

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

HEARING ON U.S. POLICY AND FREEDOM  
OF RELIGION OR BELIEF IN NORTH KOREA

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Virtual Hearing

P A R T I C I P A N T S

USCIRF COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Abraham Cooper, Vice Chair  
Frederick A. Davie  
Stephen Schneck  
Eric Ueland  
Frank R. Wolf

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P R O C E E D I N G S

VICE CHAIR COOPER: Good morning and thank you for attending the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's hearing today on U.S. Policy and Freedom of Religion or Belief in North Korea.

I would like to thank our distinguished witnesses for joining us and offering your expertise today.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, or USCIRF, is an independent, bipartisan U.S. government advisory body created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act, or IRFA.

The Commission uses international standards to monitor freedom of religion or belief abroad and it makes policy recommendations to the United States government.

Today, October 27<sup>th</sup>, is International Religious Freedom Day in the United States, commemorating the enactment of IRFA, exactly 24

years ago.

It is especially fitting that we are holding this hearing on the anniversary date considering the new research that has come to light on the North Korean government's religious freedom abuses despite the difficulty to obtain new information from North Korea.

Conditions were bleak 24 years ago, and we are concerned for further deterioration today. North Korea is one of the worst religious freedom violators in the world.

A monumental 2014 report by the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea found that, quote, "There is an almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion in the country." Unquote.

Recent reporting suggests that systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom have continued to occur and may even amount to genocide and crimes against humanity.

Based on interviews with victims,

witnesses, and perpetrators, USCIRF has released two reports on North Korea which clearly demonstrate that the government continues to treat religion as an existential threat and perpetuates horrific religious freedom violations against its own people.

The North Korean regime forces its citizens to unconditionally obey a state ideology called "Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism." This state ideology forbids North Koreans to adopt and practice religion from birth, and it is enforced across state and society spanning every aspect of a North Korean's life.

We are fortunate to have the authors of our most recent report here with us today who can expound on these points and give us a clear picture of the repression facing people of faith in the country.

China's complicity has exacerbated the religious freedom conditions in North Korea, as the Chinese government maintains the policy of forcible

repatriation of North Korean refugees, placing them at risk of severe persecution upon return, especially for those with any connection to Christianity.

USCIRF has consistently recommended North Korea's designation as a County of Particular Interest, or CPC, since 2001.

The State Department has followed this recommendation since that year and reimposed ongoing sanctions on North Korea.

Given these grave concerns, the U.S. government must work to find creative ways and use all the tools at its disposal to address these atrocities inside North Korea.

Speaking personally, I've been involved with and committed to the North Korean human rights issue for a quarter of a century and want to reassure the people who are presenting today and the constituency, the silent one they represent, that they are not forgotten by the American people.

With that, I will turn it over to my



distinguished colleague, Commissioner Fred Davie, for his remarks and to introduce our distinguished witnesses.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, Vice Chair Cooper, and hello, everyone.

Thank you for joining us today.

As Vice Chair Cooper mentioned, North Korea violently represses all expressions of faith. The U.S. government and the international community must work together to end these kinds of atrocities.

However, nuclear and security issues tend to dominate bilateral and multilateral negotiations with North Korea, and they often overshadow rights and religious freedom concerns, human rights and religious freedom concerns.

The reality is that security and human rights concerns are not mutually exclusive. It is absolutely critical that the U.S. government closely integrate security and human rights as complementary objectives in its policy toward North

Korea.

To this end, USCIRF recommended that the U.S. government and Congress reauthorize as soon as possible the North Korean Human Rights Act and fill the Special Envoy for North Korean Human Rights Issues, as mandated by the law.

Unfortunately, the position has remained vacant since 2017. This important position would ensure that U.S. government policy toward North Korea closely integrates human rights and security.

I would now like to introduce our witnesses. I will keep my introductions short so as to leave as much time as possible for questions and answers.

More detailed biographies of the witnesses will be shown in the chat box and can also be found on USCIRF's website.

First, we will hear pre-recorded remarks from Representative Ami Bera, who is chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, Central Asia and Non-proliferation and

introduced the North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act of 2022 along with Representative Young Kim.

Next, we will hear from our first witness, Ambassador Robert King, former U.S. Special Envoy for North Korean Human Rights issues.

