

**REMARKS BY DR. SUZANNE SCHOLTE
CHAIRMAN OF THE NORTH KOREA FREEDOM COALITION
NORTH KOREA FREEDOM DAY, APRIL 28, 2010**

Wednesday, April 28th, 1:30 pm

North Korean Women Defectors Human Rights Seminar

Korean National Assembly Opening Remarks of Suzanne Scholte

Thank for Assemblywoman PARK Sun Young and also thank you to KANG Su Jin, for her tremendous leadership of the Coalition for North Korean Women's Rights.

It is an honor for me to be here and I apologize in advance that I am not able to stay for this entire seminar due to the NKFV rally, but I just want to say that what is happening to NK refugees, especially NK women in China, is one of the worst human rights tragedies occurring today and this tragedy is compounded by the fact that it is immediately solvable. This is a human rights tragedy that could be solved overnight -- It is immediately solvable if only China would abide by its international agreements it has signed, specifically the 1951 U.N. Convention on Refugees and its 1969 Protocol.

Unlike other refugee crisis occurring around the world, North Korean refugees have a place to go to be resettled -- Under Articles 2 and 3 of the South Korea Constitution, North Koreans are legally considered South Korean citizens. Furthermore, the United States has repeatedly stated its commitment to allow refugees to resettle there.

Yet, the Chinese government has directly caused this most horrific human rights tragedy by claiming the North Korean are economic migrants. The Chinese government knows that when they force North Koreans back to North Korea, these helpless people will most definitely be tortured, most definitely be imprisoned, and sometimes even executed because it is a crime, punishable by death in North Korea for a citizen to flee their homeland.

This fact and the fact that China's one child policy has led to a shortage of women in China, has led to the buying and selling of North Korean females: Over 80% of North Korean females are being trafficked: sold as wives, sold into brothels, as sex slaves, while other refugees become slave laborers and children are orphaned and abandoned. There are actually markets in China to purchase NK women and the traffickers describe these women as pigs but treat them worse than animals.

It is hard to imagine in the year 2010 that there is a place in the world where human beings are being bought and sold. But this is the reality for North Korean women, most of whom ended up in China because they were trying to find food or work to feed their starving children.

Now, I respect China's concerns about the refugees and protecting its border and I greatly admire the citizens of China who are part of the underground railroad rescuing refugees, but the government of China's policy is cruel and barbaric.

Finally, there are three immediate solutions for China to solve this problem:

First, there is a vibrant and active humanitarian community that is secretly rescuing refugees – 17,000 North Koreans have made it to South Korea. Imagine if this humanitarian community could partner with China to help alleviate this crisis. Rather than working with the Raoul Wallenburgs and Harriet Tubmans of today, China hunts down these humanitarians and jails them including their own citizens for helping these refugees.

Secondly, the UN has an established institution, the UNHCR – whose sole mission is to help in situations like this – the UNHCR has an office in Beijing but China blocks the UNHCR from even leaving Beijing to interview North Koreans. Thus, the UNHCR is only able to save a handful of refugees that can reach them.

Thirdly, as mentioned before these refugees have a place to go. But the government of China, rather than allowing these refugees safe passage to South Korea, where they have citizenship, or to the United States, which has offered resettlement, China sends them back to North Korea. China has even put up barbed wire and extra guards at the embassies of other countries to block access by these refugees.

We also know that Kim Jong-il has instructed his border guards to beat the bellies of pregnant North Korean women who are repatriated to North Korea because the babies are "half Chinese."

We call upon Hu Jintao to stop placating this dictator who is a racist against the Chinese people and end this barbaric treatment of North Korean refugees.

I hope that President Lee Myung Bak will raise this issue with Hu Jintao when they meet this Friday. I hope that all of you in attendance today will listen to the testimonies and learn the reality of this situation and join in the efforts to save North Korean refugees from continued exploitation and abuse.

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Wednesday, April 28, 2:30 pm
North Korea Freedom Day Rally
Remarks by Suzanne Scholte

Happy North Korea Freedom Day. This is a day that actually started seven years ago -- with the first North Korea Freedom Day rally which was held exactly seven years ago on Capitol Hill and led to the passage in the United States of the North Korean Human Rights Act. Now, it has finally come to Seoul and I hope that it will lead to the passage of the North Korea Human Rights Act currently before the Korean national assembly.

It is fitting that the Chairman of this rally is Dr. Hyunuk Kim who was there at that first rally and who always stood with us year after year. I want to thank him for taking on the Chairmanship of this rally and I also want to thank Professor Yong Hee Lee for agreeing to lead the North Korea Freedom Week prayer vigil coming up this Friday.

