



All Party Parliamentary Group for
International Freedom of Religion or Belief

Religion and Belief in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: A Report of
the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or
Belief.

"We have been the silent witnesses of evil deeds." – Dietrich Bonhoeffer



"the gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world...there is almost a complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion... the State considers the spread of Christianity a particularly serious threat."

– Report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry, 2014, leading to 111 nations voting for a referral of North Korea to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.



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Foreword

I passionately believe that there must be no coercion of belief or unbelief: following the religion or belief of one's choice, and listening to the still small voice of the conscience, is a crucial part of the inherent dignity of what makes us human.

This is why, in the twenty-first century, I joined the rest of the world in horror at the reports coming out of the DPRK, including the brutal state-sponsored oppression of followers of religion. This is a country that has suffered severe oppression in its past at the hand of its neighbours. Now it oppresses its own people, suppressing their precious internal freedom of thought, conscience and religion. For the last sixty years-plus it has committed egregious human rights violations – the details of which would turn the stomach of even the most hardened person. This includes banishing those followers of religion to remote places, incarcerating and subjecting them to torture in labour camps, or murdering Christians for merely possessing a Bible.

The DPRK is one of the most closed nations in the world. Resigned for many years as an impossible case, the international community is finally beginning to afford it the attention it so desperately deserves. Nearly seventy years after the liberation of Auschwitz, it is inconceivable that the DPRK is still able to operate prison and labour camps that have been regularly compared to the concentration camps of the Nazis. The human suffering is immense and we have a moral and political duty to do all we can to bring this devastation to an end and hold people to account.

I would like to offer my particular to Lord Eames, Jim Shannon MP and other members of the APPG who participated in the oral hearings for this Report, and also to Lord Alton, Kay Carter, Clare Lay and James Burt. Especial thanks are also due to all those who gave written or oral evidence: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, the founder of HH_Katacombs, Rev. Hanna Park, Marie-Laure Verdier-Shin, Professor Colin McCulloch, Joo-il Kim, Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, Benedict Rogers, Professor Hazel Smith, and those who could not be named for security reasons

As Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief, I commend this report to you. Lord Alton of Liverpool, who chaired this inquiry, often speaks of his conviction that *"when small stones move, landslides happen."* This report is one such small stone, joining others around the globe to create a landslide; a landslide which must ultimately see the freedom of the people of the DPRK from a lifetime of oppression.

Baroness Elizabeth Berridge of the Vale of Catmose, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Introduction

In February 2014, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry (COI) into Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) released a 400 page report documenting chronic, wide-spread human rights abuses in the DPRK. The COI concludes that: *“there is no effective freedom of religious belief in the DPRK. Such belief is treated as basically incompatible with, and hostile to, the state-sponsored personality cult surrounding Kim Il-sung and his descendants. Countless numbers of persons in the DPRK who attempt to practise their religious beliefs have been severely punished, even unto death.”*¹

Therefore, the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Religious Freedom concluded that it was necessary to write a report devoted to this particular aspect of the human rights abuses in the DPRK. The All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief was established in June 2012 and published its first report in May 2013. It is supported by groups from across the religion and belief spectrum, as well as interested individuals, and groups campaigning for human rights. The All Party Parliamentary Group aims to champion the right of all people across the world to enjoy the freedom bestowed by Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It was founded on the principle that it would direct its attention where the need is greatest and the possibility for change is highest.

This Report seeks to provide an overview of the situation facing religion in the DPRK, including the history of faith on the peninsula, the chronic abuse of followers of religion in the DPRK where Kim Il-sung is reported to have said that *“religious people should die to cure their habit”*,² possible signs of hope and suggestions of ways forward for the international community to address the seemingly implacable situation.

The DPRK is one of the most closed states in the world. Therefore, it presents an almost unique challenge in obtaining up-to-date and verifiable statistics and witness statements. Nevertheless, the inquiry was able to hear testimonies from DPRK refugees, NGOs, experts and academics, and believes that the evidence it received is credible. For security purposes, a number of these witnesses' identities have been withheld.

Furthermore, the majority of the evidence concerning religion in the DPRK details the situation of Christians in that country. This is partially because many of those who attempt to engage with the DPRK are Christians, but also because, as the COI reported, *“the spread of Christianity is considered by the DPRK a particularly serious threat”*³ and therefore Christians are subjected to especially harsh treatment and warrant the particular interest of human rights groups. This is evident throughout the Report but, nonetheless, this Report aims to address the overall treatment of religions in the DPRK.

¹ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2014 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIDPRK/Pages/CommissionInquiryonHRinDPRK.aspx> para, 258 [accessed 23.11.14]

² Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 253

³ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 264,

Executive Summary

Korea has a rich religious heritage. Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism have been practiced on the Korean peninsula for centuries with other religions, such as Christianity and Tonghak arriving much later – Christianity first in the 1600s and Tonghak in the 1800s. Such was the widespread adherence to Christianity in North Korea that, by the twentieth century, Pyongyang was known as *“the Jerusalem of the East.”* Pope John Paul II said that the Korean church was *“unique in the story of the Church”*

Since the division of the Korean peninsula in 1945 religion has been restricted and then systematically suppressed in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). Before the Korean War of 1950-1953, Kim Il-sung’s policies squeezed religious organisations, annexing their sources of finance and restricting their ability to meet. Increasingly, those who refused to collaborate with the regime were banished to remote, hostile parts of the country, imprisoned in labour or prison camps, or killed. Those who could fled South to the Republic of Korea (ROK).

Atrocities were committed against religious groups during the Korean War, particularly against Christians, such as massacres, torture and forced death marches. Bishops, ministers, priests, nuns and lay people were routinely murdered. Atrocities were also reported by self-styled Christian groups, and the predominant religion of the ROK’s Western allies completed the creation of religious and political associations during the war.

After 1953 the DPRK retreated into isolationism and Kim Il-sung focussed on consolidating his rule by wiping out opposition, including religious groups. From 1953 to the early 1970s it appeared as if religion had been completely wiped from the DPRK. *“(We) cannot carry such religiously active people along our march toward a communist society. Therefore, we have tried and executed all religious leaders higher than a deacon in the Protestant and Catholic churches. Among other religiously active people, those deemed malignant were all put to trial. Among ordinary religious believers, those who recanted were given jobs while those who did not were held in prison camps.”* – Kim Il-sung, 1962.

During this time, the *songbun* system was introduced to the DPRK. This categorised citizens into three groups, with an additional 51 sub-groups. These groups were ‘core class, wavering class and hostile class’. Followers of religion were assigned to the lower rungs of the ‘hostile class’ and banished to remote areas, labour or prison camps. Religion was forced underground with followers meeting secretly and at great risk. One refugee described how he and his wife hid under a blanket to sing hymns, whereas another reported how their friend was taken to one of the most notorious prison camps in the DPRK after being seen saying grace over dinner.

Furthermore, a system of three-generational guilt was introduced, meaning that if one person were found to be religious, three generations of their family would suffer as a result. As in the cases of Ms Seo Keum Ok and Ms Ryi Hyuk Ok. Ms Seo Keum Ok was arrested in 2009 for distributing Bibles and suffered ‘indescribable torture’. Her husband was also imprisoned and her children went missing. Also in 2009, Ms Ryi Hyuk Ok was executed for distributing Bibles. Her husband, children and parents were sent to a political prison camp.

When in a camp, religious followers and particularly Christians are subject to especially harsh treatment. One woman, arrested for her faith, was *“assigned to pull the cart used to remove excrement from the prison latrines. Several times the guards made her lick off excrement that had spilled over in order to humiliate and discipline her.”*

Persecution of religious groups is well-known. Of all the refugees interviewed by the Database Centre for North Korean Human Rights, 99.7% said that there is no religious freedom in North Korea. The interviewees' testimonies showed that victims of religious persecution were 45.5% Protestant, 0.2% Catholic, 1.3% Buddhist, 1.7% no religion, 1.1% 'others' and 50.3% unknown. Many religious people are discovered when forcibly repatriated to the DPRK after trying to flee. More often than not, they are repatriated from China, in violation of the international principle of *non-refoulement*.

The DPRK has instituted its own national ideology, *Juche*, which merged with what is known as 'Kimilsungism' in the 1970s to create a quasi-religious ideology. All DPRK citizens are demanded to adhere to *Juche*, which has no tolerance of separate belief systems, thereby providing further fodder for religious persecution. With the introduction of The Ten Principles in 1974, DPRK citizens were commanded to "*Accept the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung's revolutionary thought as your belief and take the Great Leader's instructions as your creed.*"

Despite this bleak outlook, there have been some visible displays of religion in the DPRK. In the early 1970s various national religious institutions appeared. Furthermore, from the late 1980s, state-sponsored churches were erected in Pyongyang and Buddhist temples were permitted to hold national celebrations. The language of the Constitution and also the dictionary definitions around religion have also changed, dropping many of the negative connotations therein.

The implication of these developments is hotly debated. Many argue that they are no more than Potemkin-style attempts to convince the international community that there is religious freedom in the DPRK in order to encourage investment and to appease international criticism. Indeed, there are reports of church congregations being bussed in for services or Buddhist guides hurriedly donning a tonsure when seeing a tourist group.