Ambassador King is currently a senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Next is Shirley Lee, Consultant at Korea Future.

Then Inje Hwang, an investigator at Korea Future.

And after Inje, we will hear from Jinmyung Choi, a North Korean defector, who will share his personal account as a witness of religious freedom violations in North Korea.

I would now like to give the floor to Chairman Bera for his recorded remarks.

MR. BERA: [Transcription of prerecorded remarks as follows:]

Hi. I'm Congressman Ami Bera, the chair of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, Central Asia and Non-proliferation on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

I want to thank the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom for giving me a moment to make some opening comments.

The work that the Commission does is incredibly important. It's supported in a bipartisan way, and the advice and recommendations that the Commission makes to both the United States Congress, the Secretary of State, and the administration is incredibly valuable.

Thank you for hosting this hearing on religious freedom in North Korea. Obviously, we know the regime in North Korea is incredibly repressive, and the limited freedoms that individuals have in North Korea needs to be examined, and then the recommendations on how we approach this as the United States Congress will be incredibly valuable.

I look forward to seeing those recommendations. In addition, I've been proud to submit H.R. 7332, the North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act of 2022, with my good friend and colleague Representative Young Kim.

This is an incredibly important piece of legislation as well, to look at the human rights issues, abuses, and lack of freedoms that are taking place in North Korea.

So, again, thank you to the Commission and the commissioners for holding this incredibly valuable hearing. I look forward again to the recommendations, not just on North Korea, but also guaranteeing individual rights, individual freedoms, and the freedom to worship however one chooses to around the world.

So, again, thank you. Be well. Be kind to one another, and thank you again.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, Representative Bera.

We will now hear from our ambassador,

Ambassador Robert King. Ambassador King.

AMBASSADOR KING: Thank you very much for the opportunity to meet with members of the Commission on International Religious Freedom.

I remember very well when this Commission was created. Congressman Tom Lantos was a member of Congress. I served as his chief-of-staff for 23 years, and I remember his discussions with Congressman Frank Wolf and the interest and effort to get this Commission in place.

I'm delighted that we're holding this session today on the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signature by Bill Clinton of the legislation creating this Commission, and it is a real pleasure for me to be here today to participate with you in this important discussion on religious freedom conditions in North Korea.

I want to thank the Commission for the work that they do in terms of calling attention to the religious freedom issues in North Korea.

The reports that have been issued by the

Commission are important to document, to chronicle what's taking place in terms of the issues of religious freedom in North Korea, and I appreciate the efforts that you're carrying out.

Let me make a couple of quick comments so that we can have more time for discussion and other witnesses.

The first point that I'd like to make is that we are dealing with the issue of religious freedom in North Korea at a particularly difficult time.

Information about conditions in Korea has become even more difficult than it has been in the past. It's always been difficult getting information out of North Korea about what's going on on issues like international religious freedom and human rights. The problem has become much more difficult in the last three or four years.

The first problem is that one of the principal sources of information about what's happening inside North Korea are from the

defectors, the refugees, who leave North Korea and come in most cases to South Korea, a few to the United States, and a few to Europe.

These refugees are an important source of information about what's happening now in North Korea and those numbers have become increasingly difficult.

Over the last 20 years, there have been somewhere in the neighborhood of 35,000 North Koreans who have fled North Korea and been able to leave North Korea, and most of them, as I mentioned, have gone to South Korea.

The numbers who have gone to South Korea reached a peak in 2011 when there were 2,706 refugees who resettled in South Korea that year.

The number averaged about 1,500 for the next five years. Between 2017 and 2019, it dropped to about 1,100 annually.

In 2020, when the COVID pandemic began, when North Korea shut its borders and limited border crossing, made it even more difficult to



leave the country, the number who left North Korea and resettled in South Korea reached only 229 in 2020.

Last year, 63 individuals were able to get out of North Korea, and the first nine months of this year, only 42 refugees have left North Korea.

These numbers are an indication of how difficult it is for people to leave North Korea, but the most important thing in terms of our understanding of what's going on with religious freedom is the numbers who have reached the West, who have been able to get out, has declined precipitously.

A second problem that has created difficulties in North Korea is that other sources of information, diplomats in North Korea, tourists, visitors, business people traveling to North Korea, has also been cut off.

In the past, these numbers were limited. People were given limited opportunities to see Pyongyang, to see North Korea outside Pyongyang,

but the stories about people leaving and conditions there have become increasingly rare.

In February 2021, two Russian diplomats and their families left North Korea. It was so difficult because of the COVID restrictions that were imposed by the North Korean government, the two Russian diplomats were required to push their luggage and their children in a trolley across the railroad bridge between North Korea and Russia.

In the last year or so, the North Korean government arranged for a special flight. Most international flights in and out of North Korea have ceased. A special flight was arranged so that diplomats from Germany, France and Switzerland could leave North Korea.

Most of the diplomats in North Korea have left. There are a few who remain, but they have even more limited contact than before.

Foreign humanitarian aid workers in North Korea have been an important source of information for us, and, unfortunately, because North Koreans'

concerns about the COVID pandemic, this flow of individuals in and out of North Korea to provide humanitarian aid has all but been eliminated making it much more difficult for us to know about the circumstances and conditions in North Korea.

What I'd like to do is make a couple of quick comments about areas of concern where the United States can encourage religious freedom in North Korea and what we might be able to do in spite of the difficulties of getting information out of North Korea.

The first area where we need to give greater emphasis and focus is to strengthen U.S. participation in the human rights efforts of the United Nations.

The United Nations continues to be an important source of putting pressure on North Korea to make progress on its human rights.

The U.N. Human Rights Council has played a key role. Mention was made by Rabbi Cooper in his introductory comments about the value of the report

that was prepared by the United Nations on Human Rights in North Korea, the report that appeared in 2014.

We're marking in about five months the anniversary of the decision to establish the Commission of Inquiry.

We need to continue to press North Korea in the U.N. Human Rights Council, in the General Assembly, and in the Security Council where we've been able to have discussions of North Korea human rights problems in spite of objections from North Korea but also objections from the Chinese and the Russian government.

The one thing that I think has been particularly important is the decision of the Biden Administration to involve the United States again as a member of the U.N. Human Rights Council. The United States was not participating in the Human Rights Council activities, did not seek a position on the Human Rights Council board. We are now back and actively engaged and involved in Geneva in the

Human Rights Council and its efforts.

We've also become much more active and involved in New York. This week the United Nations General Assembly is having a discussion of North Korea's human rights problems.

The Special Rapporteur appointed by the Human Rights Council will report to the General Assembly on conditions there.

It's important that the United States continue to be involved in these U.N. activities.

A second area of concern that we need to give attention to is encouraging and supporting the South Korean government which is involved and actively participating in encouraging human rights and religious freedom in North Korea.

The South Korean government appointed Ambassador Shin-hwa Lee recently after the change in governments, and Ambassador Lee has been active and involved. She's in New York today participating in the human rights activities in connection with the General Assembly.

So it's important we continue to support and encourage South Korea in its efforts in encouraging North Korea to make progress on human rights and religious freedom.

The third thing that we need to do, and this again is something that should have been done well before now, the United States needs to appoint a Special Envoy for North Korea Human Rights Issues.

It's been five-and-a-half years since I left that position, and during the last administration, and unfortunately during the first year-and-a-half of the current U.S. administration, the Special Envoy has not been appointed.

I urge all of you who have influence to put pressure on the White House to make this decision. There's not a philosophical problem. There's a problem of getting it done, and it needs to be done.

The last effort, the last issue that I'd like to mention is we need to encourage

humanitarian efforts in North Korea.

Many of the humanitarian efforts in North Korea involve private organizations, individuals actively engaged in providing assistance to North Korea.

Many of them are groups and organizations that have religious roots, religious connections. They are limited in terms of what they can do in North Korea in terms of religion, but their humanitarian efforts are particularly important.

And as we have always emphasized, by example, we can preach the Gospel and we need to do that in terms of encouraging humanitarian efforts in North Korea.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak, and I look forward to the discussion that we will have afterwards.

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, Ambassador King. We really appreciate your comments, and we look forward to that discussion that will follow

soon as well. Thank you so much.

We'll now turn to our next speaker, Shirley Lee, who is a consultant with Korea Futures.

Shirley.

MS. LEE: Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I will offer three recommendations for U.S. policy based on the findings of Korea Future's recent investigations.

