Willy Fautré, the director of Human Rights Without Frontiers International is author of the study, “Human rights in North Korea: An International Coalition To Stop Crimes Against Humanity.” In it he describes the work he has done with North Korean refugees. North Korea ranks on every survey as one of the world's most egregious violators of human rights and religious freedom. Please see the ICRF Country Report on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
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This paper (entire text follows) was presented at a conference entitled "Commemorating Human Rights Day 2011" at the Houses of Parliament in London on December 9, 2011.

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Human rights in North Korea: An International Coalition
To Stop Crimes Against Humanity
Willy Fautré

by Willy Fautré

North Korea is ranked in every survey of freedom and human rights as the worst of the worst.

An estimated 200,000 people are trapped in a brutal system of political prison camps akin to Hitler's concentration camps and Stalin's gulag. Slave labor, horrific torture and bestial living conditions are now well-documented in numerous reports by human rights organizations, through the testimonies of survivors of these camps who have escaped. Although there is still a shroud of mystery surrounding North Korea, the world can no longer claim ignorance as an excuse.

Shocking accounts of the worst possible forms of torture have emerged from survivors of the gulags who have escaped. Lee Sung Ae told the British Parliament about how when she was jailed, all her finger-nails were pulled out, all her lower teeth destroyed, and prison guards poured water, mixed with chillies, up her nose. Jung Guang Il was subjected to "pigeon torture," with his hands cuffed and tied behind his back in an excruciating position. He said he felt as though his bones were breaking through his chest. All his teeth were broken during beatings and his weight fell from 75kg to 38kg.

Kim Hye Sook spent 28 years in the gulag and was first jailed at the age of 13 because her grandfather had gone to South Korea. Her family was not told the reason for their imprisonment. She was forced to work in coal mines, even as a child, and witnessed public executions. Shin Dong Hyuk was born in Camp No.14 in 1982 and saw his mother and brother executed. He himself was hung on meat hooks over a fire and left to roast, and one of his fingers was chopped off as a punishment. Neither Kim nor Shin were in the gulag for any misdemeanor of their own. They were victims of North Korea's "guilt-by-association" policy, which results in the punishment of family members up to three generations for the "crime" of a relative.

For too long, North Korea has suffered from two evils: the regime's brutality and the international community's apathy. It is staggering that one of the world's worst human rights crises is also one of the most overlooked.

On 9 September, the world's three largest international human rights organizations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), along with 40 other organizations from around the world, including Human Rights Without Frontiers, launched a major global campaign in Tokyo to seek the establishment of a United Nations (UN) Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity in North Korea, on the basis of the final report to the UN of the former UN Special Rapporteur, Vitit Muntarbhorn.

In his address to the UN, he indeed demanded an "end to impunity" in North Korea describing violations as "harrowing and horrific," "egregious and endemic," and "systematic and pervasive." He urged the international community to "mobilize the totality of the UN to promote and protect human rights in the country; support processes which concretize responsibility and accountability for human rights violations, and an end to impunity."

The objective of the International Coalition to Stop Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea (ICNK) is to hold the North Korean government accountable for widespread and systematic violations.

On July 8, 2010, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry, condemning the North Korean Government for its "ongoing, grave, widespread and systematic human rights violations perpetrated against its own people."

In October, the International Coalition appealed to Kim Jong-il

- To provide access to the DPRK to international humanitarian organisations and human rights monitors;
- To immediately invite the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other international monitors in North Korea to visit his country, and allow him unfettered access to penal institutions as there is growing concern in the international community about the conditions of detention in the kwan-li-so;

In its letter to Kim Jong-il, the International Coalition also raised the issue of food shortages in North Korea and the humanitarian crisis that has developed as a result. As the international community is to effectively help your people, the International Coalition demanded that the World Food Programme (WFP) and other UN agencies are provided with unfettered access to monitor the distribution of food assistance in North Korea.

The International Coalition also raised the issue of abductions of foreign country nationals to North Korea and urged Kim Jong-il to immediately release all abductees who have been kidnapped from other countries and taken to the DPRK or, in the cases where those abductees have died, to provide clear and incontrovertible proof of their demise to the relatives of the

abductees.

The International Coalition also appealed to Kim Jong-il to end all public executions, to close the concentration camps, and to immediately end the practice of forced labour in penal institutions.

Finally, the International Coalition urged the North Korea government:

- To publicly proclaim that it will respect the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and all other international human rights conventions and treaties to which the DPRK is a party;
- To revise all laws and regulations to bring them into compliance with the international standards of freedom of conscience, expression, association and assembly, and ensure that these rights are respected in practice by the North Korean government and its officials in all parts of the country.

As far as Human Rights Without Frontiers is concerned, we urge the EU member states to implement the UN sanctions as listed in its Resolutio18 (ban on the import of luxury goods) and Resolution 1874 of the UN Security Council (ban on all North Korean arm export).

We also urge the EU member states to impose the EU's own restrictive measures on the North Korean government such as diplomatic sanctions, suspension of cooperation, boycott of sport and cultural events, flight bans but also on non-state entities and individuals such as both travel restrictions, an asset freeze, restrictions on financing activities and trade with North Korea, particularly of arms and related material.

Although no comprehensive study has ever been carried out to assess the efficiency of the UN and the US sanctions, of the EU restrictive measures and of the overall "naming and shaming" policy by various human rights NGOs and institutions around the world, it seems that North Korea has partly curbed its repression policy on some issues that have been highly publicized around the world. On the basis of fragmented information it seems that the number of executions has diminished, that the imprisonment periods of the repatriated defectors are now reduced, that forced abortions of repatriated pregnant defectors and killings of newborn children are less practiced during their detention. It means that North Korea is not totally deaf to pressure of the international community.

This should be both an encouragement and a source of inspiration for the shaping of EU policies concerning North Korea.

(*) List of members of the International Coalition To Stop Crimes Against Humanity

Amnesty International

Human Rights Watch

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

People In Need (Czech Republic)

Freedom House (USA)

Jubilee Campaign (USA)

Human Rights Without Frontiers (Belgium)

Christian Lawyers Network for Latin America

Advocates Latin America

Kontras (Indonesia)

Odhikar (Bangladesh)

Conectas (Brazil)

Burma Partnership (Thailand)

Han Voice (Canada)

No Fence (Japan)

Life Funds for North Korean Refugees (Japan)

Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (USA)

Council for Human Rights in North Korea (Canada)

Liberty in North Korea (USA)

Helping Hands Korea (ROK)

Open Radio North Korea (ROK)

Free North Korea Radio (ROK)

Free NK Gulag (ROK)

Database Center for North Korea Human Rights (ROK)

Justice 4 North Korea (ROK)

North Korea Freedom Coalition

Suzanne Scholte, Seoul Peace Prize Recipient & Defense Forum Foundation (USA)

David Hawk, author of Hidden Gulag

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