"Ending the Kim Regime's Reign of Terror in North Korea: What Must Be Done"

Speakers:
Kim Seong Min,
Free North Korea Radio

Kim Young-il,
People for Successful Corean Reunification

Kwon Ryu-You
Keun Saem Education Center

Pastor Kang Cheol-ho,
Saetu Church

Eiko Kawasaki
Korea of All

With Special Guests
North Korea Freedom Week Delegation including
Choi Jeong-hun, North Korea People’s Liberation Front

Park Sang Hak, Fighters for Free North Korea

Park Kun-ha, North Korea Intellectuals’ Solidarity
Lee So-yeon, New Korea Women’s Alliance

Introduction and Moderator:
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SUZANNE SCHOLTE: Good afternoon. If I could have everybody’s attention please? We’re going to go ahead and get started. I’m Suzanne Scholte. I’m president of the Defense Forum Foundation, that’s hosting this lunch today, and also the chairman of the North Korean Freedom Coalition.

I’m going to first start out by just acknowledging a few of our guests in the audience that have joined us this morning. From our board of directors, the vice chairman of the Defense Forum Foundation, the Honorable Ty McCoy, who’s seated right here. And we also have with us the brother of David Sneddon, who disappeared in China, Michael Sneddon is our honored guest who is seated over there, along with Mr. Nishioka, who’s a longtime friend of ours, and Susan Komori, who has been I think at every North Korea Freedom Week since we started. So it’s great to have you all here. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

This is the 12th annual North Korea Freedom Week, Day Six! And I want to mention to you that since we first began this event back in 2004, there have been some dramatic changes that have occurred in North Korea. Those changes have been totally driven by the people sitting at your tables. The North Korean defectors who have escaped, that have become active in this issue are why things have changed so dramatically. The focus of this forum is how to end the regime, the Kim regime. And these defectors know how to do that. (Applause.)

Among the dramatic changes have been the end of isolation. North Koreans now have access to information. The Information Age has also come to North Korea. And these defectors are driving that flow of information so that the people of North Korea are no longer deceived about the reality of their circumstances. Again, the North Koreans themselves have created a free market system. The reason why we don’t see the level of starvation is not because conditions have improved, it’s because the North Koreans through their sheer determination have created private markers that have exploded all over the country – so many that over 200 can be identified by satellite. Those are just the ones we can see by satellite. Through their own sheer determination they’ve created these private markets. Capitalism is thriving in North Korea.

But another dramatic change is related to these first two -- that is the fact that close to 30,000 people have escaped. And the reality of North Korea is now universally accepted. We are no longer arguing that North Korea human rights should be the priority issue, as we were during the first North Korea Freedom Week. We are no longer trying to make that argument. We have won that battle with the report by the UN’s Commission on Inquiry determining for certain that crimes against humanity are being committed in North Korea. There is no disputing that fact at this time in history, at this time in the struggle.

But the challenge we face now is that we know these atrocities are happening but nothing is going to change in North Korea unless we act -- we must be active in helping these North Korean defectors do the job of reuniting the Korean Peninsula peacefully. They need our support. And we are going to hear from some of these defectors in just a moment who are going to talk about some of the work that they’re doing. But I want to identify every member of the delegation – if you will bear with me. I’m going to have them stand and – hold your applause – but I’m going to have each one of them stand and just identify the group they’re with, or whether they were special witnesses. This is one of the largest group of defectors that we’ve ever hosted for North Korea Freedom Week.

If you’d just hold your applause, I’m just going to have them stand really quickly so you know and can identify each one of these defectors. **Kim Seong-min**, who is the chair of North Korea Freedom Week along with me, is the director of Free North Korea Radio; **Choi Jeong-hun**, the commander in chief of the North Korea People’s Liberation Front; **Park Sang-hak**, director of Fighters for Free North Korea, which does the balloon launches; **Pastor Kang Chul-ho**, the first North Korean ordained Methodist minister, but also the first defector to establish a church for North Koreans in South Korea (applause); **Park Jung-oh**, representative of the Keun Saem Education Center, educating -- for free -- an after-school program for North Korean refugees who are trying to acclimate to South Korea’s educational system; **Park Kun-ha**, the executive director of the North Korean Intellectuals’ Solidarity, doing amazing work reaching out to the elites in North Korea; **Kim**
Young-il, one of the first North Korean defectors to have founded an NGO, whose purpose was to bring about unification and to be sure that people knew that it could be done without being a financial burden on South Korea, he’s preparing the way.