The first recommendation has already been made, but it's worth repeating. That is to appoint a Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea because messaging matters, not only for those who may not share the same values and interests, but especially among allies who do. It serves as a concrete demonstration of what one does and does not value.

Also, as has been mentioned, religious freedom and other fundamental human rights are inseparable from the various security issues when



it comes to North Korea.

This is because it is the same political system that sustains the violations that also allows one man's desire for power ahead of the safety and prosperity of the nation, the region, and even the world.

The second recommendation is something a little different. That is to understand and expose at every opportunity the Workers' Party of Korea and its mission of upholding Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism and the Ten Principles, rather than vaguely blaming North Korea.

To understand and expose the mission of the Workers' Party of Korea reflects an understanding of what sustains and directs the systematic and egregious violations of human rights and denials of freedom of religion or belief.

The source and justification for that behavior is in a document called the Ten Principles for Establishing the Monolithic Leadership System, which demands that every North Korean citizen

unconditionally accepts and obeys the words of Kim Ill Sung, Kim Jong Il, and now Kim Jong Un, in other words, the essence of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.

They are to not only conform their thoughts, actions and speech in alignment with the leader's teachings, but to also not begin to look to any other source of truth or belief.

It is through the Workers' Party enforcing the Ten Principles that even those rights guaranteed in North Korea's own constitution are denied on a daily basis.

Whether it is a government entity, the armed forces, or the secret police, it is an embedded Workers' Party unit that directs, controls, and continuously corrects policy and implementations on the basis of upholding the Ten Principles.

The punishment for actively going against the Ten Principles is severe, including erasure of your identity from the records, the revoking of

your status as a person by the party-state, and the death penalty or life sentence in the infamous prison camps.

Three generations of the convicted individual's family must join them in their fate.

I quote from a former high-ranking official of the Workers' Party of Korea, quote:

"Other criminal acts can be forgiven, but if the crime is against ideology, against the work of party propaganda and party organization, there is no such thing as forgiveness. If you commit murder instead, you stand a better chance at mercy." Unquote.

It is important to accurately perceive and to call out North Korea's sources of conduct, whereby obedience to Kim must occur, even as his orders contravene domestic and international laws, and even undermine the national interests, because the Workers' Party enforces the Ten Principles across state and society.

To keep calling this out educates both

North Koreans and the outside world on the root cause of the lack of progress on many fronts, in security, in human rights, on reform, the building of trust, normalized relations.

There can be no effective remedy for a problem that has not been diagnosed.

It strengthens awareness that there is no hostility towards the nation or its people. It is, in fact, a reminder of the opposite, that we see and remember the many people whose lives are being destroyed by a system designed to sustain the adulation of Kim.

It foregrounds our shared values of the universal human desire for agency, dignity, and enjoyment of human rights.

For the realization of alternate viable paths, it is necessary to identify and name the cause of why this whole apparatus of a state is configured in such a way, to serve the whims and desires of one man at the expense of everyone else.

Even among the Workers' Party elite, there

are individuals that take part in maintaining the system, not because they believe in it, but because they have no other choice and are not allowed the space to think about or talk about another choice.

If the outside world looks only to Kim, who is the foremost beneficiary of a system he inherited and did not create himself, resting our hopes in him and not seeing that by doing so that it entrenches the very specific and tangible system, and the notion inside and outside the country that Kim Jong Un alone can determine the country's future, then those inside remain at the mercy of the rules that entrap them.

This leads me to the third and final recommendation. That is to recognize and embrace asymmetric leverage.

First, we must understand the priorities of a Ten Principles system, whereby the Workers' Party's job is to ensure that the North Korean government prioritizes the continuity of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism through upholding the

information blockade, by preventing free speech, free assembly, by preventing the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and by preventing Koreans from imagining another future.

We must not mirror-image. Because of the structure of Kim's power and the role of the Workers' Party, what drives their choices of behaviors is not what we assume would drive them if we were in their shoes.

North Koreans live under the Ten Principles and we do not. As individuals, many of them may want the same things we do—security, peace, prosperity, a brighter future. But they live under the constraints of the Ten Principles while we do not.

The fundamental principle driving every foreign policy choice in North Korea should be to reinforce, amplify and support the separation of Kimism from North Korea.

To uphold the Ten Principles is not an organic matter. It requires a lot of coordination

and concerted area by the Workers' Party to sustain and maintain.

