



North Korea: ICNK Welcomes Japan's Support for Commission of Inquiry

Urges Members of Human Rights Council to Establish Commission

(Tokyo, February 4, 2013) -- The International Coalition to Stop Crimes against Humanity in North Korea (ICNK), consisting over 40 leading human rights organizations and activists, today welcomes Japan's strong position in favor of the establishment of a new United Nations commission of inquiry on serious human rights violations committed by the North Korean Government at home and abroad.

During the meeting of the Headquarters for the Abduction Issue with all members of the Cabinet on January 25, the Japanese government confirmed that it will begin negotiating with other governments to include the establishment of a new commission of inquiry mechanism in the text of the resolution on North Korea to be considered at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva at its 22nd session from February 25, 2013.

The Japanese government should be commended for its leadership role in demanding justice for the victims of human rights violations by the North Korean government, said Kanae Doi, Japan Director at Human Rights Watch. Now Tokyo needs to roll up its sleeves and get to work to convince members of the European Union, the US, and other governments around the world that this critical inquiry must be established without delay.

Japan's decision follows a call by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay on January 14, 2013 for creation of a full-fledged international inquiry into serious crimes in North Korea, noting that it is one of the worst, but least understood and reported, human rights situations in the world.

The member states of the UN Human Rights Council should positively respond to Japan's initiative to establish a new mechanism of inquiry. Now is the time for governments around the world to unify their efforts to expose and to end the suffering of victims.

If the commission is established, it is expected that the UN will appoint independent experts of significant stature to carry out an in-depth investigation into the systematic and serious human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, in North Korea including those committed in political prison camps where an estimated 200,000 people are arbitrarily detained, as well as abduction of hundreds of foreign nationals from South Korea, Japan and other countries. Information from victims of North Korea's rights violations who have been able to flee North Korea will likely play a central role in the commission's work because those complaining from inside North Korea could face serious retaliation.

Human Rights Watch has published detailed documents answering commonly asked questions about what a commission of inquiry will do and how it will operate. These documents are available in [English](#), [Korean](#), and [Japanese](#).

For far too many years, the North Korean people have suffered in isolation, their plight relegated to the lowest part of the international community's agenda with the leaders in Pyongyang, said Hiroshi Kato, Representative of Life Funds for North Korean Refugees. An international commission of inquiry will shed light on the plight of North Koreans and foreign nationals held against their will in that country.

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Members and supporters of the Coalition include:

- Advocates International Global Council
- Amnesty International
- Asia Justice and Rights
- Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances
- Asian Human Rights & Humanity Association of Japan
- Burma Partnership (Thailand)
- Christian Lawyers Association for Paraguay
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide
- Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (USA)
- Conectas (Brazil)
- Council for Human Rights in North Korea (Canada)
- Freedom House (USA)
- Free NK Gulag (ROK)
- Free North Korea Radio (ROK)
- Han Voice (Canada)
- HH Katacombs (ROK)
- Human Rights Watch
- Human Rights Without Frontiers (Belgium)
- Inter-American Federation of Christian Lawyers
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- COMJAN (Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to North Korea)(Japan)
- Japanese Lawyers Association for Abduction and Other Human Rights Issues in North Korea
- Jubilee Campaign (USA)
- Justice for North Korea (ROK)
- Kontras (Indonesia)

- Liberty in North Korea - LiNK (USA)
- Life Funds for North Korean Refugees (Japan)
- Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights (ROK)
- NK Intellectual Solidarity (ROK)
- NO FENCE <Association for the abolition of concentration camps in North Korea> (Japan)
- North Korea Freedom Coalition
- Odhikar (Bangladesh)
- Open North Korea (ROK)
- People In Need (Czech Republic)
- PSALT NK (Prayer Service Action Love Truth for North Korea)
- The Simon Wiesenthal Center
- The Society to Help Returnees to North Korea (Japan)
- Students Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea (ROK)
- Young Defectors' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (ROK)
- Yuki Akimoto, Burmainfo (Japan)
- Tomoharu Ebihara
- David Hawk, Visiting Scholar, Columbia University, Institute for the Study of Human Rights, and author of Hidden Gulag
- Ken Kato, Director, Human Rights in Asia (Japan)
- Tomoyuki Kawazoe, Kanagawa Association for The Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (Japan)
- Suzanne Scholte, Seoul Peace Prize Recipient & Defense Forum Foundation (USA)
- Dr. Norbert Vollertsen