House Policy Committee

Christopher Cox, Calif.
Chairman
Dennis Hastert, Ill.
Richard K. Armey, Tex.
Tom DeLay, Tex.
J.C. Watts, Okla.
Deborah Pryce, Ohio
Barbara Cubin, Wy.
Thomas M. Davis, Va.
Rob Portman, Ohio
John R. Thune, S. Dak,
Ernie Fletcher, Ky.
Ander Crenshaw, Fla.
Shelley Moore Capito, W. Va.
Jim DeMint, S.C.
Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Fla.
David Dreier, Calif.
Vito Fossella, N.Y.
Benjamin Gilman, N.Y.
Bob Goodlatte, Va.
Mark Green, Wisc.
Felix Grucci, N.Y.
Kenny Hulshof, Mo.
Henry Hyde, Ill.
Darrell Issa, Calif.
Brian Kerns, In.
Joe Knollenberg, Mich.
Ron Lewis, Ky.
Jim Nussle, Iowa
Doug Ose, Calif.
Todd Platts, Penn.
Bob Schaffer, Colo.
John Shadegg, Ariz.
Nick Smith, Mich.
Cliff Stearns, Fla.
Bob Stump, Ariz.
John Sununu, N.H.
Billy Tauzin, La.
Bill Thomas, Calif.
Todd Tiahrt, Kans.
Pat Toomey, Penn.
David Vitter, La.
Dave Weldon, Fla.
Jerry Weller, Ill.
Roger Wicker, Miss.
Heather Wilson, N.M.
C.W. Bill Young, Fla.

Policy Statement

A Humanitarian Policy for the People of North Korea

The United States Must Help the People of North Korea Flee Communist Rule

July 31, 2002

Introduction

Kim Jong Il's Stalinist dictatorship has starved an estimated two million people—10% of North Korea's population—since 1995. Starvation and economic deprivation, denial of all individual rights and freedoms, and political, social, and religious persecution are causing the people of North Korea to risk death to cross the border rather than starve in their own country. If caught in the PRC, however, they risk being returned to North Korea, where they face imprisonment, torture, and death.

As evidence of North Korea's abuses mounts, the United States and the international community must increase its support for the human rights of the people of North Korea. The United States must lead the way in protecting the North Korean people from forcible return as they attempt to escape Communist rule.

The Diversion of U.S. Food Aid

Since the advent of the Clinton administration, North Korea has gone from zero U.S. foreign aid to become the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid in the East Asia-Pacific region. U.S. taxpayers will pay for one-third of this year's food donations from the rest of the world to North Korea. Meanwhile, Japan—which by agreement with the Clinton administration used to provide such aid—has ended all donations to North Korea this year, due to Kim Jong Il's abuses.

2471 Rayburn House Office Building (202) 225-6168 FAX (202) 225-0931
policy@mail.house.gov http://policy.house.gov

The world's donated food rarely makes it to those suffering the most in North Korea. Despite totalitarian secrecy and a dearth of effective international monitoring, evidence shows that Pyongyang has diverted food aid from U.S. humanitarian organizations and the European Union, using it instead to feed Kim Jong Il's million-man army and his security forces, and as a preferment for the Communist party elite.

The U.S. Ambassador-designate for the UN World Food Program, Tony Hall, noted the terrible conditions under which the North Korean people live during a visit to North Korea in November 2000. "The continuing crisis is most telling in the lives of Korean children," he said. "Without soap, hot water, heat or medicine—most were dirty, coughing and sniffling. At lunch, they gulped their milk without taking a breath and came back hungrily for seconds."

Since that statement, the situation in North Korea has deteriorated to such a degree that the World Food Program reported on February 8, 2002 that two million children under age five may die of hunger. Kim Jong Il's diversion of U.S. and world food aid is a direct contributor to this grisly prognosis. According to Jasper Becker, former Beijing Bureau Chief for the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post*, Kim Jong Il uses the diversion of U.S. food aid as a tool to control the population. In testimony given at a May 2, 2002 House International Relations Committee Hearing, Becker said "most of the people who died first are those who belonged to the classes which were considered less reliable, less politically loyal to the regime … and there are also stories that the food is being deliberately withheld from some areas in order to punish these areas for staging anti-government protests or rebellions or even military uprisings."