There is no need to aid and abet their mission. For example, delivering aid to the state agencies rather than through independent organizations, that strengthens the bonds.

To project assumptions from our own society by thinking that civil society is allowed to exist, acting with that assumption, that strengthens the bonds.

Projection and mirror-imaging is evident in many well-intentioned attempts at diplomacy with North Korea.

To use an example related to religious freedom that is also applicable to many other areas, believing that at least a few official churches are tolerated along with their religious leaders, as long as they toe the Workers' Party line, and not understanding that these entities are fronts of the Workers' Party United Front Department that distract outsiders from the reality

of the absolute nature of the Ten Principles and its demands, that leads then to compromise by self-censoring on human rights for the sake of the hope of future access and dialogue, without realizing that the North Korean counterparts are constrained by and punished according to the Ten Principles, that strengthens the system because it funnels the limited outside bandwidth there is into not seeing the reason for the reason for the deadlock.

If all those things strengthen Kimism, supporting information flow loosens the bonds, supporting escapees and defectors loosens the bonds, because it is proof that Koreans in the north cannot only survive but thrive outside of the system of Ten Principles.

This idea should be developed and embedded as a play book, and be pursued in private and public diplomacy and interactions with like-minded and non-like-minded countries.

The Workers' Party is an entity dedicated to ensuring that its idea remains the only idea.



It has in part been so successful in that mission because no other organization has dedicated itself to countering that specific mission.

The Workers' Party is engaged through political warfare, and the only real security guarantee by the outside world is one it cannot provide, which is to ensure the survival of an institution that goes against the values held by so many in the international community.

In the Workers' Party's framework of political warfare, its most formidable enemy is not nations or governments, but the disintegration of the Ten Principles and of Kimilsungism and Kimjongilism. We must not forget that fact.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to speak to you today.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, Shirley, and we look forward to coming back and having a discussion with you as well at the end of the presentations.

We'll now turn to our next speaker, Inje

Hwang, who is an investigator at Korea Future.

Inje.

MR. HWANG: Thank you, Commissioner, and thank you again for giving me the chance to speak for Korea Future as the investigator who worked on the recent investigation project on North Korea's religious freedom.

I would like to share with you an effective summary of the findings of the investigation. Korea Future's 2022 investigation establishes the source of religious freedom violations in North Korea as the ideology known as Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism, which is universally enforced within North Korea by the ruling Workers' Party of Korea.

An understanding of how and why this is implemented across state and society can aid the deterrence of perpetrators, the pursuit of accountability and justice, and policies designed to prevent future atrocities.

In Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism, an

individual strives to follow the guidance of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il in both the internal and external aspects of life.

It is not a new ideology, as it was first announced as Kimilsungism by Kim Jong Il in 1974, when the Ten Principles, the central tenets of the ideology, were released. It became known as Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism following the death of Kim Jong Il.

While commonly ridiculed in Western media, North Korea's monolithic ideology is the vehicle by which the North Korean citizens' freedom to choose between Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism and other religions or beliefs is eradicated.

Essentially, it is the tool for denying the North Korean peoples' freedom of religion and belief.

Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism makes no explicit claim that the Kims are gods. Rather, they are presented as extraordinary beings possessing superhuman abilities, and those who

spearheaded the technological breakthroughs of the nation and safeguards its future.

It is important to remember that adherence to Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism entails the renunciation of all other systems of religion or belief, creating an effective zero-sum relationship between the party ideology and religious freedom.

Subscription to alternative ideals is regarded as an act of treason to both the modus operandi and the founding ideals of the state.

The party teaches the people must completely devote themselves to Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism and any investment in alternative ideology or beliefs are regarded as deviations from the monolithic ideology of the state.

Adherence to Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism is a requirement for students in compulsory education. The content is taught in age-appropriate methods.

For example, kindergarten students learn the heroic deeds of Kim Il Sung as a child through vivid story telling using a scale model of the

supreme leader's childhood home.

Study of the supreme leader's achievements and teachings are considered as a core academic subject, and all university admission exams include the assessment of a student's proficiency in its content.

Ongoing assessments of students' ideological adherence starts in elementary school and continues until their high school matriculations.

The permanent records of the assessment greatly influences a student's college admission results and future employment possibilities.

