

## Chairman Royce Opening Remarks

Good afternoon. Thank you for joining me here today to bring attention once again to the deplorable human rights conditions in North Korea.

Last year, nine North Korean refugees – some only teenagers – were tragically arrested by the Laotian government and deported back to North Korea via China. At that time, I wrote to President Xi Jinping expressing my profound displeasure with Beijing’s continued repatriation of North Korean refugees, knowing that they face torture and death.

The findings of the Commission of Inquiry give us good reason to be deeply concerned about their fate, not just today, but for years to come. If these children have met the horrible fate of so many other North Korean refugees, that is a crime against humanity. But if the nine are alive, it is evidence that international pressure can help save North Korean lives. Beijing, in cooperation with UNHCR, must help us find the truth about these nine children.

The reality is that under the Kim regime, North Koreans have been denied every last freedom: the right to speech, assembly, religion, and movement. In a Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing, one dissident told us that she was denied even the right to smile or sing. Meanwhile, the regime's elites live in luxury

For over 50 years, the North Korean regime has operated the world's most oppressive system of political prisoner camps. As many as 120,000 prisoners are currently enslaved. So-called violators are starved, worked to death, tortured, raped, forced to abort or participate in infanticide, or even executed for supposed crimes.

But we are here today not only to bring attention to North Korea’s egregious human rights abuses, but to call for action. Earlier this year, the most damning report ever compiled on North Korea was released by the UN Commission of Inquiry. The report singles out North Korea as the worst human rights regime in the world, and rightfully says that the Kim regime “has for decades pursued policies involving crimes that shock the conscience of humanity.”

In the coming weeks, the UN General Assembly Plenary will consider a resolution condemning North Korea for its systematic and gross human rights violations, recommending that the top perpetrators be referred to the ICC. I **strongly** urge all members of the UN to support this measure and demand accountability! On behalf of all who have suffered at the hands of the Kim regime, justice needs to be served.

The work now is to implement the recommendations of the COI and determine how to prevent the Kim regime from continuing to commit these unparalleled human rights abuses.

Another approach that we need to consider is the implementation of the strong sanctions included in H.R.1771, measures that were previously used on North Korea to squeeze the Kim regime almost a decade ago.

In 2005, the Treasury Department sanctioned a bank in Macau that was laundering millions of dollars for Kim Jong Il. Treasury's action effectively barred that bank from the global financial system, whose hub is in New York. Banks worldwide soon blocked North Korean accounts and shunned North Korean business to protect their own access to our financial system. Within a year, Kim Jong Il could no longer afford to sustain his own extravagant lifestyle, his WMD programs, his million-man army.

We need to put an end to the house of horrors that is North Korea. Kim Jong Un and his inner circle need to be brought to justice. I want to thank Suzanne Scholte and Rabbi Cooper for their continued devotion to human rights and the North Korean people. For years they were voices in the wilderness. They aren't anymore.

Thank you.