However, others suggest that these changes may point to a very slight opening for at least those historic religious followers in the DPRK and that it points to a comprehension of the importance of the right to freedom of religion or belief to the international community. Nonetheless, any understanding that this implies is directly at odds with the continued systemic oppression of religious groups within the DPRK.

The inquiry concluded that there is systemic oppression of religious freedom within the DPRK and that Christians in particular are targeted by the regime and subjected to crimes against humanity. Furthermore, the visible changes in policy in the 1970s-1990s, which could be developed, did not point to an overall relaxation of pressure on religious groups in the DPRK. Therefore, there is need for accountability and referral to the International Criminal Court. However, the inquiry unanimously agreed that accountability in itself was not enough. Therefore, the push for an ICC referral must also be coupled with long-term, strategic engagement with the DPRK – ranging from informal tribunals to fact-finding missions, educational and cultural exchanges, breaking of the information blockade, persistent critical engagement on human rights, the re-instigation of The Six Party Talks, and the development of "off the tracks" approaches, especially be investing in the diaspora of around 30,000 North Korean escapees now living outside the DPRK. Foremost, it is vital that we maintain momentum and public pressure on the DPRK so that it can no longer perpetrate such abuses with impunity.

The history of religion in Korea

Buddhism, Confucianism and Shamanism have been practiced on the Korean peninsula for centuries. Shamanism permeates Korean society. It is the “*the earliest system of thought and belief on the Korean peninsula...a pan-Asian, animistic folk religion.*”⁴ Buddhist teachings came to Korea in the fourth century, becoming the State religion in AD 668. Confucianism rose to prominence at a similar time and eventually became the dominant philosophy of the Korean Peninsula, purposefully eroding the official hold of Buddhism. However, despite this, Buddhism retained its popularity with the working classes. Both Buddhism and Confucianism were brought to the Korean people via China.⁵

Koreans also first heard of Roman Catholicism through China. In 1644, members of the royal court returned from China, baptised.⁶ Christian books continued arriving into Korea through trade links with China. In 1785, a young man called Yi Seung-hun returned from meeting with Jesuits in China and established a secret church.⁷ In 1786 Christianity was banned in Korea and the authorities clamped down on its followers. Despite this, the Christian population rose from 4,000 in 1790 to 10,000 in 1800.⁸ Execution and torture were regularly used against these early Christians, as vividly described by Msgr. Richard Rutt in *Martyrs of Korea*: “*Savage beating caused bloodshed and there are accounts of martyrs whose flesh fell off in shreds, even of bones being exposed. Wooden blocks and ropes were employed to bend leg and arm bones, even to break them and dislocate joints.*”⁹ Most visiting priests were executed, as was Korea’s first ordained priest, St Andrew Kim, who was ordained in 1844, executed on 16 September 1846,¹⁰ and canonised in 1984. By 1945 there were an estimated 145,000 Roman Catholics in Korea.¹¹

Other Christian denominations arrived later. In 1866, a Welsh Presbyterian, Robert Thomas, was accepted onto the American trade ship ‘*The General Sherman*’, bound for Korea. The ship came into military conflict with Korean troops. Most of the crew were killed and Robert was arrested and beheaded. During the voyage, Robert had been distributing Bibles and he gave his final copy to his executioner, Park Chun-kwon, who later became a Christian and established a church in Pyongyang.¹² Subsequently, missionaries were allowed into Korea to establish institutions such as medical training facilities, schools and orphanages.¹³ Although they also supported the local besieged Christians, it was the latter who were mainly responsible for sharing their faith with other Koreans. Of particular note were the spiritual revivals of the 1907 which gave “*Pyongyang the nickname ‘the Jerusalem of the East.’*”¹⁴ By 1945, approximately 200,000 Korean citizens followed Protestant traditions of

⁴ Hawk, David, *Thank you Father Kim Il Sung: Eyewitness Accounts of Severe Violations of Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion in North Korea*, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2005, p. 56

⁵ Alton, David and Chidley, Rob, *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, Lion Hudson, 2013, pp. 24-25

⁶ *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, p. 68

⁷ Rutt, Richard, *Martyrs of Korea*, Catholic Truth Society, 2002, pp. 9-10

⁸ Alton, David and Chidley, Rob, *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, Lion Hudson, 2013, pp. 69-70

⁹ *Martyrs of Korea*, p. 16

¹⁰ *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, p. 71

¹¹ See Appendices: Professor Hazel Smith, UCLan, oral evidence 26 November 2014

¹² Hi-tae, Kim, and Jung, Peter, *The Persecuted Catacomb Christians of North Korea*, Justice for North Korea, 2013, pp. 10-11; *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?* pp. 72-73

¹³ *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, pp. 73-74

¹⁴ *The Persecuted Catacomb Christians of North Korea*, p. 21

Christianity. Although a relatively small part of the population, Protestants were highly visible around Pyongyang, wielding disproportionate influence because they educated their congregations.¹⁵

Another religion on the Korean peninsula was Chondokyo, or Tonghak. Tonghak was “largely based on Confucianism but...also prominently incorporated elements of Taoism, Shamanism, Buddhism, and Catholicism. Promulgated as Eastern Learning in contrast to Western Learning (Sohak), i.e. Catholicism, Tonghak taught that God was in human beings, heaven could be made on earth, and history could be driven by common people as opposed to the yangban aristocratic elite.”¹⁶ In 1945, out of a population of 26 million, roughly 1 million of those were adherents of Tonghak.¹⁷

Between 1910-1945, Japan occupied the Korean peninsula. During this period, and particularly during the 1930s, Koreans were forced to take part in Japanese Shinto worship – worship of the emperor. Some religious groups felt able to accommodate this. Those that did not were brutally oppressed.

Establishing the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

*“(We) cannot carry such religiously active people along our march toward a communist society. Therefore, we have tried and executed all religious leaders higher than a deacon in the Protestant and Catholic churches. Among other religiously active people, those deemed malignant were all put to trial. Among ordinary religious believers, those who recanted were given jobs while those who did not were held in prison camps.” – Kim Il-sung, 1962.*¹⁸

After the 1945 division of Korea into the DPRK and the Republic of Korea (ROK), Kim Il-sung ‘proceeded to attack and eliminate indigenous communists and those who had given in under persecution from the Japanese’.¹⁹ He then focussed on those who posed an ideological threat to his plans: followers of religion. ‘Religion was classified as an object that needed to be eradicated in order to complete the communist revolution’.²⁰ The COI has summarised the different periods of persecution thus: “1946-1950: Pre-Korean War; 1950-1953: Korean War; 1953-1971: pre-Kimilsungism movement; 1972-present: era of *Juche*, with the Korean War and pre-Kimilsungism movement periods described as the most vicious in the persecution of religious believers.”²¹

Kim Il-sung’s early communist policies hit religions hard. The ‘land reform’ in 1946 saw 150 million square metres of land confiscated from religious organisations and all industries belonging to religious people or organisations were confiscated during the nationalisation of major industries in 1948. In 1946, restrictions were placed on gatherings in churches.²² Buddhism was also targeted with monks stripped of their titles, tonsures and donations banned, and restrictions placed on activities.²³

¹⁵ Professor Hazel Smith

¹⁶ *Thank you Father Kim Il Sung*, p. 63.

¹⁷ Professor Hazel Smith

¹⁸ Han, Dong-ho, Kim, Soo-Am, Lee, Kyu-Chang, Lee, Keum-Soon, Cho, Jeong-Ah, *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2014*, Korean Institute for National Unification, 2014, p. 316;

¹⁹ See Appendices: Verdier-Shin, Marie-Laure, Submission to the All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief

²⁰ Yeo-sang, Yoon, Jaiho, Chung and Hyunmin, An, *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, 2013, p. 38

²¹ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 245

²² *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, pp.49-50

²³ *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, p. 50

There was also a foretaste of the more extreme repression of the prison camps – a situation compared to the Holocaust –²⁴ to come. As David Hawk writes: *“Primitive prison-labour camps in North Korea initially were set up immediately after World War II, for predictable or potential enemies of the revolution: landowners, collaborators with the Japanese occupation, religious leaders, and some family members of those individuals who went south.”*²⁵ Professor Hazel Smith estimates that, due to the religious persecution in the DPRK between 1945-1950, of the protestant population *‘about 100,000 at least went South’* and the peninsula saw mass migration.²⁶

During 1949, in the build-up to the Korean War, the regime specifically targeted religious people who refused to join them. Many were *‘reportedly deported to mountainous areas in North Pyongan and Hamgyong provinces’*,²⁷ and *‘by 1949 any known Christians who refused to collaborate...had been jailed’*.²⁸ The Korean War created further opportunities to persecute religious groups who were labelled anti-state and counter-revolutionary. Massacres have been recorded, such as the murder of 530 people in a cave in Wonsan, accused of religious or political dissent.²⁹ Professor Smith highlights that *“some of the major atrocities were committed by the Communists against Christians and others. But also by Christian anti-Communist youth, who self-identified as Christian...[thereby establishing] political relationships tied to faith.”*³⁰ Foreign clergy, monks and nuns were arrested and subjected to imprisonment and a forced march in which many of them died.³¹

The persecution of religious groups contributed to the building of a sense of DPRK identity and the fostering of a mono-cultural society united against the ROK and their supporting Western forces. By 1953 the peninsula was devastated. Mass-bombardment of the DPRK resulted in the deaths of two million DPRK citizens between 1950-1953, out of a total population of 10 million. One million ROK citizens were killed in the same time period out of a population of 16 million.³²

UK Government archives report that *“The UN contingent included troops, not only from the USA and Britain, but also from Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Colombia, Turkey, the Philippines, France and many others. The USA made the largest contribution of troops and equipment; Britain the second. By Spring 1951, Britain’s contribution to the UN forces was 12,000 strong.”*³³ This, plus the subsequent strong association between Christianity and ROK regimes, fed Kim Il-sung’s propaganda about religion. In particular, Joo-il Kim highlighted to the inquiry how Kim Il-sung viewed Christians as natural collaborators with the South and the ‘imperialist’ Americans.³⁴ By 1953 religion was firmly forced underground – many religious people had fled to South Korea, the remaining who had not colluded with the regime were either in prison, killed or lived in constant fear of being discovered.

²⁴ Michael Kirby: ‘Holocaust-type phenomenon’, Al-Jazeera, , 26 April 2014

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/talktojazeera/2014/04/michael-kirby-holocaust-type-phenomenon-2014425124333281170.html> [accessed 24.11.14]

²⁵ Hawk, David, *The Hidden Gulag: Exposing North Korea’s Prison Camps*, U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2003

²⁶ Professor Hazel Smith

²⁷ *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, p.51

²⁸ *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, p. 76

²⁹ *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, p. 76

³⁰ Professor Hazel Smith

³¹ *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, p. 77

³² Professor Hazel Smith

³³ *Korea, 1951: The Opposing Forces*, The National Archives, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/battles/korea/> [accessed 23.11.14]

³⁴ See Appendices: Kim, Joo-il, oral testimony, 26 November 2014

This is typified by Rev. Hanna Park who was born in the DPRK in 1945. Although her maternal line was Christian, she had no contact with religion as a girl: *“Only on two rare occasions, I happened to catch a glimpse of a cross necklace, which my mother kept very secretly... On both occasions she gravely exhorted me, “Don’t talk about this, ever!”*³⁵

Post-Korean War to present day

Propaganda, social structure, surveillance and control

After the end of the Korean War (1950-1953), the suppression of religion was central to legitimising Kim Il-sung’s rule and still plays a key role in the maintenance of the regime. After 1953, the COI reports that the DPRK’s prison camps *‘rapidly grew in size, as Kim Il-sung consolidated his rule by purging political opponents and rival socialist factions and suppressing any expression of the Christian and Chondoist religions’*.³⁶ Religion was vilified in public propaganda, including in the school curriculum, and continues to be so today. This was particularly so for Christianity, with Christians depicted as evil, collaborating with the DPRK’s enemies. For example, in one DPRK book, *‘The Jackals’*, a cartoon shows an American missionary poisoning a Korean boy.³⁷

In 1958 the DPRK regime reorganised society it into three major classes. These classes were: core class, wavering class and hostile class. *“The classes were further divided into 51 groups or types. Religious followers...were branded as impure or reactionary elements...then banished from society and placed in one of 21 subgroups of ‘hostile class’.*”³⁸ This is known as the *songbun* system. Whole families were forcibly relocated to remote areas, labour or prison camps if they were deemed ‘hostile’, ensuring a lifetime of poverty, forced labour, brutal treatment and early death. Furthermore, the *songbun* system applies the principle of intergenerational wrong-doing: when one generation is deemed guilty, three generations are purged in order to eradicate that element from society. The COI heard numerous accounts of this, ascertaining that *“The ideological basis for such intergenerational punishment is ascribed to an instruction reportedly issued by Kim Il-sung himself according to which: ‘Class enemies and factionalists, whoever they are, their seed must be eliminated through three generations.’ Camp guards and other security officials are taught this doctrine during their basic training.”*³⁹

This principle has continued today, as seen in the 2013 purge of Kim Jong-un’s Uncle Jang Song Thaek. It also continues to devastate ordinary citizens as the three following testimonies show. Mr. Timothy’s father was arrested in 2003 for being part of a Christian church whilst in China and was sent to the notorious Yodok Camp. Mr Timothy, 14 years old at this time, was also sent to a labour training camp for one year.⁴⁰ Ms Seo Keum Ok was arrested in 2009 for distributing Bibles. She was accused of *“spying and of ‘being a Catholic’ with connections with the United States and ROK”*. Ms Seo suffered *‘indescribable torture’*. Her husband was also imprisoned and her children went missing.

³⁵ See Appendices: Park, Hanna, *I was a 3rd Generation Underground Christian in North Korea*.

³⁶ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 744

³⁷ *Voices from North Korea’s largest underground movement: the secret church*, Open Doors UK & Ireland, 2013, p. 4

³⁸ *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2014*, pp. 315-316

³⁹ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 747

⁴⁰ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 256

On 16 June 2009, Ms Ryi Hyuk Ok was executed for distributing Bibles. She was also accused of the same crimes. Her husband, children and parents were sent to a political prison camp.⁴¹

Therefore, those who secretly follow a religion in the DPRK are faced with the terrible knowledge that, if caught, not only they but three generations of their family will suffer imprisonment and torture as a result. Many whose spouses are caught are forced to divorce them in a bid to save the rest of their family, as described by one woman: *“the judge asked my husband whether he wanted to divorce and he nodded his head to say yes... if he disagreed to a divorce, the rest of the family members would face many difficulties... My husband just looked at me with tears in his eyes.”*⁴²

The establishment of the *songbun* system coincided with the creation of mutual surveillance among civilians and the collective farm labour system,⁴³ ensuring that civilians kept watch on each other and that followers of religion were increasingly likely to be discovered. The internal surveillance system actively watches for religious groups, particularly Christians. One former Public Safety Agency employee recounts: *“we gave instructions to the neighbourhood unit and the Primary Party Committee to watch certain [Christian] people. We told them to watch them closely and report the people who visit them. We were to be informed every 15 days.”*⁴⁴ This remains an effective form of social control, as testimonies from three DPRK defectors show: *“I saw a family being taken to Yodok Kwanliso [Kwanliso is a maximum security camp or ‘total control zone’] for possession of Bible and praying. The mother died in the Centre, and the remaining family was released in April 2012 after serving ten years”; “My friend’s family was spotted praying grace at the dinner table, and was taken to a Kwanliso”; “The wife of a tactical staff officer of Air Command in China’s military, North Hamgyoung Province was publicly executed for possessing a Bible around 2009.”*⁴⁵

Those Christians remaining in the DPRK have to be careful of this all-pervasive surveillance, as one wrong-step could result in imprisonment, torture and death. One DPRK defector testifies: *“...it was my practice whenever possible to climb a hill very early in morning for prayer. One day, a villager asked why I was going up to the hill every morning. I took this as a serious warning because suspicious village onlookers could easily report such illegal activities to the local authorities.”*⁴⁶ One DPRK refugee told of how he and his wife hid under a blanket to sing hymns.⁴⁷

Arrest, imprisonment and torture

Religious followers who are deemed, by practicing their religion, to have committed a political crime, are reportedly sent to a Kwanliso. Kim Sung-Min, a former captain in the North Korean army, told Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) that *“Inside the camp there are two types of prisoner, the anti-government type and the religious type. Neither type gets out – they are in until they die.”*⁴⁸ Those who are suspected of being Christian are reportedly subjected to especially harsh treatment in the

⁴¹ See Appendices: *North Korea: Parliamentary Inquiry on Freedom of Religion or Belief in North Korea*, Christian Solidarity Worldwide – submission

⁴² See Appendices – *Report about Political Prisoner Camps in North Korea: Christians in the Political Prisoners Camps and Persecution*, 14 November 2014 (identity withheld for security reasons)

⁴³ *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, p. 53

⁴⁴ *Voices from North Korea’s largest underground movement: the secret church*

⁴⁵ *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2014*, pp. 331-333

⁴⁶ Park, Hanna

⁴⁷ See Appendices – DPRK refugee oral evidence, 26 November 2014 (identity withheld for security reasons)

⁴⁸ *North Korea: A case to answer, a call to act*, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2007, p. 19

camps. The COI reports that *“Identified Christians are interrogated for longer periods, usually under torture, in an effort to identify other members of underground Christian churches.”*⁴⁹

Rev. Park remembers the internment, torture and murder of her husband: *“For about six months the SSA repeatedly tortured my husband with the goal of coercing him to divulge names of other Christians in the DPRK...his physical constitution succumbed to this unrelenting battering and death followed. Formal DPRK charges brought against him included 1) that he was a South Korean spy and 2) the crime of spreading superstitious beliefs...When they brought my husband to me, he was...Mere skin and bone, he was clad in filthy clothing riddled with lice. Dried, clotted blood and bruises from blows to his head covered his face and head. By this time he was so frail that he could no longer stand upright under his own power. The movement of his eyelids was the only sign that he was still alive.”*⁵⁰ Of her own arrest she shared: *“I was subjected to an evil and prolonged cycle of brutal interrogations by the district-level SSA and police, then atrocious punishments in a labour training camp”*.⁵¹

Another woman, Jeon Young-ok, who was imprisoned and brutalised in a DPRK camp testified that *“They tortured the Christians the most. They were denied food and sleep. They were forced to stick out their tongue and iron was pushed into it.”*⁵² Another Christian woman shared of her imprisonment and interrogation: *“While my hands were tied behind my back, they kicked my sides and breasts. I couldn't even feel the pain because I was losing my mind...I am deaf in one ear now.”*⁵³ The DPRK continues to deny the existence of these camps.

The sentences given to Christians seemingly vary arbitrarily: *“Some Christians were sentenced around 3 years and imprisoned in Labour Training Centre, Labour Reform Centre or Kyohwaso, while others were imprisoned in Kwanliso or just executed in front of the public.”*⁵⁴ What does not vary is the particularly harsh treatment meted out to Christians in the camps. The COI recorded the testimony of one particular lady interned in an ‘ordinary’ prison camp: *“sent to prison for expressing her Christian religion, [she] was punished 10 times with solitary confinement during her seven years of detention. She was also assigned to pull the cart used to remove excrement from the prison latrines. Several times the guards made her lick off excrement that had spilled over in order to humiliate and discipline her.”*⁵⁵ This account and countless others clearly show that Christians are singled out for persecution. They are subject to torture, face a real threat of execution or are sent to the most oppressive camps in the knowledge that people do not return.

However, although Christians appear to account for the majority of those persecuted for their religion or belief, followers of other religions also suffer under the regime’s attempt to create a mono-cultural society free from dissent. The Database Centre for North Korean Human Rights interviewed many DPRK refugees and included questions about the treatment of religious followers in the DPRK. The responses show that the victims of religious persecution were 45.5% Protestant, 0.2% Catholic, 1.3% Buddhist, 1.7% no religion, 1.1% "others" and 50.3% unknown (this covers the

⁴⁹ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 254

⁵⁰ Park, Hanna

⁵¹ Park, Hanna

⁵² Alton, David and Chidley, Rob, *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, Lion Hudson, 2013, p. 81

⁵³ *Report about Political Prisoner Camps in North Korea*

⁵⁴ *Report about Political Prisoner Camps in North Korea*

⁵⁵ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 807

personal experience of those interviewed, plus persecution they had witnessed, heard about or perpetrated).⁵⁶

The response from those interviewed by the Database Centre is telling: *“99.7 percent of North Korean defectors responded that there is no religious freedom in North Korea. In addition, 0.5 percent responded that religious activities are subject to no punishment, while 57.7 percent selected detention in political prison camps as punishment for religious activities, 11.9 percent selected detention in prison, and 2.8 percent selected labour training camps.”*⁵⁷ Persecution of religious adherents is not a hidden policy but one which is widely known within the DPRK and the outside world. One expert commented to this inquiry that *“It is clear from continuing reports that religion, especially Christianity, is harshly repressed. North Koreans who leave the country and are recaptured have reported being asked by North Korean interrogators whether they had any contact with churches, and it seems that harsh punishment is meted out to those who had. There seems little evidence that this policy has changed under Kim Jong Un.”*⁵⁸

This points to another element of the DPRK’s oppression of religious followers. The DPRK demands unswerving loyalty. Therefore, *‘Leaving North Korea without official permission is tantamount to betrayal of the Kim family regime’*.⁵⁹ Those caught are met with unbelievably harsh treatment up on return. Surrounding states – notably China, but also Russia and Laos – watch for DPRK refugees (who they claim are economic migrants and not genuine refugees) and repatriate them to the DPRK, openly violating the international principle of *non-refoulement* (i.e. not sending people back knowingly to situations where they will face torture). China has been roundly condemned for this. The COI concluded that *“in forcibly returning DPRK nationals, China has violated its obligation to respect the principle of non-refoulement under international refugee and human rights law. In some cases, Chinese officials also appear to provide information on those apprehended to their DPRK counterparts to the known danger of those affected”*,⁶⁰ noting that *“In a number of cases, there seemed to be targeted operations to find and apprehend DPRK nationals.”*⁶¹

Non-refoulement is a genuine danger for any DPRK citizen attempting to escape. The founder of HH_Katacombs reports of *“a terror aroused in the hearts of North Korean refugees hiding in China linked to the prospect of arrest in China and forced repatriation to the DPRK. So extreme is that fear that many carry either a razor blade or some form of poison on their person.”* He goes on to note that *“Such dread of repatriation is compounded if the refugee has been in contact with Christians while outside the DPRK. A finely honed DPRK interrogation procedure includes a relentless inquisition focused on the issue of whether the captured refugee has been in contact with foreign Christians...Refugees who dare to make outside religious contacts are invariably aware that DPRK authorities perceive such activities as treasonous and that punitive consequences will be grave.”*⁶²

⁵⁶ *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, pp. 162-163

⁵⁷ *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, p. 5

⁵⁸ See Appendices – Expert submission to APPG on International Freedom of Religion or Belief (identity withheld for security reasons).

⁵⁹ See Appendices – Founder of HH_HH_Katacombs, *Dark Night of the Soul: The Price of Exercising Religious Belief in North Korea* (identity withheld for security reasons).

⁶⁰ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 490

⁶¹ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 436

⁶² Founder of HH_Katacombs

The extra punishment meted out to those who had met or joined with Christians in China is something of which this inquiry has been made repeatedly aware. One woman reported that upon repatriation she was asked the questions: *'Why did you go to China?'* and *'Do you believe in God?'*. She said that *'Had I agreed, they would have sent me to a political prison camp'*. Another young man was asked *'Did you ever go to a Christian church in China?'* and *'What was discussed?'*, but he reported that *'Right to the end, I did not admit that I had been to a church'*.⁶³ There is a widespread understanding among those who have been repatriated that denying any contact with Christians is crucial if they want to avoid the most brutal punishment or execution upon repatriation. The Korean Institute for National Unification (KINU) recorded the stories of DPRK refugees in the ROK. Numerous testimonies linked discovery of Christian activity upon repatriation with immediate detention in a Kwanliso, disappearance or presumed death: *"During an investigation, it was discovered that one woman had illegally crossed the border and attended a Protestant church in China. She was detained in a Kwanliso"; "During processing, a Bible was found among the belongings of a fellow female deportee. As soon as the Bible was found, the woman was placed in another line and disappeared from the Detention Centre. The woman was from Wonsan and was about 65 years old. Nobody knows what kind of punishment she received"; "I saw a detainee, who studied the Bible for a month in China, sent off to a Kwanliso."*⁶⁴

Genocide?

The targeting of religious minorities, notably the Christian community, has raised the question of genocide. In their 2007 report, CSW put forward a convincing case, arguing that *"Religious groups are recognised as one of the four specific groups that are protected by the Genocide Convention. As religious believers have been executed, sent to political prison camps that they cannot leave and where reproduction is prohibited, and targeted in other ways...evidence indicates that most or all of the acts specified in the genocide definition⁶⁵ have been carried out against religious believers."*⁶⁶

The COI considered this possibility. They ultimately concluded that there was insufficient evidence to prove it either way. However, as former Justice of the High Court of Australia Michael Kirby said in a subsequent interview, *"The proof of the pudding is found in statistics which are published by North Korea itself. The statistics reveal that at the partition...the identifying Christian population in North Korea was roughly the same as it is to this day in South Korea, about 23% identified as Christians. Now, according to figures published by North Korea, the identified Christian population in the country is 0.8%. That's to say, it's less than 1% and that's a very rapid fall...The COI didn't feel able to make that finding [of genocide] on the material that we had. We didn't close it off."*⁶⁷ The COI called for further investigation into this possibility and this inquiry echoes that call.

⁶³ *Report about Political Prisoner Camps in North Korea*

⁶⁴ *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2014*, pp. 332-333

⁶⁵ See article II of the Genocide Convention (1948).

⁶⁶ *North Korea: A case to answer, a call to act*, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2007, pp. 62-63

⁶⁷ Kirby, Michael, *Responding to Religious Repression in North Korea*, October 22, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/north-korea/responding-religious-repression-north-korea/p33658> [25.11.2014]

A new ideology – *Juche*, Kim-Il-sung-ism and Kim-Jong-il-ism

One way in which the regime maintains power is through the creation and propagation of a national ideology. This ideology was built by combining ancient myth and legend with Soviet-style communist thinking and has existed by evolving and adapting as the situation required.

