

**Statement from Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen to be Read in
Seoul, South Korea during North Korea Freedom Week 2010
(April 25 – May 1)**

Dear People of both South and North Korea, Members of the North Korea Freedom Coalition, Ms. Scholte of the Defense Forum Foundation, Members of the NGO Human Rights Community, Pastors, North Korean Defectors, Abductee Families, Members of the Korean-American Community and Friends of Korea:

It is particularly fitting and proper that this year's annual North Korea Freedom Week will be held for the first time on the Korean peninsula. This week of events also comes at a particularly critical time as we seek answers to the tragic sinking last month of the South Korean naval vessel, Cheonan, and look forward to honoring veterans during the upcoming sixtieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War in June.

I have joined with Representative Sam Johnson as a co-sponsor of legislation commemorating the anniversary of the commencement of that tragic war, due to North Korean treachery, which nonetheless formed an unbreakable bond between two allies, the United States and the Republic of Korea. As a friend and ally, I also wish to state that I fully agree with President Lee Myung-bak's recent statement of the need for a resolute response once the cause of the South Korean ship's sinking is determined. The families of the forty-six dead South Korean sailors deserve no less than a full accounting.

North Korea's refusal to allow a transparent and thorough verification regime for inspection of its nuclear program led to a complete breakdown of the Six-Party Talks last year. This followed the premature and unwise decision by the United States in 2008 to remove North Korea from the State Department list of state sponsors of terrorism.

There are now consistent rumors to the effect that Kim Jong Il may be visiting Beijing at the end of this month, perhaps even while North Korea Freedom Week events are taking place in Seoul. Kim supposedly seeks a devil's bargain with the Chinese leadership: more economic and food aid for his faltering regime and starving people in an exchange for participation in another round of the kabuki theater known as the Six-Party Talks – without any firm commitment to denuclearize or stop Pyongyang's proliferation activities.

We had another example of Pyongyang's dangerous game of proliferation when it was recently reported that Syria was selling missiles

to Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. The sources of Syrian missile technology are likely the arms dealers of Pyongyang.

As a former refugee and an active advocate for North Korean human rights I was pleased to serve as the chief sponsor in 2008 of the North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act. That legislation made it clear that Beijing must cease and desist at once from interfering with work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in assisting North Korean refugees hiding in China. It also made it clear that Beijing must stop the forced repatriation of refugees to almost certain imprisonment and sometimes death in the North Korean gulag. Beijing must also stop turning a blind eye to the massive, abusive trafficking of North Korean women and children within China's borders. It is time for every Korean voice on this peninsula to rise and tell the Chinese Communist boss, Hu Jintao, as Moses once told Pharaoh: Let my people go!

It is time for the U.S. Government and the State Department to tell the Pyongyang regime in no uncertain terms to let U.S. citizen Aijalon Mahli Gomes go. It is time to tell Pyongyang to stop taking American citizens as hostages in a game of political intrigue as the North Koreans have done with Laura Ling, Euna Lee and Robert Park in the last year. It is time for Pyongyang to come clean on its past history of abducting South Koreans, Japanese, and citizens of other nations and to release those who have survived a prolonged captivity. The world unites in demanding that Korea let our people go!

All of you gathered in Seoul to publicly state your commitment to North Korea's freedom have played such a significant role in rescuing North Korean refugees stranded in China, Mongolia and Southeast Asia; in broadcasting the words of truth and the promise of liberty inside North Korea; and in seeking to reunite divided families and to return the abductees and old South Korean POWs to their families. In these and other innumerable ways, you have placed a spotlight on the regime in Pyongyang so that the sunshine can pierce the darkness of the North Korean gulag. And so I say to you all: Do not give up the struggle for North Korean freedom! We shall prevail! Thank you.

Sincerely,

**Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress**