



Vabien III N. 918 Sunhwa-Dong, Jung gu
Seoul, Korea 100-130
(82)-2-720-8035

www.nkgulag.org



Vabien III N. 918 Sunhwa-Dong, Jung gu
Seoul, Korea 100-130
(82)-2-720-8035

www.nksc.co.kr

**Joint Submission to the Conservative Party Human Rights
Commission Inquiry on North Korea**

Executive Director: Kang Cheol Hwan

I. Submitting Organizations

Free North Korea Gulag

Free North Korean Gulag (FNKG) is a non-profit founded in 2003 by former prisoners of political prison camps in North Korea. FNKG works for the democratization of North Korea and the dismantlement of North Korean political prison camps. FNKG carries out annual in-depth interviews to former defector prisoners and prisoner's family members in South Korea and China. This information is then exposed through a report and submitted to international institutions as is then completed with press conferences and expert seminars. FNKG also maps out the location of the political prison camps through satellite pictures. FNKG also attends international conferences and exposes these human rights violations to the international community through international institutions and mechanisms. Through the use of satellite pictures, FNKG also maps the location and movements of political prison camps. FNKG has been working closely with the Commission of Inquiry (COI) for North Korea assisting with interview and information processes.

North Korea Strategy Center

North Korea Strategy Center (NKSC) was founded in 2007. It is a defector-led non-profit organization that seeks to use its background and knowledge gained from first-hand experience in North Korea to prepare for a generation of reunification. NKSC activities are primarily centered on fact-finding research, awareness at a local and international level, community empowerment, and information dissemination in North Korea. NKSC considers these aspects essential to understand North Korea and strategically prepare to spread freedom, democracy, and human rights in the country.

NKSC works with elite defectors that have information and insight on North Korean affairs where information is shared through reports, debates, and seminars. In 2012, NKSC formed the **International Network for the Human Rights of North Korean Overseas Labor** (INHL) in order to bring forward the basic human rights conditions to North Korean overseas workers in places such as Kuwait, Russia, and China.¹ NKSC also offers the **Journalist Academy** program to young defectors with the objective to cultivate defector journalists to become leaders in bringing free media in an open North Korea. In addition, NKSC carries out the **Unification Education** program taking young defector university students to schools so they can provide insightful information of North Korea creating positive views and support for the unification of the Korean peninsula. These activities promote awareness and understanding at a local level in South Korea. At an international

¹ NKSC produced the report, 'Conditions of North Korean Overseas Labor' where it showed an analysis of interviews carried out to former overseas North Korean workers in Kuwait, Russia, and China. The report showed how North Korea is sending over 60,000 workers in order to obtain foreign currency where the workers are not allowed to leave the complex and do not receive any salaries.

level, NKSC participates in international conferences regarding North Korea human rights. NKSC also has impact directly in North Korea, exposing its citizens to democratic ideals and values by sending external information, South Korean dramas, and movies through DVDs, radios, and USBs into North Korea.

I. Analysis of North Korean Affairs

Authoritarian control through the use of political prison camps

The stability of the North Korea regime relies on three main factors: the dynamics of its foreign relations, the environment of its internal political conditions, and economic situation. In the past, Kim Jong Il was highly supported by the Eastern Bloc, Russia, and China which allowed him to maintain strict political control and economic stability. The international allies supported the sustainability of the authoritarian regime and solidified its legitimacy. Notwithstanding, the North Korean government also maintained a complex system of surveillance and control through the usage of political prison camps that began being built in the 1970s. Any possibility of power struggle was then controlled and removed through the usage of political prison camps. During the mid-70s, the creation and prisoner intake in political prison camps increased as more people expressed their discontent with the feudal reformation. Consequently, many innocent people were arrested with no fair trial for the mere justification of representing a threat to the authoritarian regime. The system of control and suppression has thus been applied for decades through fear and execution of the North Korean people.

Korean peninsula political relations

The mid-90s were marked by significant changes for North Korea. After the death of Kim Il Sung in 1995, the external support received by North Korea was weakened. The Eastern Bloc collapsed as well as the power and stability of the Soviet Union. Most importantly, China went through an economic reform leaving North Korea with no political or economic support. In a state of crisis, Kim Jong Il used drastic measures by carrying out public executions, torture, and arbitrary arrest to prevent any form of revolt and protect the stability of the regime.