Lee So-yeon, the representative of the North Korea Women’s Alliance, who’s doing amazing work rescuing women and children out of China and out of North Korea, trying to reunite mothers with their children that were separated when they were trying to escape. Jung Kwang-il, a powerful witness at the COI, who’s a survivor of the political prison camps, who established the NGO, No Chain. Jay Jo, if she’s come in yet – she’s going to be coming in later; Grace Jo is here, representative of NK in the USA, and NGO of North Korean defectors who have or are becoming American citizens. And they’re working not only on rescues, but helping the North Koreans that have come to the United States of America on their resettlement.

Lim Il, who testified in Congress this week and who has established an NGO to focus attention on the North Koreans who are slave laborers and are being abused in countries all over the world to bring in up to a billion dollars in cold cash for this regime by exploiting their own citizens. He’s been exposing this, as he was also a slave laborer of the regime. Kim Hye-sook, the longest survivor of a political prison camp, 28 years incarcerated at a political prison camp, who testified at the United Nations yesterday. Kim Gyu-min, a special witness on propaganda movies and media, who’s done several documentaries on the North Korea issue. Ju Ara, a special witness speaking out for the victims of trafficking.

Choi Jeong-ho, special witness on the drug production and trafficking of this regime, the illicit activities to get cold cash to the regime. Bang Ung-cheol, a special witness on the illegal weapons trade and the counterfeiting. We also have Lee Da-eun, with the North Korean People’s Liberation Front, a special witness on the female soldiers. In fact, the North Korean People’s Liberation Front has plenty of women and men were who former soldiers who are now active in NKPLF.

Lee Yun-hui, an amazingly brave woman who crossed the Gobi Desert with a compass to get to freedom and who taught herself how to become a sound engineer and now works for Free North Korea Radio. Kwon Ryu-young, who’s a special witness on the people who have disappeared, as she’s had loved ones that have been taken to the political prison camps. But she’s also working on the after school program with her husband.

Jo Young-hwa, of the NKPLF. If it weren’t for him, we would never get anywhere on time! He’s been – (laughs) – he’s the guy who looks out for us and makes us move along and get on the bus. He’s been wonderful, a wonderful help to all of us. I found out later the reason why he’s so efficient at rallying everybody, getting us all together, is because he was a border guard in North Korea. (Laughter.) We also have Kim Dong-nam, a witness from No Chain who’s had members of his family put into political prison camps.

We have Liz Ihn who’s with the – president of Now! Act for North Koreans! She’s not a defector, but she’s been a wonderful help for all of us. She’s one of the special people that came with us from South Korea. Kwon Hye-jin, who works with her on strategy. And then Kim Jeong-ah, who spoke out very eloquent this morning in a special meeting with the China Commission this morning. Kawasaki Eiko, who’s our special witness on North Koreans in Japan, and she has shared amazing stories about rescues and how she rescued her daughter out of North Korea.

All of these brave people are the reason why we can acknowledge today that crimes against humanity are being committed in North Korea. These people have had an amazing schedule. They’ve testified at the United Nations yesterday. They’ve testified in Congress. They’ve been speaking out at different NGO’s – We have had NGO events all during the week. Dr. Greg Stanton led us in a candlelight vigil at the Chinese embassy just earlier this week. We’re going back to protest there, as a matter of fact on Saturday. Everyone’s welcome to join us at 3:00. If you guys could give a round of applause to these brave women and men. (Applause.) Now, you can all be seated now.
People ask me all the time, I’ve been working on this issue since 1996, nearly 20 years. People ask me all the time: “When is the regime going to collapse?”

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Tomorrow!

MS. SCHOLTE: Tomorrow! (Laughter, applause.) And that’s exactly what I say. – I always answer, “Tomorrow!” because we don’t know when it’s going to happen but we know it’s coming soon. And it’s coming soon because of these people that are fighting and speaking out and are not forgetting those they left behind. So we’re really happy to have these wonderful witnesses with us.

Now, I’m going to introduce several of these witnesses to speak. I want to be sure that everyone got a copy of this particular handout that had a list of everybody with their bios, so you know all their backgrounds. If you ever want to follow up or interview any of these people or want any more information, they are speaking out. So be sure, especially the congressional staff, NGOs and the media, to get a list of all the people that are here for North Korea Freedom Week.

We’re going to have several of them come up and speak in just a moment. And I want to just tell you a little story. The last time Kim Seong-min and I – (and if the translators could translate this for the defectors) – the last time that Kim Seong-min and I were in this room together was 2005 – 10 years ago! We had finally, finally been able to have a hearing in the committee room across the hall on the trafficking of North Korean women. At the same time, of that committee meeting there was a congressman from Pennsylvania who is no longer in Congress who was feting the ambassador from North Korea in this same room.

For that moment this was like the DMZ. The freedom fighters, the people that were speaking out were on that side of the room about to testify in a Congressional hearing. And the people that were on this side of the room were feting one of the representatives of one of the most abusive regimes in history. And at that time, we were trying to make the point that there were many women that were being trafficked in North Korea. But because they were just surveying the border area, they had come to the conclusion the traffic situation, oh, it wasn’t really that serious, because they were surveying people on the border area and there weren’t that many refugees there.

So we made this map tracing the route of just one woman. (Scholte holds up a map of China) This was a map from 2005. Now, Kang Seo (NKFW coordinator and translator) gives me a hard time because I’m a pack rat. This is a map from Mrs. Cha Kyung-sook’s testimony. She was one of the first women to speak out about the trafficking of North Korean women in a hearing. This is the route that she was trafficked, all across the whole area – this whole area of China. The other woman that testified, Mrs. Ma Soon-hee, we had a map of her – the route that she was trafficked and it was all over the interior of China.

So we were getting ready to present this before Congress. But when we found out that the North Korean ambassador was being feted by members of Congress, my dear brother and co-chair of North Korea Freedom Week, Kim Seong-min, wrote a quick message on the back of this map. And as soon as they opened the door of this room we all flooded in. And he wrote this message: The peaceful unification of Korea comes with the end of the Kim regime. (Scholte flips over map to show message in Korean.) Do you remember? (Laughter.) And at that moment, the ambassador from North Korea threatened Kim Seong Min’s life. And the congressman who was hosting at the time denied that he was feting and honoring the North Korean ambassador, (Han Song Ryol) denied that Kim Seong-min had been threatened. But there were three witnesses that spoke Korean that heard it very plainly.

Why do I bring this up? Because that is the fight that we have had to fight, even here in America, in diminishing the tragedy that’s going on in North Korea. If you could imagine that we had to face that fight, imagine what these North Korean defectors have had to go through in South Korea in speaking on this issue. It
was a powerful moment, but it demonstrates how far we’ve come because there’s no North Korean ambassadors that are being feted on Capitol Hill anymore. The North Korean Human Rights Act has passed several times. There now is legislation, the North Korean Sanctions Enforcement Act, there is also legislation calling for them to be relisted as state sponsors of terror. But I just wanted to share that story with you, because that was just 10 years ago. We have come a long way. But we have to do all we can to invest in these North Korean defector organizations and help them bring about the peaceful unification of Korea.

And now I’m going to introduce my little brother, an award-winning North Korea human rights activist, who will then introduce Kim Young-il, who’s going to make a statement on behalf of the visiting North Korean defector delegation. We’ll have several of them speak for you. But it’s a great honor to introduce my comrade and brother, the founder of Free North Korea Radio and the co-chair of North Korea Freedom Week, Mr. Kim Seong-min. (Applause.)

KIM SEONG-MIN: (Through interpreter.) Yes, so as I walked into this building I said, what building is this? And then I walked into this room and I am reminded that this is the very room where Han Song Ryol, ambassador from of North Korea, and I had a major fight. (Laughter.)

So it’s been a long journey for me. And for the most part of that actually I don’t even know what I did or how I worked. It just has been such a long, long journey. I’m glad that Suzanne remembers the journey and the walks that I have taken. So Suzanne, to me, is like a big sister, just like she called me a brother. And we have known each other for a long time, and she is also board of director for Free North Korea Radio. We have been seeing each other so much, although I don’t speak a lick of English, I think we can talk now to one another just by looking at the faces of one another.

And I must really, really do thank Defense Forum Foundation for all the support that they have been providing, especially the funding part. Thanks to them and many others for 10 years of support for Free North Korea Radio. We have not lost a single day. We have been able to broadcast continuously through those days so that we could continue to fight for the democracy in North Korea.