Initially, Kim Il-Sung followed Soviet-style communism. However, soon a DPRK ideology – *Juche* – emerged. The term *Juche* was first used by Kim Il-sung in a speech in 1955. However, the man credited with inventing and developing *Juche* is Hwang Jang-yop – one of the most senior defectors from the DPRK. On arrival in South Korea he reported that “We...agreed to interpret [*Juche*] as every [decision and policy] in the north should be decided in conformity with Chosun’s reality and in the interest of the Chosun people”.⁶⁸ However, Lord David Alton and Rob Chidley comment that “*in practice, it was the ‘Chosun reality’ that had to keep adjusting in line with party policy,*” and they emphasised that “*Kim Il-sung and his son, Kim Jong-il, took an active role in developing and expanding [*Juche*]...in 1965, Kim Il-sung defined the three pillars of *Juche* as political independence, economic self-sufficiency, and self-reliance in defence. In 1982, Kim Jong-il published *On the Juche Idea*, which established him, after his father, as the highest interpreter of the policy*”.⁶⁹ Furthermore, *the military is included as a ‘core part of the self-sufficiency and reliance policy of Juche’*.⁷⁰

It is worth noting at this point that the connection between the military and the regime’s power-upholding ideology, *Juche*, presents a particular problem to the international community when discussing peace. If the existence of a large, ever-ready army is a crucial part of the ideological structure supporting the authority of the state, they may be unwilling to sue for peace at the risk of lessening their control on society. This is a particular problem in the present era of third-generation leadership. A recent study by KINU noted that the regime has tightened border security and internal control since Kim Jong-un came to power. They suggest that “*The regime is now more dependent on ideological than police control in securing internal stability.*”⁷¹ In any negotiations with the regime, the ideological structure on which it is founded must be taken into serious consideration.

In the 1970s, the *Juche* ideology merged with what is known as ‘Kimilsungism’ to become, as David Hawk described, the “‘monolithic’ or ‘unitary’ ideological system” in the DPRK.⁷² Solidifying this unitary system were the emergence of The Ten Principles, announced in 1974. These principles mandate unconditional loyalty to Kim Il-sung. KINU report that the principles “*sought to deify ‘the great leader’ Kim Il-sung and played the role of commanding the daily behaviours of every North Korean,*” functioning “*at a higher level than the Constitution and the Statute of the KWP.*”⁷³ The Ten Principles were taught through the educational system, forced on detainees in camps, and disseminated to adults through mandatory education classes and the regime’s study halls. Interviewees for a United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) report recalled that “*the formal ‘studies’ are supplemented by other forms of Workers Party control and education efforts, particularly Party-led weekly, obligatory small group discussions, held either at*

⁶⁸ Alton, David and Chidley, Rob, *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, Lion Hudson, 2013, p.102

⁶⁹ Alton, David and Chidley, Rob, *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, Lion Hudson, 2013, p. 102

⁷⁰ Alton, David and Chidley, Rob, *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, Lion Hudson, 2013, p. 104

⁷¹ Park Hyeong-Jung, *Assessment of North Korea’s Internal Affairs and the Main Points for Observation in the Second Half of 2014*, Korea Institute for National Unification 01 July 2014, p. 4

⁷² *Thank you Father Kim Il Sung*, p. 34

⁷³ *Assessment of North Korea’s Internal Affairs*, p. 4

work or in residential neighbourhoods through which the population would be kept on the correct path of revolutionary thought.”⁷⁴ The Ten Principles were updated in 2013, for the first time since their creation in 1974. The updates reportedly tightened ideological control, re-emphasising the rule of Kim Jong-un. Furthermore, KINU report that “North Korea has tightened the ideology control over the people through ‘harmonious life (nightly meetings)’ and ‘self-criticism’ diaries in compliance with the newly revised Ten Principles.”⁷⁵

The Ten Principles and the Constitutional provision proclaiming *Juche* as the founding ideology guiding the DPRK (Article 3: ‘DPRK is guided in its activities by the *Juche* idea’),⁷⁶ leave no room for alternative ideologies or beliefs – religious or political. In particular, principle four was drawn to the inquiry’s attention on numerous occasions as justifying the suppression of religious groups: “Accept the Great Leader Comrade Kim Il-sung’s revolutionary thought as your belief and take the Great Leader’s instructions as your creed.”⁷⁷ One DPRK defector, Baek Mi-Jin, summarised the situation thus: “From birth to adulthood all worship Kim Il-Sung. There is no other faith – so we can’t compare it to anything. It was all we knew. We worshipped because if we didn’t bow down we would be killed.”⁷⁸ Another DPRK escapee reported that “In North Korea we call ourselves ‘Kim Il Sung people.’ The only ideology is Kimilsungism, and no other ideology is allowed.”⁷⁹ Indeed, this ideology has many of the hallmarks of a religion and there are multiple references in reports and witness statements to the deification of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. The inquiry also heard from Marie-Laure Verdier-Shin that Kimilsungism conforms to the idea of ‘civil religion’ by combining “a relationship with God [i.e. the Supreme Leader Kim Il-sung] and a sincere faith...with a religion that prescribes loyalty to the nation.”⁸⁰

It was suggested to the inquiry that the regime effectively admitted to total ideological control in their official response to the COI report. While emphasising that *Juche* is not state-enforced, the report makes the hyperbolic claim that while “In the DPRK everyone is fully provided with the rights to choose and follow their own religion and thought according to their own free will. Every citizen has chosen to follow the *Juche* Idea...[which leads to] genuine happiness and prosperity.”⁸¹ The lack of admission to any form of opposition to *Juche*, and the claim that 100% of the population adheres to it, points to complete ideological control. The report then further discredits all witness statements used by the COI, acknowledging that anyone who challenges the regime and its *Juche* system will face punishment. The report states that “As far as those ruffraffs that the US is using as ‘witnesses’ are concerned, they are fugitives that committed extremely serious crimes against the country and people. They are terrorists that opposed the social system of the DPRK where people enjoy a genuine life and happiness and they are the objects of punishment by the criminal law of the DPRK.”⁸² Far from supporting their claim that adherence to the *Juche* ideology is not imposed by the state, this

⁷⁴ *Thank you Father Kim Il Sung*, p. 13;

⁷⁵ *Assessment of North Korea’s Internal Affairs*, p. 4

⁷⁶ DPRK’s Socialist Constitution http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/061st_issue/98091708.htm [accessed 27.11.14]

⁷⁷ Kim, Joo-il; Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 241

⁷⁸ *North Korea: A case to answer, a call to act*, p. 20

⁷⁹ *Thank you Father Kim Il Sung*, p. 34

⁸⁰ Verdier-Shin, Marie-Laure

⁸¹ *Report of the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies*, DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies, 2014, p. 56 (my italics)

⁸² *Report of the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies*, p. 57

statement clearly indicates the level of control that the regime asserts over citizens and the demand for total conformity with the very real threat of punishment for anyone who steps out of line.

Within this context, the following of any other form of religion or belief is viewed as a threat because it provides an alternative belief system to *Juche* and therefore presents a challenge to the regime's ideological foundations. Mrs X testified to this before the COI: *"if there's any other religions that are somewhat in competition with that – their main religion then it will be undermining the basic foundation of the Kim Il-sung religion so that will mean more difficulty for the leadership to maintain or the control of the society. So if the North Koreans start to realize that Kim Il-sung might not be the real god and there might be some other god out there then it's not a good thing for the leadership and that's why they wanted to avoid all the other religions occurring in North Korean society and persecuted other religions."*⁸³

The prevalence of this ideology, plus the state enforcement for many decades and the religious-like belief of those who adhere to it, not only exacerbates religious persecution but must also be considered when entering into discussions with the DPRK regime and thinking of the future for DPRK society.

A double-sided response to religion

But the DPRK's response to religion constitutes more than blanket oppression. Benedict Rogers from CSW report that *'religious repression in North Korea from the 1950s onwards virtually eliminated the main religion or belief communities'*.⁸⁴ Yet, despite this, the inquiry heard that from the 1970s onwards there have been internationally-noticeable expressions of religion within the DPRK.

Religious organisations

In the early 1970s the Korean Christian Union, the Korean Buddhist Union, and the Korean Chondoism Central Guidance Committee appeared. The timing is critical as they coincided with two important developments within the DPRK. First, they appeared during the decade when *Kimilsungism* was officially adopted in the DPRK and citizens were commanded through the Ten Principles to accept the revolutionary thoughts of comrade Kim Il-sung as their faith. This raises questions about the legitimacy of their expressions of faith. Second, their appearance coincided with inter-Korean talks in 1972 and points to the use of these religious organisations for political purposes. These groups are still in existence and are referenced by the DPRK when attempting to prove religious freedom.⁸⁵ It is worthwhile pointing out here that existence of religion in the DPRK does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that this activity points to 'freedom or religion'. Existence and freedom are two fundamentally separate concepts which are often seemingly considered synonymous by States.

