

May 19, 2006: North Korea: USCIRF Commissioner Bansal To Moderate Panel at Asia Society Event

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Anne Johnson, Director of Communications, (202) 523-3240, ext. 27 WASHINGTON - Preeta D. Bansal, Commissioner and past Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, will moderate a panel discussion exploring concerns about human rights in North Korea at the Asia Society in New York City on May 24, 2006, at 10:15 a.m. The panel, including Republic of Korea National Assembly Member Chung Eui-yong, Japan's Human Rights Ambassador Fumiko Saiga, and Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Roberta Cohen, will examine mechanisms to establish a broader security agenda for Northeast Asia that would include a human rights and humanitarian dimension. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is co-sponsoring the Asia Society event, along with Refugees International. Last year, the Commission released its landmark report, *Thank you, Father Kim Il Sung: Eyewitness Accounts of Severe Violations of Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion in North Korea*. The report documents extreme oppression of religious freedom in North Korea and examines how the officially proclaimed personality cult of the Kim regime has been forced upon the public as a state religion. David Hawk, author of the Commission report on North Korea, will also speak at the Asia Society event, on a panel that will assess the humanitarian crisis in North Korea. Also on the panel with Mr. Hawk are Marcus Noland, Senior Fellow at the Institute for International Economics; Joel Charny, Vice President for Policy at Refugees International; and Kato Hiroshi of Life Funds for North Korean Refugees, a non-profit organization in Japan dedicated to the support and protection of North Korean refugees in China. Evans Revere of the Council on Foreign Relations will moderate the panel, which begins at 8:30 a.m. Jay Lefkowitz, the U.S. Special Envoy on Human Rights to North Korea, will give the keynote address at the Asia Society event at 12:30 p.m. To register for the event, contact the Asia Society at 212-517-ASIA. The Asia Society is located at 725 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021.

Michael Cromartie, Chair

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