Sadly, U.S. aid is supporting Kim Jong Il's Stalinist regime, and not the suffering people of North Korea.

Persecution of Religious Followers

Kim Jong Il's government, which completely outlaws all non-state sanctioned religious practice, has now confiscated nearly 2,000 churches. "Counter-revolutionaries" caught practicing their faith face forced starvation, torture, indefinite imprisonment, and execution. Proselytizing is completely banned in North Korea. Those caught promoting religion are subject to long prison sentences, torture, and death.

The U.S. State Department reports that religious followers have been beaten, imprisoned and killed for practicing their faith. According to State Department reports, the North Korean government may have executed as many as 400 Christians during the last three years.

A study released by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom in April 2002 found that approximately 6,000 Christians are currently incarcerated in Prison Number 15 in northern North Korea. These men and women are treated far worse than other prisoners—often they are given the most dangerous jobs in the prison factories. Christian prisoners are being killed for refusing to renounce their religious beliefs.

On June 21, 2002, in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, North Korean prison survivor Soon Ok Lee relayed an eyewitness account of the killing of a group of North Korean Christian prisoners. "In the spring of 1990, I was carrying a work order to the cast iron factory in the male prison. Five or six elderly Christians were lined up and forced to deny their Christianity and accept the Juche Ideology of the State. The selected prisoners all remained silent at the repeated command for conversion. ***The security officers became furious by this and killed them by pouring molten iron on them one by one."*** (Emphasis added.)

Despite the risks, some religious activity persists in North Korea. The State Department estimates that there are as many as 10,000 Protestants, 10,000 Buddhists and 4,000 Catholics practicing in North Korea. In addition, there are a number of individuals who belong to underground churches.

The Desperate Flight from Stalinist Rule

In testimony given at a May 2, 2002 House International Relations Committee Hearing, North Korean defector and former bodyguard to Kim Jong Il, Young Lee Kuk, said: "When we talk about North Korean people, we are talking about the slaves of Kim Jong-Il. Kim Jong-Il's aim is to live well for himself and for his system and for his regime." To flee these cruel living conditions, an estimated 200,000 North Korean citizens have escaped the rule of Kim Jong Il since 1995. Most of these have had to cross into the People's Republic of China because of the Demilitarized Zone on North Korea's southern border. Few seek asylum in China, however, due to the PRC's commitment to return any North Korean citizen caught in the PRC. This PRC policy, which has been more strictly enforced since the May 2002 PRC Foreign Ministry demand that foreign embassies turn asylum seekers over to the police, has served effectively to sentence North Korean refugees to death—because Pyongyang considers any attempt at emigration a crime punishable by death.

Most recently, the forced repatriation of North Korean refugees has escalated into egregious violations of international law. On June 13, 2002, a North Korean man and his 13 year-old son entered the South Korean consulate in Beijing seeking asylum. PRC security guards forcibly entered the South Korean consulate, battled South Korean security personnel to drag the father from the consulate, and delivered him to Beijing police. During the scuffle, PRC security guards assaulted six South Korean diplomats who were trying to rescue the North Korean asylum-seeker. These blatant violations of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations—to which the PRC is a signatory—are clear indicators that asylum-seekers face extraordinary obstacles in escaping the horrific conditions in North Korea.

Recent Congressional Action to Support North Koreans Seeking Freedom

The dismal political, economic, and social conditions throughout North Korea, as well as the plight of the North Korean refugees, has received wide attention in Congress. Both the Senate and House have held hearings on these issues that have received testimony from U.S. and international organizations and from defectors from North Korea. Their descriptions of the cruel practices of Kim Jong Il, his deliberate withholding of food from starving people, his use of concentration camps, and his lack of respect for human life, have galvanized the Congress to take action.

On June 11, 2002, the House unanimously passed H.Con.Res. 213, which highlights the grave state of affairs within North Korea. The resolution calls on the PRC to honor its international obligations by providing North Korean refugees with safe asylum; by halting the forced repatriations of North Korean refugees; by allowing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to have access to all North Korean refugees residing in China; and by cooperating with the United Nations in its efforts to resettle North Korean refugees in other countries. On June 19, S.Con.Res. 114, a similar resolution, passed unanimously in the Senate.

The Next Steps

The Bush administration, Congress, and America's allies should adopt a policy of temporary *first asylum* for North Korean refugees. This humanitarian policy should accomplish two things: first, guarantee all North Korean people safe arrival and temporary stay in the port of their first asylum; and second, promote burden sharing of refugee costs by providing for the swift transit of refugees from poorer countries to countries more capable of accepting the responsibility.

This policy was followed in the late 1970s to help the thousands of Vietnamese "boat people" then flooding the shores of Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Indonesia. When the neighboring countries began refusing the boats at port—literally pushing them back to sea with large wooden poles—the United States led the way in building a coalition of European, Asian, and African countries who agreed to remove and re-settle the Vietnamese boat people if the neighboring countries let them land.

Such a step for North Korean refugees was endorsed in testimony before a 1999 House International Relations Committee hearing by Paul Wolfowitz, then the Dean of Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies, and now U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense. Dr. Wolfowitz said: "I think we should be trying to develop a policy concerning first asylum for North Korean refugees. We had a spectacularly successful first asylum policy for Vietnamese boat people 20 years ago. It probably saved the lives of a million or two million people…. It seems to me it would be worth trying to develop a similar policy in cooperation, not only with our allies in the region, but with China and Russia, as well."

More recently, the State Department has made it clear that it opposes the PRC policy of forced repatriation of North Korean refugees. On March 14, 2002, State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher said, "we have always felt that North Koreans should not be returned to North Korea because they would face persecution there."

In fulfillment of this mandate to stop forced repatriation, the Congress and the Administration should work together to implement a first asylum policy to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis facing the North Korean people. These are the crucial first steps:

- Both Congress and the Bush administration should continue to publicly condemn, in the strongest terms, North Korea's inhumane and repressive treatment of its people. The recent House and Senate resolutions highlight the growing humanitarian crisis in North Korea; additional resolutions should condemn the Stalinist government in Pyongyang for creating the dismal conditions that have led to this crisis, and denounce the PRC's violation of South Korean territorial sovereignty as well as Chinese national law by storming the Korean embassy to forcibly extract North Korean refugees.
- Congress should consider increasing the funding for the Broadcasting Board of Governors to lengthen Voice of America and Radio Free Asia broadcasting hours in North Korea. With Kim Jong Il having prohibited the use of the Internet—making it the only country in the world without Internet access—messages of hope and democracy must be delivered to the people of North Korea through the only means possible—the short wave radio.
- The Administration should work with America's European and Asian allies to create a policy of temporary *first asylum* for North Korean refugees.
- The United States should sponsor a resolution at the United Nations condemning the religious and other human rights violations by North Korea's government.
- The Bush administration should encourage the European Union to include religious freedom in its human rights discussions with the government of North Korea.
- The Bush administration should insist that the PRC honor its international obligations regarding the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers, and that it grant the UN High Commissioner for Refugees access to the PRC-North Korean border area to help determine which individuals require protection as refugees.
- The U.S. should insist that North Korea grant international food aid workers access to monitor the distribution of food to the starving people of North Korea.

Conclusion

Despite a decade of foreign aid and international concessions to Kim Jong Il's oppressive regime, his Stalinist government continues to deny the most basic human rights to the people of North Korea. As a result, the North Korean refugee crisis is getting worse, and poses an immediate threat to the stability and prosperity of the regime. As the United States led the way in formulating a comprehensive humanitarian policy for the Vietnamese boat people, the United States must once again lead the way in helping the people of North Korea to flee Communist rule.