I also want to recognize KIM Seung Min, director of Free North Korea Radio, who coordinated North Korea Freedom Week and the many North Korean defector and South Korean NGOs who

have sponsored press conferences, panel sessions, and events throughout this week; Pastor KANG Chul Ho and Pastor Chang Ho Lim who led the first event of this week -- a prayer vigil which united for the first time the nine North Korean defector churches here in South Korea; Moon Gook Han who organized the North Korea Human Rights Exhibit which will be open all week at the Seoul Press Center; Do Hee Hyun, Kim Tae Jin, Jung Gwang il, Jee Hae Lee who made us aware of the ongoing horrors occurring today in North Korea's gulags and detention centers. Lee Mi Il and Professor Nishioka of Japan who remind us that Kim Jong-il's crimes are not just against the people of North Korea, but he has abducted and held citizens of South Korea and Japan and other countries and continues to hold South Korean POWs from the Korean War.

Kim Heung Gwang of the Elites from North Korea with the NK Intellectuals for Solidarity gave us an understanding of the savage and inhumane rule of this regime.

Today, Kang Su Jin of the Coalition for North Korean Women's Rights under the sponsorship of National Assemblywoman PARK Sun Young is exposing the reality of the trafficking of North Korean women in China and the terrible ordeal that many North Korean women are facing right now because they went to China to try to find food to feed their starving children and families.

During this Week Kang Cheoul Hwan and KIM Young-il will also host conferences focusing on North Korea human rights issues.

Friday night will be our North Korean Freedom Week prayer vigil led by Professor Lee and Saturday we will send our messages of hope and truth to the North Korean people with a balloon launch organized by Park Sang Hak of the Fighters for a Free North Korea.

This is the seventh North Korea Freedom Week and I know that seven is a very special number to God, and I believe this is a Holy Week and Holy time as we stand together today to proclaim the freedom, human rights and dignity of the North Korean people. I have always believed that the sooner we held North Korea Freedom Week in Seoul, the sooner we would hold North Korea Freedom Week in Pyongyang. Because make no mistake about this: that is our intention.

We gather today to say in one voice that North Koreans deserve freedom, human rights, and dignity and that we will not stand by and watch as millions die in Kim Jong-il's gulag, from starvation because he has used our food aid as a weapon against his own people, and through his cruel treatment of those who have fled his hell on earth.

We gather at an historic time because North Koreans are no longer isolated - they are hearing more and more about the outside world and they are quickly learning that their enemy is not South Korea, or America, but that the source of all their misery is Kim Jong-il.

We gather at an historic time because North Koreans through their own determination have learned to survive through established private markets and are no longer dependent on their dear leader for his hand outs as the public distribution system has collapsed.

We gather at an historic time because there are dramatic changes occurring in North Korea as we have seen for the first time public outrage at the regime and for the first time we have seen the regime apologize for their currency devaluation which was aimed to wipe out these growing markets.

There is not a more important time to reach out to the North Korean people to let them know that we are fighting for them. That is the reason for North Korea Freedom Week.

Freedom - because everyone is deserving of Freedom and no “great leader” or “dear leader” has the right to deny what God has granted to each of us as human beings;

Human Rights - because North Koreans are fully deserving of the human rights enjoyed by free people around the world and yet, North Koreans are the most suffering and persecuted people on Earth;

Dignity – because no one should treat North Koreans with indifference or discrimination simply because they were denied the advantages of those of us who were born in freedom.

Now, we always have had trouble organizing North Korea Freedom Week -- we faced opposition even in the United States in organizing the very first event, But no matter the many storms that have come against us, we always knew we had to do it because we had to stand for what is true, and what is right, and to stand against the terrible injustice happening to the North Korean people.

One day, North Korea will open up and we will be haunted by the things we will learn about this regime -- we will ask ourselves what could we have done? That day is coming soon so let us continue to work together to do all that we can to rescue North Korean refugees, reach out to the North Korean people, and raise awareness of these issues.

Someone asked me this recently: does it ever happen that someone just unexpectedly comes and helps you, not asking for something return.

Yes, this happened three times to me recently -- three people came to me providing support for NKFW -- one must remain anonymous because of his request, but two I want to acknowledge -- they simply decided to help and I cannot fully express how deeply appreciative I am of Ambassador In Ho Lee and Won S. Lee -- I never asked them for anything, they never asked me for anything, they just simply came to me and said here is support for North Korea Freedom Week.

It is in their spirit of giving and hope that we will accomplish our dreams of seeing North Korea free.

I want to close by answering the question I am asked all the time: why are you involved in this issue, you are not even a Korean? The fact is this is not a Korean issue, this is an issue that should effect the conscious of the world -- no one asks why do you care about the Holocaust, you are not Jewish? Why do you care about Darfur you are not African? What is happening on the Korean peninsula is the world's worst human rights tragedy -- no people are more suffering, no people are more persecuted and this is a tragedy that has continued for 65 years -- longer than the Jewish holocaust, longer than the Soviet gulags, longer than China's cultural revolution, longer than the Rwanda genocide.

The truth is that many times I cried out to God, why have you made me so involved with the tragedy in North Korea. God gently reminded me that once I had prayed to him that He would break my heart for what was breaking his heart. In that simple prayer I came to know that what is happening in North Korea is breaking God's heart.

And because so many now are praying for North Korea, I have no doubt that God will be with us and reclaim his children in North Korea and that freedom will come to that land.

So, let us work together until we can celebrate this day in Pyongyang and the North Korean people can breathe the breath of freedom.

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