

December 15, 2020

Moon Jae-in  
President of the Republic of Korea  
1 Cheongwadae-ro, Jongno-gu  
Seoul 03048  
Republic of Korea

**Joint Open Letter to President Moon Jae-in  
Re: Promoting Human Rights in North Korea**

President Moon Jae-in,

We are writing on behalf of 47 groups representing over 300 non-governmental organizations and 7 concerned individuals in 16 countries to express our deep concern regarding the Republic of Korea government's increasingly weak stance on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

We greatly regret your recent decision to again [not co-sponsor](#) a resolution on the human rights situation in North Korea at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. Although the November 18 resolution passed by consensus, South Korea's lack of leadership signals weakened international pressure on North Korea for its human rights abuses.

Your government's justifications that it still "[joined the consensus](#)" and will work "with the international community toward substantive improvements in the human rights situation of the people of the DPRK" are inadequate. This abandonment of South Korea's crucial leadership in promoting human rights issues in North Korea sends the message to North Korea that human rights issues can be ignored for the sake of political negotiations. On the contrary, we believe that any hope of success in negotiations with North Korea, on any and all issues, requires negotiations to be comprehensive and inclusive of human rights issues and North Korea's general lack of cooperation with the UN system.

Your government's reluctance to prioritize North Korea's human rights record is made worse by the fact that the North Korean government, in the context of the Covid-19 crisis, has put in place disproportionate, unnecessary, and abusive measures under the pretext of combatting the virus.

Over the past few months, the North Korean government intensified surveillance on people breaking Covid-19 related quarantine measures and enforcement of a travel ban in the border area with China, including by reportedly [laying new mines to deter people from crossing into China](#), and [executing North Koreans caught while attempting to flee the country](#), or people [breaking virus prevention rules](#) or quarantine and going for [banned walks to see the autumn leaves](#). In March, [Chinese authorities](#) told people to stay away from the North Korean border or risk being [shot by North Korean guards](#). In August, the

government created buffer zones one to two kilometers from the northern border, with guards ordered to [“unconditionally shoot” on sight](#) anyone entering without permission.

Also under the [pretext of Covid-19 prevention](#), on September 22, the North Korean navy shot and killed a 47-year old South Korean fisheries official, Lee Dae-jun, on a boat near North Korea’s western sea border. On September 24, the South Korean government said Lee was [killed while attempting to defect](#) to North Korea, which Lee’s family publicly and insistently said was impossible. On September 25, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sent a note to South Korea [expressing regret](#) over the incident. In its [report](#) to the UN General Assembly on October 14, Tomas Ojea Quintana, the UN special rapporteur on North Korea, said the incident seemed to be “an unlawful and arbitrary killing of a civilian who was not exhibiting any imminent threat to life of the security guards, which is in violation of international human rights law.”

We are also concerned about the economic impacts of the Covid-19 lockdown, as the North Korean government reportedly began reducing its staple food imports from China in July and [totally stopped them in October](#), even after severe floods hit North Korea between June and September destroying crops, roads, and bridges, undermining the country’s agricultural sector. The North Korean government has also repeatedly [rejected offers](#) for international aid.

On September 25, Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said the South Korean government will continue to push for peaceful engagement with North Korea. But South Korea’s failure to speak out about North Korea’s abusive and misguided measures signals a lack of genuine concern for the country’s deteriorating human rights situation.

We urge you to once again demonstrate leadership in promoting human rights in North Korea and re-join the list of co-sponsoring member states on the UN General Assembly resolution ahead of its expected passage later this month at the plenary meeting. We also urge you to clarify what steps South Korea is taking to work with the international community to pressure and encourage the North Korean government to undertake reforms and bring about substantive improvements in the country’s human rights situation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Groups*

1969 KAL Abductees' Families Association

Arakan Rohingya National Organization

Article 19

Balaod Mindanaw

Centro para la Apertura y el Desarrollo de América Latina

Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR)  
Comjan  
Committee for Human Rights in North Korea  
CSW  
Democratic Leadership Foundation (DLF)  
Families of the Disappeared  
FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights  
Georgetown University Law Center  
HanVoice  
HHK Catacombs  
Human Asia  
Human Rights Concern - Eritrea (HRCE)  
Human Rights Data Analysis Group  
Human Rights Foundation  
Human Rights in Asia  
Human Rights Watch  
International Christian Concern  
International Coalition to Stop Crimes against Humanity in North Korea  
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights  
Jubilee Campaign USA  
Justice For North Korea  
Kanagawa Association for The Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea  
Korean War Abductees Family Union  
Korean War POW Family Association  
Lawyers for Human Rights and Unification of Korea  
Liberty in North Korea  
Lumen  
Mental Health and Human Rights Info  
NK Watch  
NKnet (Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights)  
No Fence  
North Korea Freedom Coalition  
Open North Korea  
People for Successful Corean Reunification (PSCORE)  
Rohingya Human Rights Network  
Saram - Stiftung für Menschenrechte in Nordkorea  
Southern African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes  
Stepping Stones  
The 88 Project  
Transitional Justice Working Group

Unification Academy  
Unification Strategy Institute

*Individuals*

- David Alton, Lord  
Independent Crossbench Member of the House of Lords & Co-chair  
of the All Party Parliamentary Group on North Korea
- Sonja Biserko  
Former Commission of Inquiry (COI) member on the situation of  
human rights in the DPRK & current chair at the Helsinki Human  
Rights Committee in Serbia
- Roberta Cohen  
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, U.S.  
Department of State
- Marzuki Darusman  
Former UN Special Rapporteur/COI member on the situation of  
human rights in the DPRK
- Yanghee Lee, Ph.D.  
Former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in  
Myanmar / Former Chairperson of UN Committee on the Rights of  
the Child
- Vitit Muntarbhorn  
Former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in  
the DPRK
- Chris Sidoti  
International Expert Member, UN Independent International Fact  
Finding Mission on Myanmar

2020 년 12 월 15 일

문재인 대통령님 귀하  
서울특별시 종로구 청와대로 1

**문재인 대통령님께 드리는 공동 공개서한**  
**Re: 북한의 인권 증진에 관하여**

문재인 대통령님,

저희는 16 개국의 300 개이상의 비영리단체를 대표하는 47 개 단체와 7 명의 관계자들을 대신하여 북한의 인권 상황에 대한 한국 정부의 입장이 갈수록 약화되는 것에 대해 깊은 우려를 전달하고자 이 서신을 드립니다.

저희는 한국 정부가 유엔 총회에서 또다시 북한인권 결의안의 공동 제안국으로 참여하지 않기로 결정한 것에 대해 깊은 유감을 표합니다. 11 월 18 일자 결의안이 투표 없이 합의에 의해 통과 되었으나 한국 정부의 소극적인 태도는 북한의 인권 상황에 대한 국제적인 압력이 약화되었음을 시사합니다.

“컨센서스에 참여했다”는 말로 한국 정부의 입장을 정당화하고 “북한 주민들의 실질적인 인권 증진을 위해 국제사회와 함께 노력할 것”이라는 말만으로는 충분하지 않습니다. 북한의 인권 증진을 위한 노력에 한국 정부가 주도적인 역할을 포기하는 것은 정치적 협상을 위해서라면 인권 문제는 무시할 수도 있다는 메시지를 북한에 전달합니다. 그러나 저희는 사안을 막론하고 북한과의 협상에서 성과를 거둘 수 있다는 희망을 조금이라도 가지려면 인권 상황과 북한이 유엔과 협력하지 않는 문제를 포함하여 포괄적으로 협상이 이루어져야 한다고 믿습니다.

코로나 19 사태 중에 북한은 바이러스 퇴치를 명분으로 과다하고, 불필요하며, 폭력적인 조치들을 단행했고, 이로 인해 북한의 인권 상황을 우선과제로 다루기를 꺼려하는 귀 정부의 입지가 더욱 악화되었습니다.

지난 몇 달간 북한은 코로나 19 관련 격리 조치를 위반하는 사람들에 대한 단속과 중국 접경지에서의 이동 금지령을 강화시켰습니다. 보고된 바에 의하면, 북한 정부는 주민들이 중국으로 가는 것을 막기 위해 새로 지뢰를 매설하고, 탈북을 시도하다 붙잡힌 사람들이나 격리 또는 바이러스 예방 규정을 위반하고 단풍 구경을 다녀온 사람들을 처형했습니다. 3 월에 중국 당국은 북한 접경지에 가까이 접근하면 북한군에 의해 사살될 수 있다고 경고했습니다.