Many argue that the emergence of these groups was solely for financial and political reasons and for no other purpose. KINU clearly argue that these religious organisations *"seem to focus more on playing a counterpart role vis-a-vis foreign religious organizations or international humanitarian*

⁸³ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 242

⁸⁴ Christian Solidarity Worldwide – submission

⁸⁵ *Report of the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies*, p. 56

groups, rather than attempting to promote and support freedom of religion in North Korea.”⁸⁶ Others suggest that this indicates an opening of the regime in response to international criticism. However, they emphasise that any opening is only slight but may represent an opportunity. Some of the organisations reached through these official religious groups still work in the DPRK today. Professor Smith, who previously worked with UNICEF and the UN World Food Programme in the DPRK, states that *“the North Korean government has had very long-standing and quite profound relations with faith-based NGOs from abroad, including from South Korea, the United States, Canada and Europe [including] CARITAS, ADRA, Campus für Christus, Mercy Corps, Eugene Bell Foundation, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, World Vision, the Vatican.”*

However, the operations of these organisations are strictly limited by the regime and there is real need for unfettered, internationally-monitored aid access to this country. Furthermore, any openness implied by engagement with foreign religious organisations is directly at odds with the brutal oppression of religious groups within the DPRK. One expert commented: *“it is a mistake to look for coherence in North Korean policy...Why the senior elite of North Korea decide that when they arrest Christians they are going to mistreat them so very badly, while at the same time allowing albeit very limited interaction with South Korean churches? I don’t know. If I were to hazard a guess I’d say the answer is money.”*⁸⁷

Religious buildings and gatherings in the DPRK

The DPRK also argues that the existence of state-approved and controlled religious buildings in their country denotes freedom of religion. In 1988 the DPRK built the Protestant Bongsu church. Both the Protestant Chilgol church and the Catholic Jangchung Cathedral were built the following year and a Russian Orthodox church was built in 2006. All are based in Pyongyang – and Lord Alton of Liverpool and Baroness Cox of Queensbury have visited them during their visits to the DPRK. There is no indication of similar projects elsewhere in the country, although, when the Peers visited Anju, north of Pyongyang, they were told by the mayor that Catholics had been meeting in the rubble of their destroyed church each Sunday for the past sixty years. Also, *“A celebration was held at Bohyon Temple in Mt. Myohyang on Buddha’s Birthday in May 1988. On Jan. 15, 1989 temples held celebrations of enlightenment nationwide. Additionally, since the late 1990s, restoration and repainting have continued at temples in North Korea with the help of South Korean Buddhists.”*⁸⁸

The implication of the officially sanctioned religious buildings is hotly debated. The generally accepted conclusion from the evidence presented to the panel was that they are not indicative of religious freedom in the DPRK. Foreigners who have visited these religious buildings argue that they are merely Potemkin-style buildings, serving no purpose other than seeking to fool the international community. KINU recorded the testimony of foreign Christians who *‘stopped by a church on Easter Sunday without prior consultation and discovered that the doors were locked’*.⁸⁹ DPRK defectors interviewed by David Hawk *“knew of the existence of some of the more famous mountain-top Buddhist temples in North Korea, but surmised that these temples were maintained as ‘cultural heritage sites’.* None had seen a temple open for public religious activities or that housed Buddhist

⁸⁶ *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2014*, p. 327

⁸⁷ See Appendices: expert oral evidence, 26 November 2014 (identity withheld for security reasons)

⁸⁸ *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, p. 58

⁸⁹ *White paper 2014*, pp. 329-330

monks.”⁹⁰ When recounting one unplanned group visit to a Buddhist temple, Professor Colin McCulloch from PUST said of the attendant Monk: *“On one occasion he saw us coming, he was wearing normal North Korean-style working clothes, and he saw us coming up the path then ran around the back to put his robe on and came out to greet us.”*⁹¹ This suggests that these religious buildings are merely for show.

There is, however, an argument that *‘Although they were built out of necessity to comply with the request from the outside’ the religious buildings should not be written-off as meaningless because they ‘were built with state subsidies. This shows that the regime realized that religion was no exception to the global trend of change’ – in particular, the churches were deemed to be meaningful and of ‘great significance because it was the first of its kind since the Korean War’.*⁹² However, as CSW stated in their written submission, *“certainly we need to contrast whatever limited space there may be in those churches with the well-documented imprisonment and sometimes execution of Christians for possessing a Bible or meeting to pray elsewhere in North Korea.”*⁹³

Debate was also had about the religious affiliation of DPRK citizens attending these services. A strong opinion is that the congregations are hand-picked by the DPRK and that none are religious adherents. KINU reports that *‘When foreign guests come to visit, several hundred carefully selected 40 to 50-year-old citizens are gathered to conduct false church services’.*⁹⁴ However, former British Ambassador to the DPRK, John Everard, writes that *“A foreign Catholic who attended the [Pyongyang Catholic] church regularly told me that she thought about half of the congregation might be genuine believers while the other half were security stooges.”*⁹⁵ Therefore there may be some ability for ‘historic’ believers to practice their faith within these state-controlled buildings, but there is still no freedom in this due to strict state controls.

The existence of religious activity outside Pyongyang was a topic of interest to the inquiry. Former Ambassador Everard noted in his book that *“Every now and then I would hear of groups meeting for worship clandestinely, mostly in private homes...in 2008 the South Korean news agency Yonhap surveyed 755 defectors and found that 10 of them said that they had attended house churches and another 443 knew of people who had – so there probably is some truth in these reports”.*⁹⁶ The COI notes that these house church groups are made up of *“individuals whose families were Christians before 1950; and as such, they are allowed to gather for worship without leaders or religious materials.”*⁹⁷ By deduction, therefore, those Christians who are not from historic Christian families are unable to meet in official state-sanctioned groups. Further analysis was provided which stated that *‘unofficial religious activities have increased, [and] the regime has intensified repression on such activities, including voluntary efforts to learn about religion or possession of Bibles’.*⁹⁸

⁹⁰ *Thank you Father Kim Il Sung*, p. 15

⁹¹ See Appendices: Professor Colin McCulloch, PUST, oral evidence 26 November 2014

⁹² *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, p. 58

⁹³ Christian Solidarity Worldwide – submission

⁹⁴ *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2014*, p. 329

⁹⁵ Everard, John, *Only Beautiful Please*, Asia/Pacific Research Center, Div of The Institute for International Studies, 2012, p. 46

⁹⁶ *Only Beautiful Please*, p. 47

⁹⁷ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 250

⁹⁸ *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, pp.60-61

Forum 18 provided an overview of the figures,⁹⁹ clearly indicating the complexity of the issue. Of the Catholic community the DPRK reported that there were 800 Roman Catholics, *two 'public worship centres'*, and one *'sanctuary'*. However, Forum 18 report that 'there is no independent source that could confirm the existence of the "*public worship centres*". They noted that the DPRK claimed that the Protestant community was 12,000 strong, had two churches, 500 *'family worship centres'* or *'house churches'*, and 20 priests – although in 2003 Baroness Cox and Lord Alton were informed by DPRK officials that there were only 200 house churches. Forum 18's analysis read that "*Other than the two churches, there seems to be little agreement between government data and foreign estimates*". The COI received higher estimates than this, with one assessing that the secret Christian population in the DPRK constituted between 200,000 and 400,000 people.¹⁰⁰

Forum 18 report that Buddhist figures are also unclear: the DPRK reported that "there were 10,000 Buddhist adherents, 60 Buddhist temples (the US State Department's International Religious Freedom Report gives an estimate as high as 300), and 200 monks, reliable sources indicate that there is no genuine Buddhist presence." Shamanism appears to be widespread in the DPRK with limited state interference. USCIRF report that "Despite ongoing bans on these practices, they are apparently tolerated in rural areas...practitioners are even frequented by high ranking officials."¹⁰¹

Freedom of religion for foreigners?

A further anomaly lies in the DPRK's assertion that *'Foreigners and expatriates resident in the DPRK are also given complete freedom of religion'*.¹⁰² Expatriates are indeed able to privately celebrate religious festivals in the state-approved religious buildings and in private apartments. Furthermore, the panel heard numerous instances of expatriates regularly attending churches and visiting both churches and Buddhist Monasteries.

However, this practice is severely limited and religious conversations with DPRK citizens are strictly prohibited. Professor McCulloch shared his experience from PUST: "*The discussion of religious topics with students or local DPRK staff is strictly forbidden...If overseas personnel over-step the line with regard to this rule, they may be subject to removal from the faculty (for instance, not being permitted to return for future semesters)*."¹⁰³ The foreign Christian staff working at PUST "*don't have any restriction on our own...corporately private practice of our faith including having what is in effect a church meeting on the campus in a private meeting room and we meet privately in our apartment...I have quite a collection of theological books...but I keep them carefully locked away in my apartment, not accessible to the locals*."¹⁰⁴ Therefore, although granted the ability to privately practice religion, the *'public'* and *'freedom'* aspects of religious freedom as found in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights are denied. Foreigners who attempt to share their religion with others face arrest and punishment, as in the recent cases of Kenneth Bae, John Short and Kim Jong- uk.

⁹⁹ Hornemann, Magda, *North Korea: Mystery of the Last "Hermit Kingdom"*, Forum 18, http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=261 [accessed 01.12.14]

¹⁰⁰ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 246

¹⁰¹ *A Prison Without Bars: Refugee and Defector Testimonies of Severe Violations of Freedom of Religion or Belief in North Korea*, United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2008, p. i7

¹⁰² *Report of the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies*, p. 57

¹⁰³ See Appendices: Professor Colin McCulloch, PUST – submission

¹⁰⁴ Professor Colin McCulloch, oral evidence

Official language around religion

The appearance of the religious organisations and religious buildings was matched by a change in official DPRK language surrounding religion both in the Constitution and the dictionary. The Constitutional provision on religion has changed from the right to have a religion and perform rituals, to the right to have a religion but also the right to spread anti-religious propaganda, then later a change in focus to the right to have a faith and build religious buildings but not to invite foreign forces into the country or to disturb state and social order.¹⁰⁵

The changing language of the Constitution is not reflected in the treatment of DPRK citizens. Those who lived in the DPRK following the latest change to the constitution in 1998, and have subsequently fled, provided testimonies of religious persecution after 1998. Arguably the broad prohibition of disturbing *'state and social order'* encompasses any challenge to the foundational belief system perpetuated by the DPRK and therefore could be applied to any religious adherent. The DPRK dictionary has also undergone a change in its definition of religion, removing many of the negative connotations and providing a more balanced view of religion.¹⁰⁶

Arguably, the continued repression of religious groups renders these changes in language null and void. However, one expert proposed to this inquiry that *"it is important to remember [art. 68 of the Constitution]...Needless to say it is not widely honoured in the DPRK. But it is actually there in the constitution and can easily be quoted back at the DPRK in conversations on freedom of religion or belief."*¹⁰⁷ Although an academic point, language is important as it points to, at the very least, a surface-level understanding of the international obligations upon the DPRK to protect its citizens' right to freedom of religion or belief. The DPRK's response to the COI report again indicates a clear understanding of this principle: *"It is the freedom of a person to choose his or her religion and thought. That is why the international human rights laws require the issues of religion and thought to be solved according to every individual's free will, not by coercion of the state or others."*¹⁰⁸

However, as previously explained, the Ten Principles of 1974 are the highest authority in the DPRK, and reign above the Constitution in the hierarchy of the DPRK legal system. Therefore it is highly questionable what, if any, implications can be drawn about the DPRK's attitude towards religion from the changed wording of the Constitution. Furthermore, it is important at this point to draw attention to the glaring dichotomy between an outward-facing understanding of an international legal norm and simultaneous violations of that norm against civilians, and to emphasise that in no way is the emergence of increasingly acceptable language a sufficient response to human rights violations.

The way forward

It is beyond doubt that grave violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief have occurred in the DPRK with devastating personal consequences. The COI report concluded that *"persons who are considered to introduce politically or ideologically subversive influences are subject to crimes against humanity. Among the foremost victims are religious believers who practise outside the small number of state-controlled religious institutions. In the contemporary DPRK, such religious believers comprise*

¹⁰⁵ *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, pp. 41-42

¹⁰⁶ *White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea*, p. 43

¹⁰⁷ Expert oral evidence

¹⁰⁸ *Report of the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies*, p. 56

*independent communities of Christians who usually come into contact with the religion through Korean-language churches operating in the border areas of China.*¹⁰⁹ These crimes against humanity include ‘*Severe beatings, prolonged and deliberate starvation and other acts of torture*’, as well as execution.¹¹⁰ Further, the COI reported that “*In the DPRK, international crimes appear to be intrinsic to the fabric of the state. The system is pitiless, pervasive and with few equivalents in modern international affairs.*”¹¹¹ The situation for religious adherents in the DPRK will not improve without an overall improvement of the human rights situation in that country. Therefore there is a clear need for justice in the DPRK and for an end to the entrenched crimes against humanity.

United Nations

One recommendation from the COI report, which was regularly presented to the inquiry, was that “*The Security Council should refer the situation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the International Criminal Court for action in accordance with that court’s jurisdiction.*”¹¹² The first stage of this recommendation was realised at the UN on the 18 November 2014 when the Third Committee voted in favour of a resolution for the General Assembly to refer the situation of the DPRK’s human rights record to the UN Security Council for referral to the ICC. At the time of writing, the resolution is due to go to the General Assembly for approval in December 2014.

Questions were raised at the inquiry about the benefit of attempting a quick referral to the ICC through the Security Council, at the risk of vetoes from permanent members China and Russia. Some witnesses argued that “*rather than second guess the position China and Russia will adopt, the international community should put it to the test. If China and Russia abstain and do not use their veto, a case will then go to the International Criminal Court. However, if their vetoes are used, this avenue for pursuing justice and accountability closes; but this does not preclude other possible avenues.*”¹¹³ The benefit of this proposal is that it has international momentum and is also a very clear goal. Furthermore, it is seen by the world citizen to be a direct way to ensure accountability.

Nonetheless, Sir Geoffrey Nice QC highlighted that a significant danger with single-objective calls such as this one is that ‘*if that failed [the international community]...wouldn’t really know what to do next*’.¹¹⁴ Therefore, although “*the immediate task has to be getting this through the Security Council and making the world and the permanent members realise that the time when they could block things for purely local, political reasons is passing...[attention needs to be paid to sustain international momentum so that]failure at any stage of the judicial process is actually seen as success, or is part of an activity that is forward-moving and successful, which can accommodate the step-by-step potential failures of the judicial process.*”¹¹⁵ The need for additional steps alongside the ICC is clear, not only because of the difficulty of getting an ICC referral but also because of the fallibility of the international justice system and the reality that the ICC would only be able to hold certain individuals accountable and not provide justice to those failed by the state-wide system.

¹⁰⁹ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, paras, 1087-1088

¹¹⁰ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, paras, 1092-1093

¹¹¹ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 1164

¹¹² Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 1225 (a)

¹¹³ Christian Solidarity Worldwide – submission.

¹¹⁴ See Appendices: Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, oral evidence, 26 November 2014

¹¹⁵ Sir Geoffrey Nice QC

Others proposed using the threat of an ICC referral as a lever to encourage the DPRK to reform some of its practices, temporarily withholding the threat of a referral under conditions such as an unrestricted visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, inspections of the prison systems, and the internationally-monitored provision of humanitarian aid. This appeared to be an attractive option, ensuring that the DPRK were not immediately on the defensive but still retaining the threat of an ICC referral. However, Sir Geoffrey Nice QC commented that this proposal comes with significant difficulties: *“first, that there may be no single decision maker who can make the threat and have the power to withhold it on terms. Second, it takes such effort to get even close to referring a situation to the ICC that voluntarily abandoning – even on terms – the slight prospects that an actual referral brings could be utterly destructive of so many well intentioned aspirations as to be nearly impossible. And taking such a course could dash the world citizen’s developing expectation of accountability. Yet it is an idea that should be considered if only a mechanism for doing it ‘safely’ can be conceived.”*¹¹⁶ This proposal will require further thought.

The overall conclusion by the inquiry was that there was need for accountability and that the COI’s recommendation of referral to the ICC is one which should be pursued, but that this process should not be the sole attempt to respond to the crimes against humanity in the DPRK and that the international response required creativity – such as that suggested above and below.

Alternative justice mechanisms

There is a very real chance that the ICC referral may be vetoed at the Security Council. Even if it was referred the ICC system has limited scope as it can only hold individuals, rather than states, to account. Therefore other alternative justice mechanisms were also put forward. The possibility of an *ad hoc* tribunal established by the General Assembly was dismissed as too expensive, too time-consuming and too unlikely due to the extensive criticisms levied at previous tribunals.¹¹⁷ However, an *‘informal tribunal’* was proposed, such as the one established for Vietnam by Bertrand Russell.¹¹⁸ These tribunals are low-key and often do not attract the international attention, and momentum, that larger tribunals are able to. They are of *‘long-term good, and they drive formal procedures to do better’* but are of no immediate use for the victims of the DPRK, who need to be a central part of any international response. Nonetheless, they could compliment other justice mechanisms.

Other suggestions included broaching the possibility of a non-institutionalised committee of people *‘who are not politicians, who have extreme and pretty well unchallenged integrity...to engage in a fact-finding mission’* in the DPRK. Alternatively, the question was raised of whether offering the DPRK the *‘most scrupulously neutral tribunal’* would be of value, possibly even *‘on terms of no immediate or significantly delayed publicity of findings’*.¹¹⁹ These are untried methods and possibly are not suitable. But the inquiry puts them forward for serious consideration as alternative ways of engaging with the DPRK regime on the subject of human rights abuses in the country. As Lord Alton and Rob Chidley write: *“North Korea falls into a category all of its own and is in desperate need of a firm strategy of engagement”*.¹²⁰ There is need for a long-term perspective and for critical engagement with the

¹¹⁶ Sir Geoffrey Nice QC

¹¹⁷ Sir Geoffrey Nice QC

¹¹⁸ For more information on informal tribunals, please refer to: <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/the-vietnam-informal-tribunal>

¹¹⁹ Sir Geoffrey Nice QC

¹²⁰ *Building Bridges: Is There Hope for North Korea?*, p. 131

DPRK. Furthermore, almost regardless of the results of any processes, it will be necessary for world citizens, governments and international bodies to maintain momentum on the issue and ensure that the DPRK is no longer able to retain its identity as an autonomous *'hermit kingdom'*.

Soft Power: Smart Power.