And thanks – thank you, Suzanne, for again jogging of my memory as to what I did 10 years back. And it brings me tears for me to think that we still have our brothers and sisters in North Korea. And I do have a lot of things that I wanted to say, but I realize that I have other refugees and escapees from North Korea who are going to be taking the stand after me. So I will stop here, but thank you very much for your presence here today. (Applause.)

MS. SCHOLTE: Kim Young-il is now going to read a statement on behalf of the North Korean defector delegation. And he’s one of the few defectors that’s been able to speak English. But he’s nervous about speaking English, but I think he does great. And I’m so proud, because he was also at the first North Korea Freedom Day. And when he got up at the Capitol Hill rally that day he did a complete flip in the air. So, he was showing that North Koreans, even though they’ve been through a lot, they’re still very athletic. It was pretty funny. Everybody remembers him for doing the big flip on stage. So it’s a great honor to introduce Kim Young-il.

KIM YOUNG-IL: Thank you, Suzanne. First, I am happy to speak today on behalf of the North Korean defectors’ organizations. I would also like to give me deepest appreciation to those who came to this Forum today, in particular, I want to thank the Congressional staff who have taken a deep interest in and supported us in our efforts to address the North Korean human rights problem. Additional thanks to Mrs. Suzanne Scholte, who has led the North Korean Freedom Week for the past 12 years, and has made this all possible.

Despite Western World’s aid and concern for North Korean human rights, America in particular, the human rights situation for the people of North Korea has not seen ANY improvement. The North Korean government still controls many aspects of the North Korean people’s lives, while also coercively gaining their
loyalty. Beginning in 2014, the North Korean regime intends to make the revolutionary activity of Kim Jong-un a subject in school that will be taught to students as early as middle school. People have a ill feeling because there is talk of Kim Jong-un learning to drive as young as three-years old and other absurd content becoming part of the standardized curriculum.

Compared to Kim Jong-il’s time in power, the people of North Korea have come to defect from North Korea from within the highly regulated border. But currently, they say that it takes as much as $4,000 in bribes to cross the border at the Yalu or Tumen River, which are guarded by soldiers. As North Koreans have become key activists, human right organizations have continued to maintain a close relationship with North Koreans who are leading the movement to improve North Korea’s human rights.

Currently we are engaged in the following activities to work towards the democratization of North Korea: activities that tell the outside world about the true of North Korea, so that the international community can pressure North Korea to change; activities that that send information of the outside world into North Korea; activities rescuing North Korean defectors in danger and activities to bring about the formation of democracy inside North Korea through grassroots efforts.

More specifically, to inform the international community of the reality of the human rights conditions that the people of North Korea are enduring, every year we jointly proceed with North Korea Freedom Week. Each organization holds academic seminars, organizes campaigns, attends the UN to present evidence to the international community regarding the North Korean regime’s suppression of human rights, and then disseminates this information to the public. We are providing information to the people of North Korea, who are living in a regulated society, so that they can make informed decisions. We are utilizing ties with North Korean defectors’ families to steadily spread flyers, documentaries, audio and visual files, and radio broadcasts. And, we are providing educational and economic support for those individuals who intend to go back to North Korea or who intend to rescue North Korean defectors who are in harm’s way in third countries, such as China.

We are North Korean defectors who left parents, siblings, and other family behind to leave North Korea. Those we love are still in North Korea, and because we know better than anyone how they are living we are working for the rights of the North Korean people. The story of our North Korean representatives here today is of our place of birth, growth, our defection process, and how even after we lost everything we still want to return to our hometown someday and live happily with our parents, siblings, and family whom we love.

We too were once North Korean citizens. In North Korea if we wanted to survive, we were told we must not question the reasons why we were hungry or why we could not talk freely. In the excessive environment that the dictatorial government made we could not keep living just as victims. Even though there were times when for our own survival we had to threaten someone else’s life and times when we took other’s property, we had to save our families.

Since coming to South Korea, where freedom and human rights are guaranteed, we have come to have the freedom to share each other’s sadness. There are memories of North Korea that make us sad, and others that remind us of those we miss. Even now, we occasionally go to find our families in our dreams. In our dreams, we secretly cross the border, avoiding the dictators’ gaze, and occasionally meet our families.