9 월 22 일에 북한 해군은 역시 코로나 19 사태를 핑계로 하여 서해 상 북측 해역에서 발견된 남한의 어업지도원 이대준(47 세)을 총살했습니다. 9 월 24 일 한국 정부는 이씨가 월북을 시도하다 사살되었다고 발표했으나 그의 가족들은 그것이 있을 수 없는 일이라고 주장했습니다. 9 월 25 일에 김정은 북한 국무위원장은 이 사건과 관련하여 남한 측에 유감의 뜻을 전달했습니다. 10 월 14 일자 유엔 총회에 대한 보고서에서 토마스 오헤야

퀸타나 유엔 북한인권특별보고관은 이 사건이 “생명에 즉각적 위협이 되지 않는 민간인 자의적으로 사살한 것으로 보이며, 이는 국제인권법 위반에 해당”한다고 지적했습니다.

저희는 또 코로나 19 사태에 따른 봉쇄 조치가 북한 경제에 끼칠 영향을 우려하고 있습니다. 7월부터 9월까지 여러 차례의 홍수로 농작물이 피해를 입고 도로와 다리 등이 붕괴되어 농업이 타격을 받았음에도 불구하고 북한은 7월에 중국으로부터의 식량 수입량을 줄이기 시작하여 10월에 전면 중단한 것으로 알려졌습니다. 또한 북한 정부는 계속해서 국제 원조를 거부해왔습니다.

9월 25일에 강경화 외교부 장관은 한국 정부가 계속해서 평화적인 접근방식을 추진할 것이라고 말했습니다. 그러나 한국 정부는 북한의 인권침해적이고 부적절한 조치들에 대해 발언하지 않음으로써 날로 악화되는 북한의 인권상황에 대해 진정으로 우려하지 않는다는 신호를 보내고 있습니다.

저희는 북한의 인권 증진을 위한 활동을 한국 정부가 주도하고 이 달 말 유엔 총회에서 통과될 것으로 보이는 결의안에 공동 제안국에 참여할 것을 다시 한 번 촉구합니다. 저희는 또 북한 정부가 개혁을 단행하고 인권 상황을 실질적으로 개선하도록 국제사회와 함께 압력을 가하고 독려하기 위해 한국 정부가 어떤 조치들을 취하고 있는지를 명확히 밝혀주시기를 촉구합니다.

감사합니다.

## 단체

1969 KAL Abductees' Families Association

Arakan Rohingya National Organization

Article 19

Balaod Mindanaw

Centro para la Apertura y el Desarrollo de América Latina

Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR)

Comjan

Committee for Human Rights in North Korea

CSW

Democratic Leadership Foundation (DLF)

Families of the Disappeared

FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights

Georgetown University Law Center

HanVoice

HHK Catacombs

Human Asia

Human Rights Concern - Eritrea (HRCE)

Human Rights Data Analysis Group

Human Rights Foundation

Human Rights in Asia

Human Rights Watch  
International Christian Concern  
International Coalition to Stop Crimes against Humanity in North Korea  
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights  
Jubilee Campaign USA  
Justice For North Korea  
Kanagawa Association for The Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea  
Korean War Abductees Family Union  
Korean War POW Family Association  
Lawyers for Human Rights and Unification of Korea  
Liberty in North Korea  
Lumen  
Mental Health and Human Rights Info  
NK Watch  
NKnet (Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights)  
No Fence  
North Korea Freedom Coalition  
Open North Korea  
People for Successful Corean Reunification (PSCORE)  
Rohingya Human Rights Network  
Saram - Stiftung für Menschenrechte in Nordkorea  
Southern African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes  
Stepping Stones  
The 88 Project  
Transitional Justice Working Group  
Unification Academy  
Unification Strategy Institute

개인

David Alton, Lord

Independent Crossbench Member of the House of Lords & Co-chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on North Korea

Sonja Biserko

Former Commission of Inquiry (COI) member on the situation of human rights in the DPRK & current chair at the Helsinki Human Rights Committee in Serbia

Roberta Cohen

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, U.S. Department of State

Marzuki Darusman

Former UN Special Rapporteur/COI member on the situation of human rights in the DPRK

Yanghee Lee, Ph.D.

Former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar / Former Chairperson of UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Vitit Muntarbhorn

Former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK

Chris Sidoti

International Expert Member, UN Independent International Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar