres, and evaluations of the truth commission
- Joint Memorial Services and other Memorial services were also held at various points throughout the commission's operation

Analysis of verified cases was outlined in a section; this gave an overview to each specific area of the commission and dealt with various issues that would come up in them, such as work redundancy, categorization problems, and the implications of major incidents.

Special attention should be given to the fact that most of the massacres involving non-state actors involve troops of the DPRK and leftist sympathizers who were involved in vigilante justice during occupation periods.

Attention was also given to the scale of South Korean military and Counter-intelligence Corps involvement in state repression and killing whether through intention or negligence, as well as the US' role in civilian deaths, mainly through improper planning of aerial bombing operations often in areas with dense civilian populations.

Human rights abuses were found to occur through illegal execution of public power, and examples of torture were also uncovered, although there were uncertainties in cases involving freedom of speech, property rights, and labor rights. Many cases involved fabricated espionage involving Japan or North Korea.

Major achievements were seen as gaining an apology from the President of the Republic of Korea for the illegal activities committed by state officials, as well as legal and political reconciliation messages. Active cooperation was also cultivated, which helped strengthen the image of the commission

Further agendas were listed as

1. Completing truth verification within the term - the quota established by the commission at the beginning of the term had not been met, but intended to complete verification on commission initiated investigations by 2009.
2. Reconciliation and follow-up measures after truth verification - The commission was expected to be able to mediate reconciliation between the perpetrators and victims and revise policies in order to ensure the violations are not repeated. Little progress at the time of the report's writing apparently had been made, and the Commission recommended establishing methodologies to "restore the honor" of victims, and to complete the overall plan to fund a concerned research center or archive the historical legacies introduced through the Commission's findings
3. Judicial preparation to prevent the reoccurrence of similar atrocities - majority of petitions at the Commission were filed against illegal acts conducted by public power. Thus, the commission concluded that it was necessary to pass judicial reforms, especially in education, to ensure protections against atrocities in the future

4. Publication of the comprehensive report - Publication within 6 months of the expiration of its mandate, covering truth verification and overall guidelines to institute further policy-making.

From the preliminary report available in English, it seems that these were the general recommendations made:

1. Massacres - official state apologies, revision of family registers, memorial events, additions or revisions regarding historical records, peace and human rights education, revision of related laws, and medical subsidies for the wounded. In relation to 54 civilian deaths caused by US Air Force bombings, recommendations included an official state apology, holding of a memorial event, as well as measures to compensate the victims through negotiations with the US government.
2. Groups opposing the legitimacy of the ROK - holding of memorial events, additions or revisions regarding historical records, archiving incidents as historical record, revision of family registers, and strengthening of peace education. Many of these involved the North Korean army and "leftists" [NOTE: the report does not further elaborate on the latter and what they constitute] and thus have "realistic limitations" in implementing them
3. Human rights abuses - Official stage apology and retrial recommended for 35 cases that received irrevocable court rulings [NOTE: Jo Yong-Su of the Minjok Daily was mentioned by name; he appears to have been executed in the 1960s on suspicion of collaborating with the DPRK]. For 17 cases involving illegal arrest, detention, and death, the Commission recommended an official state apology, medical services, deletion of records, and damage reparation. Official state apology and compensation were also recommended for the Buil Scholarship Foundation Incident, and that the government apologize and nullify disqualification of national bar exam students who participated in demonstrations.

Further links:

<http://www.usip.org/publications/truth-commission-south-korea-2005>