Saving the North Korean people from the environment of fear that the North Korean regime created and its specter of communism is work that not even the gods could accomplish. No one is forcing us to do this work, but because we love our hometowns we accept this work as though it is our destiny. Even though these conditions are hard, we will not give up. Because we are doing this work our brothers and sisters in North Korea are facing even greater political persecution or are being sent to die in detention centers. Perhaps, we have made it more difficult for those people, who have done nothing wrong. We are responsible for rescuing them, and no matter what anyone says, we firmly believe in this because it is our work as North Korean defectors. Everyone here and all the citizens of North Korea wish to live in a humanized world.
We want to live in peace together with the rest of the world and make North Korean society a place where democracy can be feasible. We want to make it so that North Korean citizens are no longer alienated in the process of the reunification of the Korean peninsula, and we want to play a role spreading the seed of peace throughout the world, starting in East Asia. The American people and the US government have provided a great deal of support for the life and freedom of North Korean citizens. Through the American peoples’ tax dollars a subsidy for the North Korean human rights problem was created and it has contributed to this matter becoming one of the international community’s pressing issues.

Through radio broadcasts and other means North Korean citizens have become curious. They understand that the information that is provided is helpful and this has helped to contribute to a change in their world view. The North Korean defector community has an intimate relationship with North Korean citizens, a relationship closely bound by family, brothers, and sisters. And so, North Korean defectors are exerting a strong direct and indirect effect on North Korean society. At the center of this are North Korean organizations. On this point we ask that you give us your deepest consideration. We hope that you will support us in our efforts to strive for democracy and for the improvement of North Korean human rights. We would like to humbly make the following requests.

First of all, we would like to request that the U.S. Congress keep putting pressure on the North Korean regime through the Sanctions Enforcement Bill. The fastest way to lead North Korea to democracy is to cut off the money flow to the regime, and I do believe that the Sanctions Bill is designed to only target the regime that uses the profits of its trade to isolate, oppress, and starve us, not to help the ordinary people of North Korea.

Second, we strongly urge the U.S. to call upon China to stop repatriating North Korean refugees.

Finally, we would like to request the U.S. government as well as the Congress to support North Korean defector organizations. Empowering North Korean defectors is the best way to empower North Korean people. With our own network and knowledge on North Korea, we would teach them self-sufficiency and independence from the state, and help them shift the balance of power toward the people. This is the easiest and best way to change North Korea and reduce the instability in the region.

Thank you for listening to our concerns today in Washington DC and for pushing for the improvement of human rights for North Korean citizens.

Thank you again to all of you who work for the U.S. Congress, a symbol of democracy, for meeting with our North Korean defector representatives and giving us the opportunity to share our concerns here today.

For the American government and its’ people consideration and kindness, the North Korean people wholeheartedly thank you. We, as representatives for the North Korean Defector Community, would like to convey our deepest gratitude. On this day, Friday May 1, 2015, when we mark the 12th anniversary of the North Korea Freedom Week, all North Korean Defector Representatives present hereby consent.

MS. SCHOLTE: Thank you very much, Kim Young-il. I thought you did great in English, yes. (Applause.)

I did forget to acknowledge a defector who’s here, who wasn’t going with us this whole week with the delegation but is here doing concert performances. Is Kim Cheol-woong – Kim Cheol-woong? He may have stepped out, but he was here earlier. He was performing at several concerts. I encourage everyone – NKinUSA is having another concert on Saturday night. And the full North Korea Freedom Week schedule is online. Kim has been traveling to different cities doing concerts.

So for our next speaker I have Kwon Ryu-youn, who’s going to speak to you next. Interesting, because this young lady and I have spent a lot of time at the DMZ because her husband is very much involved with
balloon launches. So not only is she working to get information into North Korea through these balloon launches at the DMZ, but she’s also very much involved in the after school program. So she’s working to bring about the transformation in North Korea, but also preparing the way by educating the young North Koreans so they acclimate to South Korean society and are ready. So it’s a real honor to introduce to you Kwon Ryu-youn. Thank you. (Applause.)

KWON RYU-YOUN: (Through interpreter.) Hello, everyone. I come from Seoul, Cheongdam area. And I run a center called Keun Saem, which means “a large pond.” So I’m the head of the center. So what we do at the Large Pond Center is that we help the North Korean escapees assimilate to South Korean culture and society. In particular we help and work with young people. We help them get vocationally educated and also eventually find a job for them.

I would like to speak to you today about the educations that these people receive in South Korea, as well as what they are used to getting back home in North Korea. I think of children in North Korea as victims. There is a particular name called flower-swallow. It’s given to young children who are found in the northern part and of the North Korean border and in China.