Despite the death of millions through a severe famine and the increasing evidence of political prison camps, the left-wing democratic party of South Korea continued to provide aid and political support to North Korea. Consequently, the international community did not raise interest to the severe human rights violations occurring in North Korea and was hindered to see the crimes against humanity infringed by the authoritarian regime. Consequently, the aid provided to North Korea did not reach the intended beneficiaries and did not incentivize any form of cooperation or positive change.

Once Kim Jong Il attacked South Korea, former president of South Korea Lee Myung Bak responded with a policy shift from the ‘sunshine policy’ to a ‘reciprocity policy approach’. Aid and engagement activities were drastically reduced and only negotiated on strict conditions. The North Korean government was faced once again with the need of economic reform. However, in December 2011, Kim Jong Un succeeded power after the death of his father Kim Jong Il. Nevertheless, due to the lack of governing experience and lack of leadership, Kim Jong Un resulted in his first years to continue the politics his father carried out without pushing for government changes.

Nevertheless, North Korea’s foreign relations, internal political conditions, and economic situation continued became more critical and unstable. In the times of Kim Il Sung, the regime was supported by heavy political ideological indoctrination and armed politics. Similarly, Kim Jong Il carried out a military first policy through armed politics. Nevertheless, it is said that Kim Jong Un is implementing a ‘bullets politics’ approach.

Recent power struggles in North Korea

The recent execution of Jang Song Taek is a clear example of the ‘bullets politics’ Kim Jong Un is implementing. Jang Song Taek was a key figure and had played an important role during the Kim Jong Il regime. Jang Song Taek was the diplomatic mediator between North Korea and China and advocate for economic reform pushing to bring more economic rights for the North Korean people.

Over the fifty years, the Kim dynasty has had maximum authority and control over the economic decisions of the country. Nevertheless, Jang Song Taek’s important economic influence and role signified power dispersion within the regime. Using his influential power, Jang Song Taek was also actively pushing for economic reform to follow China’s steps. As Jang Song Taek reflected on the instability of the Kim leadership it therefore resulted in the execution of the highest ranking official in the regime. This public action was also maneuvered to confirm and solidify the power of the Kim regime. The regime will continue to execute all people that express opposition and threat to the government. Jang Song Taek was therefore executed with no fair trial or clear justification. This case clearly reflects on the human rights violations that the North Korean regime continues to use today from a small to larger scale.

Recently, the bellicose actions taken by North Korea including its nuclear and missile threats, have changed the strong support the country has obtained from its allies such as China. In addition, the new South Korean presidency of Park Geun Hye is shifting towards a ‘trust politics’ approach with North Korea. The North Korean government is headed for collapse and will have to reform in order to survive.

The North Korean government is going through severe political, economic, and social instabilities. Kim Jong Un, North Korea’s newest leader is young in age and lacks the

political and governing experience to run the country. Kim lacks the leadership and continues to enforce fear and threat to solve the dilemmas faced by the country. The internal system is therefore at high risk of regime collapse.

After the death of Kim Jong Il, Jang Song Taek and Choi Hye Ryong were left in control of the military assisting Kim Jong Un. Nevertheless, this produced an internal power struggle resulting in the elimination and execution of Jang Song Taek shifting the military authority of the country. While Kim Jon Un removed Jang Song Taek's influence, there is no doubt Choi Hye Ryong will soon follow the same path of execution as it still represents a power threat to Kim Jong Un. While it is impossible to predict exactly how the government will change, economic support for North Korea is highly discouraged due to its overall instability.

II. The role of the international community with North Korea

Negative consequences of humanitarian and economic aid

Due to the high instabilities and dangers of regime collapse the government is facing, it has resulted to requesting more economic and humanitarian support. While the international community continues to send and provide this type of aid, the North Korean regime will continue to use it only for the support and sustainability of its regime rather than on its people. The aid received for the most vulnerable and in need is not being delivered to the targeted beneficiary but is rather being used to feed the country's military or sold in high prices in markets. North Korea should allow aid workers to access restricted areas and should be more cooperative with the monitoring systems of external organizations. Nevertheless, North Korea continues to shut its doors and using the aid received for its own interests.

Human rights over nuclear issues

North Korea is known for its nuclear threats, human rights violations, and economic backwardness. Nevertheless, throughout the last two decades, the international community has placed greater focus and interest in the nuclear issues, rather than the human rights aggravations. Hwang Jang Yob, former Secretary of the Labor Party and highest ranking North Korean official to defect to South Korea, advocated the urgent need of involving Chinese authorities in changing the actions taken by North Korea. The influence of China in overthrowing the authoritarian regime will solve all the nuclear and human rights issues the country is faced with. As the North Korean government uses the power of a nuclear status quo, it allows it to hide the severe human rights violations it instigates on the North Korean people, particularly through the use political prison camps. Consequently, the regime continues to carry out public executions, inhumane torture practices, and unjustified detentions.