Indoctrination on the accomplishments of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il continues into adulthood. Trained party officials serve as instructors who oversee the weekly learning sessions in all government organizations including law enforcement branches.

These lectures are held in dedicated spaces known as "study centers," a structure

dedicated to the study of the supreme leader's words and achievements.

Despite the diversity in their architecture, all study centers contain pictorial representations of memorable scenes from the supreme leader's life and gypsum busts of past supreme leaders.

The Workers' Party employs a series of coercion mechanisms to proactively encourage compliance to Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism of the population while discouraging all acts of deviation from the monolithic ideology.

For example, North Korean state's use of a hereditary caste system, known as songbun, to implement policies of discrimination has been well documented by past researchers.

As individual castes in the songbun system are based in part on judgments of the ideological and political loyalty, it is unsurprising that they are considered in job assignments directly involved in the administration of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.

All party members undergo background songbun checks and assessments of individual loyalty to the monolithic ideology as a part of their cadre assignment evaluations.

Ideological assessments are also required for work in technocratic fields such as engineering and medicine. It was explained that as doctors and engineers are in a position to supervise and influence many people, they have to be totally ideologically aligned.

Exclusion from career opportunities, however, is not the only tool that the Workers' Party employs in order to ensure the ideological compliance of the North Korean people.

Both law enforcement and civilian organizations enforce penal sanctions on individuals accused of ideological deviance.

Individuals may be publicly prosecuted and sentenced for engaging in common Shamanic practice by the Ministry of People's Security or the police force of the nation or be secretly prosecuted and

sentenced by the Ministry of State Security for links to Christianity.

Korea Future's investigations have revealed that religious adherence was subjected to severe human rights violations such as arbitrary detention or unfair trials, torture, forced labor, and even summary executions as punishment for deviating from the party's ideology.

In conclusion, it is important for the audience today to understand that Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism requires its followers to not only reject other systems of religion or belief, but also to persecute or destroy other systems of religion or belief in North Korean society.

Anyone who is not an avid, proactive participant of the propaganda regimen, consisting of both education and coercion methods, are ostracized and penalized, whereas those who openly display their loyalty to the party's ideology are handsomely rewarded.

Any attempt at dismantling the Workers'



Party's systematic violation of freedom of religion and belief must take into account the holistic nature of its approach and to recognize the effective countermeasures would entail a combination of cultural and political intervention from outside sources.

Once again, thanks for giving me this chance to speak, and I will cede the floor to the next speaker.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, Inje, and we look forward to having further discussion with you as well.

We'll now turn the floor over to Jinmyung Choi. Jinmyung is a defector who escaped from North Korea and will speak to us now.

Jinmyung.

MR. CHOI: Hello, everyone. My name is Jinmyung. I escaped North Korea at the age of 17 after being arrested by the Ministry of State Security for listening to South Korean music, which made me impure in belief in the ideology.

Currently, I am enrolled in Handong Global University as a legal studies major. I want to share my experience of living in North Korea and its Juche ideology, and how it was difficult to tell ideological indoctrination from everyday life.

First, I want to tell you about the learning centers. I remember the learning centers as a temple-like space. I always felt very small in its overwhelming sense of presence. The study centers was constructed in the cleanest part of the school building and managed most carefully and made all visitors behave seriously.

We had to have the faith in everything presented in the learning center. No one dared to question the materials or consider if what they taught was even possible.

We are given ideological lessons on Juche Humanism. We were taught how the theory of evolution proved that any form of belief and superstition, such as shamanism, was rubbish. The only supernatural, superhuman beings we could

believe in were the members of the Kim dynasty. We were taught that to believe in anything or superstition was to challenge the teachings of the supreme leader and would get sent to prison.

We had to make sure that we were dressed properly and that we were clean before we entered the room. We had to listen to the instructor's lectures carefully, especially when the instructor quoted the words of any one of the supreme leaders and their family.

Attending learning sessions in the learning center was actually an emotional experience. The learning centers inspired loyalty towards the Kim dynasty. In a way, it was like a church to the supreme leader, with its own rituals and rules.

Such rituals were not only in the study centers. In fact, the whole nation venerated Kim Jong Il on the days following his death. My teacher told me Kim Jong Ill died a few days before the winter vacation. The adults guarded the mosaic

murals of the supreme leaders' portraits all night because there were rumors about how spies were planning to harm the monuments. Each shift lasted two hours. The men stood guard while the women brought them food.