These are children who are found without their families or their parents. Oftentimes, what happens is that young children in North Korea cross the border into China looking for food on behalf of their family and their parents. And then they end up getting stranded and eventually can get sold as human trafficking takes place there. And they become flower-swallows.

These children become homeless when they go across the border and they also become beggars. And they do not receive any education – any formal education, anyway. And many of these children actually do not know how to spell their name in the Korean alphabet. And starvation is rampant in North Korea. And for young people, education is not their priority. Their priority is survival.

To be sure, there are some children in North Korea who do get educated. And these people do receive formal education, but under very severe conditions. And usually there would be one textbook provided to a class that is devoted to one year of study. So each student gets one textbook, that’s all. But even these textbooks, they get abused on their own because they need papers in North Korea. And these papers come in handy for various reasons. So you end up sharing the paper in class and also outside of class.

What we are seeing is that many people are fleeing North Korea. And for the parents of these many children, for the future of these children and the very survival of these children, they flee North Korea. And they are doing so with their children in their hands. And the children are suffering severe trauma throughout all this. And they live in constant fear. So these children do arrive in South Korea. And what happens to them? What kind of education do they receive? Well, there is a gap – a large gap that needs to be filled. And it’s not easy.

I arrived in South Korea some time ago, but I still need education so I also need to learn. So having said that, how hard it must be for the children of North Koreans who have escaped to South Korea. They have not received their basic education back home. And it’s been over 60 years since the country was divided. And these children are in a new environment where the languages spoken are different and the cultures are different.

So we have a problem. How do we make sure that these children are able to adjust to the formal education system that is provided in South Korea? And so, we provide the education from our center, including a lesson in Korean, mathematics, sociology and also English. And what scares them the most is, of course, English. And it’s been about eight years but we have been providing education in English. However, to most of these children, when we ask them what they fear the most, they say meeting foreigners.
In 2014, Mrs. Suzanne Scholte, in conjunction with the 11th annual North Korea Freedom Week, visited Seoul and our center. And I am very used to our children having a good time in our center, being happy. And one of the children was asked by Suzanne as to how it is that the child ended up in Seoul. Instead of responding to the question, the child started crying. So when the question was asked, why do you cry? The child responded by saying that my mother had gone to China many years back. And it took her eight years to bring me out of North Korea. And then the child continued to cry. And this was a scar that this child had carried for many years. And she disclosed for the first time to me that when she was eight years old Chinese men came and asked her to come to China and to live with the Chinese men. And she was only eight back then. At any rate, she eventually crossed Tumen River and went into China. And naturally, she was very elated when she met her mother in China.

And what she said was also very surprising to me, that when she came to South Korea one of the hardest thing to do was to learn things. And this is what I learned from that exchange. Adults like us, when we do escape and we can talk about what happened to us – the human rights abuses or other (suffering) in our lives, we can talk about those things. But children, they don’t know how to express themselves.

So I have these children in my center. I am also a mother. And these children are all my children as well. And that’s why I want to help them. I want to help them assimilate into the Korean culture and the society. And also when their mother and their father do go out to work, I want to take care of them when they are left behind, provide them with food, if I can, provide them educational and other programs. And that’s what we do at our center.

That’s our cause. That’s what we do. And we do what we can for the better future of these children. And as long as the unification does not occur on the Korean Peninsula, I know we will have more students and more people like them. And they will all have scars of their own. Education and the learning must continue. And children are our future, and especially for unification. It is my mission and my duty that I should support these children into the future. Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. SCHOLTE: Thank you so much. I am pleased to introduce our next speaker, Pastor Kang Chul-ho. He is, as I mentioned, the first North Korean defector who was ordained as a Methodist minister. He’s got an amazing, amazing powerful story. So I just want to be sure to call your attention to it in the handout; I’m not going to read it because I really want you to hear from him not me – but his biography is included in the handout. I wanted to mention that Pastor Kang established the first North Korean defector church, Saetu Church. But their mission is to tear down the big Kim Il-sung statue and build their church at that place when North Korea is free. (Laughter, applause.) And he’s going to talk about the North Korea Christian Association that he also established. He’s networking with all these North Korean defector churches, but he has established a center that works to rescue defectors, works for the democratization of North Korean, to support North Korean defector children and to help family members in North Korea. So it’s an honor to introduce Pastor Kang Chul-ho. (Applause.)


AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hallelujah, thank you.

MR. KANG: (Through interpreter.) My name is Chul-ho Kang. I am a center’s director. And it would be loosely translated as New Home Center in Korea.

So this is our 12th meeting of North Korean Freedom Week. And I come to realize more and more each time I attend these rallies that there is an important role to be played by North Korean escapees. So the saying goes that Kim Jong-un in a meeting stated that he was not afraid of the 600,000 military personnel in South Korea, but he was concerned about the North Korean escapees, and that these escapees were a threat to the Republic.
So yesterday we were in New York at the U.N. And one of the media members from the Korean press stated as follows: "It seems that the North Koreans are not really worried about South Korean diplomats or politicians, but when it comes to the escapees from North Korea, North Koreans diplomats are very concerned. That again reminds us of how important the role that North Korean escapees play.

So what do the South Korean people want? They want peaceful unification. And what do the Christians want? We want the Gospel in North Korea and unification through the Gospel. When it comes to peace, there has to be people who work very hard at it. When it comes to gospels, there has to be people who are willing to become martyrs for this cause. The problem is, South Korean people do not want to sacrifice. And the church in South Korea do not want to become martyrs. But North Korean escapees, we have homes back in North Korea. We are willing to sacrifice and we are willing to become martyrs. (Cheers, Applause.)

So prior to my coming to the U.S. for the Freedom Week rally, there was on the North Korean internet a threat that was levied on my life and many other people who would be attending the rally. And they said that they would kill us. But I shall not be threatened, nor in fear. And I shall stand strong because I know we have people like you who are our strong supporters. The next North Korean Freedom Week will be held in Pyongyang, I believe. (Cheers, applause.)

Thank you. (Cheers, Applause.)

MS. SCHOLTE: I think he’s more of a Baptist minister than a Methodist minister. (Laughter.)

Our next speaker represents the groups of North Koreans that were lured back to North Korea from Japan. She is a woman who has a powerful testimony about what is happening to these residents of Japan, Ms. Kawasaki Eiko. She was one of the people that spoke out about the trafficking of North Koreans in China, as she has also been involved in trying to rescue her family members. She was born in Japan, but she went to North Korea when she was 17 because she was told it was a paradise. And fortunately, she was able to warn her parents who were going to follow her to Japan. She was able to warn them: Don’t come. But she ended up living there and decided in fact to escape when she was 60 years old to bear witness about what was happening in North Korea. So it’s my honor to introduce Kawasaki Eiko. (Applause.)

KAWASAKI EIKO: My name is Kawasaki Eiko. I’m from North Korea and Japan. (Through interpreter.) I was sent to North Korea when I was 17 years old. I was at third-level in high school. I alone went to North Korea. And what awaited me in North Korea were some shocking scenes. The pro-North Korean association in Japan, they propagandized and said that North Korea was a paradise on Earth. Most freedom, most human rights would be had in North Korea – that’s what I was told. And there would be basic necessities all provided for and guaranteed in North Korea.

But what I found out once I arrived in North Korea was that the North Korean regime did not treat people of North Korea, nor the people from Japan, as human beings. And contrary to what they said, there was a caste system in North Korea. And people from Japan were actually at the very bottom of this caste system. There was no freedom of movement. There was no freedom of occupation. And we were not allowed to leave or go anywhere we wanted to. So people were in incredible despair. And many of the people actually went into a shock when they arrived from Japan.

And many suffered psychologically. I know many people who have committed suicide. But in North Korea, you don’t even have the freedom to commit suicide. If you are to commit a suicide, your remaining family would within a few months disappear from society. So because of your remaining family, concern for them, you couldn’t even commit a suicide. So we didn’t even have the freedom to die.

So I lived in silence when I was in North Korea because I realized to open my mouth meant that I would be in danger of losing my life. So it didn’t matter what unrighteousness that I had witnessed or what brutality I came upon. I learned to keep my mouth shut. I don’t know how much you would understand as to the pain and
suffering that people would go through when they are unable to say what they see to be taking place. So I lived in that for 43 years.

When Kim Il-sung died, that’s when most of the European countries actually were collapsed already. So for a moment, I had a ray of hope. Maybe there would be some changes in North Korea as well. But on the contrary, as soon as Kim Il-sung had died, there were more corpses that were found on the streets. Many were dying of starvation. And I witnessed many young children crying because they were starving but the parents were not in any sight. But most times, these are wails of children about to die.

