

April 23, 2010

Statement of Congressman Trent Franks
North Korea Freedom Week

May They Walk in the Sunlight of Human Freedom

Perhaps nowhere in the world is human freedom under more constant onslaught than under the brutal regime of Kim Jong-Il in North Korea. North Korea Freedom Week has served as a consistent reminder to remember that the gift of freedom also confers on us the responsibility to aid the oppressed victims of injustice and totalitarianism. The people of North Korea never experienced the basic human rights and freedoms we take for granted--the freedom to associate, to speak freely, and to worship according to the dictates of one's own conscience.

North Korea Freedom Week, for the first time in its history, will be held Seoul, South Korea. From interviews aired on Free North Korea Radio--the main defectors operated radio program broadcasting into North Korea--to a balloon launch into North Korea that will include messages of hope, many North Koreans will be deeply touched by the events surrounding North Korea Freedom Week.

The plight of the innocent North Korean people is a tragedy of unspeakable magnitude, and one that will forever mar the history of the human family. Reports from the State Department and human rights organizations on the human rights and humanitarian situation paint a bleak picture. Reports on the North Korean gulags estimate at least 200,000 political prisoners are being held under harsh conditions. Prisoners are often brutally tortured and executed in these gulags.

I am deeply honored for the opportunity to stand in support of the beleaguered North Korean people, and to acknowledge the years of tireless advocacy on their behalf by the North Korea Freedom Coalition, its member organizations, and Suzanne Scholte in particular. It is important that Coalitions such as these continue to raise awareness about the human rights abuses in North Korea. I am so thankful for each one of you for making the sacrifices to take part in the North Korea Freedom Week on behalf of the North Korean people.

With our continuing efforts, we look forward to a day when North Korea will join America as a nation that honors and upholds human dignity, and when the long-suffering people of North Korea will themselves walk in the sunlight of human freedom.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Sincerely,

Congressman Trent Franks