The Inquiry heard that *"The Republic of Korea has embraced a policy which they tag 'pressure and dialogue'...It's important to get a balance between pressure and dialogue with the DPRK...[but it is] possible to pursue such a policy with some interesting results."*¹²¹ Constructive, critical engagement is one which has been proposed by Lord David Alton and Baroness Caroline Cox. In 2010 they wrote: *"We also believe grave human rights concerns should be discussed through a process of dialogue and constructive, critical engagement, in parallel with a resumption of the Six-Party Talks concerning security, in the same way as the Helsinki Process was established by President Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher with the Soviet Union. It is time for peace, and 'it is time for Helsinki with a Korean face'."*¹²²

Britain's involvement in the Korean War provides a duty to take an active role in responding to the DPRK's human rights atrocities and ensuring the establishment and maintenance of robust peace on the peninsula. Therefore, the UK is in prime position to encourage the resumption of the Six Party Talks and to facilitate them in whatever way possible. The UK is also well-placed, given its diplomatic connections with the DPRK, to further the recommendation by the COI for *"States that have historically friendly ties with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea... [to] form a human rights contact group to raise concerns about the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to provide support for initiatives to improve the situation."*¹²³

The inquiry also heard of two further ways that the UK could wield soft power in an attempt to encourage the DPRK society to open up and embrace the right to freedom of religion or belief and other human rights: information and education. A commonly highlighted problem in the DPRK is the predominance of anti-religious propaganda and the regime-enforced information blockade. However, we heard evidence of *"a steady erosion of the regime's ability to block information coming into the country and also a less well-documented erosion of its ability to block information flowing round the country"*¹²⁴ There was a call for the BBC to broadcast onto the Korean Peninsula and the suggestion of taking *"advantage of the brisk trade of illegal DVDs across the Chinese border...it wouldn't be difficult to spice these with DVDs of news broadcasts"* or educational programmes about human rights.¹²⁵

A suggestion made at both oral evidence sessions was to open the UK's educational institutions to students from the DPRK. Comparisons were made of similar projects run by the USA with Chinese students in the 1930s and by the UK with students from the Soviet Bloc. Professors McCulloch and Smith commended this as a way to give students *"the opportunity to see alternative societies, the way the rest of the world operates, as well as getting a very high class education which they will take*

¹²¹ Expert oral evidence

¹²² Alton, David and Cox, Caroline, *Building Bridges Not Walls: The Case for Constructive, Critical Engagement with North Korea, Executive Summary* <http://appgnk.org/reports/building-bridges-not-walls-the-case-for-constructive-critical-engagement-with-north-korea/> [accessed 01.12.2014]

¹²³ Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2014, para, 1225 (h)

¹²⁴ Expert oral evidence

¹²⁵ Expert oral evidence

back and will benefit their own people in their own country."¹²⁶ The UK has a wide range of high quality university institutions, and opening them to students from the DPRK would be a valuable use of resource. The expense was highlighted – annual tuition fees of £9,000, plus maintenance – but it was argued that these types of exchanges *"will really have an impact on the sort of society that there will be in North Korea."*¹²⁷ One particular stumbling block was the instigation of strict health criteria for visas, with which the DPRK's poor health infrastructure means applicants are unable to comply.¹²⁸

In addition to educational exchange, it was argued that 'one must press for much more open doors and social exchange' with the DPRK, such as that undergone in *"the early days of what was the cold war, [when] there was a certain amount of exchange on a very informal basis – family to family – that really served quite considerable purposes in bringing reality to bear presumably on both sides as to the different circumstances."*¹²⁹ Furthermore, the UK is host to an increasing community of DPRK diaspora – 800-900 strong – and there are a further 25,000 in the ROK. The UK should be investing heavily in these people in order to equip them to be agents for change in their country. The inquiry agreed that, as the UK, *"We have a lot of soft power. We should use it – we should exert ourselves to our maximum in using it – but not expect quick results. The effect of soft power may take decades rather than years to bear fruit."*¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Professor Colin McCulloch, oral evidence

¹²⁷ Professor Hazel Smith

¹²⁸ Professor Colin McCulloch, oral evidence

¹²⁹ Sir Geoffrey Nice QC

¹³⁰ Expert oral evidence

Conclusion and Recommendations

The inquiry concluded that the DPRK systemically oppresses freedom of religion or belief and that Christians in particular are targeted by the regime and subjected to chronic human rights abuses, amounting to crimes against humanity. Although there were some visible changes in policy in the 1970s-1990s, which could be further developed, this did not point to an overall relaxation of pressure on religious groups in the DPRK. Therefore, there is need for accountability. However, the inquiry unanimously agreed that accountability in itself was not enough, as any chosen route of accountability must also be coupled with long-term, strategic engagement with the DPRK. Only then will there be transition of the society away from one in which systemic abuses of human rights take place as a matter of course and to one where human rights, including the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief, are protected and upheld. **The inquiry recommends that the UK:**

- Pursue the UN Commission of Inquiry's recommendation of referral to the International Criminal Court;
- Pursue all other recommendations made by the UN Commission of Inquiry;
- The UK Government re-assesses its own "*soft power*" approach in North Korea and places more emphasis on developing and supporting the diaspora of escapees, developing and forming tomorrow's new leaders.
- Thoroughly consider and instigate appropriate alternative justice mechanisms to compliment the International Criminal Court process;
- Proactively support the re-instigation of the Six Party Talks and all other engagement with the ROK;
- Ensure that all discussions on the DPRK at the UN and the EU include human rights and especially the "*orphaned right*" of freedom of religion and belief: Article 18.
- Continue to critically engage with the DPRK bilaterally on human rights with the UK's Ambassador in Pyongyang elevating religious freedom to a high priority;
- Financially and administratively invest in the study of students from the DPRK in the UK, including providing solutions to insurmountable visa requirements;
- Invest in cultural exchanges with the DPRK and in the DPRK diaspora, especially those living in the UK, to equip them to be agents for change in their country;
- Urge the BBC World Service to establish a radio broadcast to the Korean Peninsula, in both Korean and English languages;
- Pursue creative ways of breaking the information blockade, for example through the use of DVDs, mobile phones and USBs;
- Fund or otherwise facilitate further research into the human rights situation in the DPRK, especially on the possibility that genocide has been perpetrated against Christians;
- Increase dialogue with China, encouraging them to end their policies of forcible repatriation and to abide by the principle of *non-refoulement*;
- Provide humanitarian assistance to the people of the DPRK, while insisting on satisfactory levels of independent monitoring.

Appendices

1. Verdier-Shin, Marie-Laure (2014) – submission based on PhD thesis: [*Contextualised mission: the South Korean evangelical response to the humanitarian crisis in North Korea \(1995-2012\)*](#). SOAS, University of London – submission.
2. Park, Hanna, *I was a 3rd Generation Underground Christian in North Korea* – submission.
3. *Submission to APPG on International Freedom of Religion or Belief* – expert submission (identity withheld for security reasons).
4. Founder of HH_HH_Katacombs, *Dark Night of the Soul: The Price of Exercising Religious Belief in North Korea* – submission (identity withheld for security reasons).
5. *Report about Political Prisoner Camps in North Korea: Christians in the Political Prisoners Camps and Persecution*, 14 November 2014 – submission (identity withheld for security reasons).
6. *North Korea: Parliamentary Inquiry on Freedom of Religion or Belief in North Korea*, Christian Solidarity Worldwide – submission.
7. Professor Smith, Hazel, oral evidence 26 November 2014.
8. Professor McCulloch, Colin, oral evidence 26 November 2014.
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11. Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, oral evidence, 26 November 2014.
12. DPRK refugee oral evidence, 26 November 2014 (identity withheld for security reasons).
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A New Day Will Dawn



A North Korean Christian who gave evidence in Parliament and whose wife and children died on the DPRK. He has regularly returned to help other escape.



Lee Hee-ho

Lee Hee-ho, a Methodist, who would become the first lady of the Republic of Korea, described how her Catholic husband, Kim Dae Jung, endured years of imprisonment, torture, assassination attempts and persecution, culminating in the overthrow of brutal military dictatorship and his election as President as: *"truly an Orwellian world of illegal brutality – acting as if they would never have to answer to history of God for their barbarity."*

She described the role of the churches in bringing about change and how supporters of democracy were *"Deprived of any clothing they were mercilessly pummelled with wooden bats, deprived of sleep, and had water poured into their nostrils while hanging upside down like so much beef hanging from hooks in the slaughter house. Listening to these stories of horror, my body shuddered with indescribable indignation and sorrow."* Kim Dae Jung said *"The intention was to make me go insane. I could hear someone moaning in a room next to me. I was stripped naked and forced to wear worn-out military fatigues. I was threatened with torture."*

In considering the testimonies given to our Inquiry we were struck that Christians and others in the DPRK are today enduring what Christians and others once experienced in the South – but that through their suffering, a new day has dawned.



"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter" – Dr Martin Luther King

With thanks to:

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association
 Aid to the Church in Need
 British Humanist Association
 The Buddhist Society
 Christian Solidarity Worldwide
 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
 Coptic Orthodox Church Centre
 Hindu Forum of Great Britain
 Interserve
 National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom
 Network of Sikh Organisations
 Open Doors UK & I
 Redeemed Christian Church of God
 Release International
 UK Coptic Organisations

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December 2014