But the new leader, Kim Jong-il, did he care? Do you know what he actually did? He started building a tomb for his father, Kim Il-sung. Much money went into the tomb, as well as effort. All people who have escaped from North Korea know what is in that tomb. And where does the tomb stand or sit now? It’s in the Kumsan mountain area. This is the very location where the national assembly of North Korea used to stand. And just think in terms of what sane people would make a tomb out of an assembly site.

After having witnessed that, I decided that I no longer wished to be in this country. And I said to myself, I need to get out. I need to go out there and tell people about this place. And I realize that now we need to bring democracy into North Korea, with the help of the international society. In 2003 I crossed the Yalu River. And this was all by myself. And in 2004, finally, I returned to Japan. I never actually imagined that I would be able to come back to Japan alive.

So my life after returning to Japan is an extra life that I have gotten, not my home. So my remaining life I dedicated to the cause of helping people who were sent to North Korea from Japan. And I am prepared now to do whatever it takes to bring about democracy in North Korea. (Applause.) So let me briefly introduce to you what I do in Japan.

I organized an NGO. Korea of All. And I have three slogans in my organization. For tomorrow’s Korea - that refers to unified Korean Peninsula tomorrow. For tomorrow’s Asia. For tomorrow’s world. So these are the three slogans that our organization lives by. So if we were to achieve our three missions, as our slogans state, this will bring about democracy on the Korean Peninsula. And we will realize peace on global basis through democratization on the Korean Peninsula.

One of those things that we are pursuing now this year on January 15th, 11 of the North Korean escapees came together. We filed a complaint with the Japan bar association. And we claim that there’s a human rights abuse that’s taking place. And we named six organizations in that claim: the Japanese government, the North Korean government, pro-North Korean association, the Red Cross of Japan, Red Cross of North Korea and the International Red Cross. And all the organizations actually came together and helped 99,340 people from Japan into North Korea. I know Abe’s government is working with the North Korean government to bring back the abductees and also Japanese citizens back to Japan. However, what’s going to happen to the 99,000-plus Koreans who were sent to North Korea from Japan? We cannot turn a blind eye to the history and neglect these people.

So we have prepared a brochure telling you what we are doing and some of the missions that we have been carrying out. So please look into the material and thank you very much for this opportunity to speak before you. Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. SCHOLTE: I know we went over time. I apologize for that, but we got started a little late and I really wanted you to hear these testimonies. We’re going to close at this point, because we need to get them to their next meeting. But I want to just mention once again: it’s North Korea Freedom Week. There are still events going on. The dinner tonight is, we believe, maybe, sold out. But if you have not registered online and you’re still interested in going go ahead and send us your name and we will put you on a waiting list. But we
have our North Korea Freedom Week dinner chair here, Professor Ok Cha Soh, sitting over here. And she’s been –

OK CHA SOH: We still have seats available.

MS. SCHOLTE: Well, OK, it has been a high demand. And we just want to make sure we can take care of everybody. So that’s tonight. But in addition, there are several events that are coming up tomorrow. North Korea Freedom Week, last day, the seventh day. There are three events tomorrow that you can join. There’s a conference, the Unification of the Mind Conference – Andrew Hong, wave your hand – he is organizing this event. It’s at the John Marshall Library in Alexandria. You do need to respond if you plan to go, because they’re serving a light lunch. If you can attend that, it’s a wonderful coming together to talk about unification and what needs to be done. Email: ENoK.group@gmail.com if you can attend that.

Also, please join us, 3:00 pm at the Chinese embassy we’re having a protest. We had a candlelight vigil, as I mentioned, that Dr. Stanton helped lead earlier this week. But we’re going to have a protest at 3:00 at the Chinese embassy. And NK in the USA is having a concert at 7:00 at Philippi Church in Hanover, Maryland tomorrow night. So to take advantage of North Korea Freedom Week, you still have an opportunity to join.

Quick thanks to Henry – the people who translated today. Henry Song, wave your hand. Oh, he may have left. Thank you to our table translators: Henry Song, Bok Lee, Peter Kang, James Victory, our translator for the program, Professor Ok Cha Soh, Liz Ihn, and I think Andrew Hong was also helping. I think we drafted (opera singer) Juan Sim at the last minute. By the way, he’s singing tonight the national anthems.