The role of the British Government

The UK government has been taking more effective policies regarding North Korea than the South Korean government. The UK continues to raise human rights issues in dialogue with the North Korean government and has been offering English lessons in Pyongyang to North Korean high officials covering topics of democracy and human rights. These approaches will have more positive effects than humanitarian or economic aid as they are directed towards the critical issues of North Korea.

Oppositely, North Korea has also received financial and material support for the development of the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology. (PUST) Consequently, the North Korean government cultivated high level hackers that launched cyber-attacks on South Korean governmental and civil society websites increasing its cyber-terror skills. This type of support for education and development must also be ceased as it will be used as an attacking strategy.

While the Helsinki Accord was created to improve the relations between the Communist Bloc and Western countries, following the same policies and approaches would not be as effective with North Korea. After the death of Stalin in the Soviet Union there were significant behavioral changes particularly in the collective leadership of the government. In addition, the view on the criminalities of Stalin was highly reduced. The people in the Soviet Union were already being exposed to external information and enjoyed more freedoms than the ones North Koreans enjoy today. North Korea is not ready to engage with policies and approaches such as the Helsinki Accord.

Therefore, it is essential to understand the complexities of the North Korean system. As the changes occurred with Stalin or Mao, it is important to focus on shifting the governing power and system of collective leadership in North Korea. Additionally, it is paramount to push for a regime collapse and reform such as the changes carried out by the Chinese. Only then will the Helsinki Accord model be effective on North Korea. The international community must increase the pressure to North Korea to push for changes in the country's economic system.

The British government can thus take the following approaches and policies regarding the human rights of North Korea:

1) Dialogue and lobbying with China

China has a paramount role in influencing the decisions and actions of North Korea. Therefore, the British government can also invite the Chinese authorities to engage North Korea in responding for its human rights inquiries. Most importantly, China must stop repatriating North Korean refugees. There are over 40,000 North Korean refugees hiding in China that are living in constant fear and threat. When sent back to North Korea, refugees

are faced with torture and humiliation. The British government can bring these cases forward to the Chinese government in institutional and international platforms and support the abolition of repatriation laws and agreements between North Korea and China.

2) Supporting free media dissemination in North Korea

No real changes occur in North Korea if the citizens themselves are not aware of their human rights and liberties. Spreading awareness and understanding of the outside world to North Korea will empower the North Korean people and free them from suppressed indoctrination. Sending external information through videos, movies, and dramas is the best way to bring understanding and notions of democracy for the North Korean people. The British government can continue to support the information dissemination activities through the funding of USBs, DVDs, and radios or can also assist in developing new technologies and forms to distribute this form of information inside North Korea.

3) Supporting the defector community and human rights NGOs in South Korea

There are 25,000 North Korean defectors living in South Korea. The defector community is essential in order to obtain information and understanding of North Korea. Many defectors are taking part of movements and activities that aim at bringing democracy and human rights for North Korea. Defector organizations can help prepare for an opening of North Korea and spread of democratic values. Many of their activities defectors NGOs engage with are international seminars, research, defector support education, radio broadcasting and information dissemination. This knowledge and activities are essential to bring changes inside North Korea and prepare South Korea for unification. Therefore, there is a need to support defector-based NGOs for them to continue to carry out their activities and provide first-hand information of North Korea.

4) Create a strategic focus when doing education exchange with North Korea

While the British government continues to carry out cultural and educational exchanges with North Korea it is important to develop a strategy that can make North Koreans embrace liberal market and accept decentralization.

5) Take leadership in the European Union to strategically engage with North Korea

Countries such as Japan and the United States have already political and historical tensions with North Korea. Oppositely, the Kim Jong Un has more affiliation with European countries as he studied in Switzerland and has a softer relations with ex- soviet countries. It is essential for the European Union to gather and form a consensual policy and approach with North Korea with the objective of bringing democracy and human rights. The British government can thus take leadership in creating meetings and lobbying activities with EU member states in order to create policies and official statements to bring forward talks about human rights in North Korea. While there is no suggested policy to be taken, it is

necessary for all European countries to become aware of the severe human rights violations in North Korea and engage in discussion and dialogue as to how the EU can mediate and bring forward the human rights of North Korea. The synergy of European countries can be highly effective in bringing the right type of engagement.