We the students had to do our part as well. We cleaned the murals everyday from four in the morning until six.

With so many students cleaning every day, we soon ran out of things to clean and kept cleaning those same spots over and over. I still do not understand why we had to clean the murals so much.

Now I want to share with you my experience of how I was punished for being not pure in my belief.

This is my picture. This is a picture of my youth league membership card. It reads: Let's always stay loyal to the venerable comrade Kim Jong Un, and be his vanguard of youth!" I had to carry this always with me.

All high school children had to sign up to the youth league on the same day. And I didn't wear my uniform to the ceremony. The youth league guidance officer confronted me, slapping my face from behind me and kicking me. He cursed me out for wearing civilian clothes and told me to never show my face in front of him.

One day I was arrested by MSS for watching South Korean movies and listening to South Korean music. My curiosity towards the music marked me as a student who actively disobeyed the teachings of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. I eventually escaped and ran away. When I returned to school, the guidance officer beat me severely. He made me stand before the entire school and cursed me out. He said that I was the type of scum who threatened the republic's socialist order and that anyone who followed my example would also be beaten.

You have to understand that violent punishments, such as getting arrested by MSS and getting beaten, were not the only ways that the

party made us obey Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. There were many more ways that I cannot describe it all.

I took part in classroom criticism sessions as a student, starting when I was nine years old. I had to join these sessions when I joined the children's league. I was young back then and passionately criticized my own mistakes and those of my friends. Our criticisms were on our failures to live up to the supreme leader's teachings.

Thanks.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thanks, Jinmyung, and we will be back for discussion as well.

In fact, we'll start that discussion now, and I'll take the lead on a question. I want to thank all of you again for your testimony, compelling and riveting testimony, and we look forward to this conversation.

So if I might, Ambassador King, start with a question to you.

We all support the call for a Special Envoy, the appointment of a Special Envoy for North Korean Human Rights Issues. And knowing that you served in that position for eight years, I would ask if you can provide some examples of achievements that you saw as Special Envoy, some of the ways those successes can serve as a road map for the administration and future Special Envoy, and then what should be a new Special Envoy's, or what should a new Special Envoy prioritize in this position?

AMBASSADOR KING: Thanks very much for the opportunity to meet with you today and discuss these issues.

Asking me if I did a good enough job is a tough question. The one thing that I will say, I've had a lot of jobs in my life. This one was one of the toughest, and it was tough because the North Koreans were not interested in doing anything to improve the human rights conditions in North Korea. So this was an uphill struggle all the way.

The one thing that I think we were able to make some success, where we were able to make some success, was with regard to pressing the North Koreans in the United Nations.

There's benefit for the United States pressing North Korea on these issues, but there is greater benefit if the United States is working with other countries to press the North Koreans, and we were quite successful.

The lead, when I was in that position, every year there would be a resolution considered in the Human Rights Council in Geneva. That was done in February or March. And in October, the U.N. General Assembly would take the issue up and discuss North Korea's human rights.

We were able to get some good resolutions adopted in both the Human Rights Council and in the General Assembly, but it was because we were working with other countries.

We worked with the European Union, with the South Koreans. We were able to talk with, I



was able to talk with members of diplomatic representatives from countries in Africa and Asia and elsewhere, but it's an ongoing effort that needs to have continual emphasis.

The one thing that was important is the United States was not the lead in this, and this was a conscious decision on our part. We were very much there and pressing for the resolutions and for action by the U.N. organizations.

A couple of things that were quite successful. We were able to put together a coalition that created the Commission of Inquiry, which produced the best detailed record of human rights conditions in North Korea, and that was an important effort where the United States was able to put a hand on the scale and push it in a positive direction.

The other thing that I think is important in terms of this effort is that North Korea was obviously concerned because we got to the point where votes were not even taken on resolutions

critical of North Korea because North Korea lost so badly.

It was better not to call for a vote than to have the kind of lopsided votes that we had.

North Korea took the position that nobody has the right to say anything about its human rights on any issue and therefore leave it at that.

U.N. representatives going to North Korea to look at human rights issues were denied access. We finally got to the point where on some issues the North Koreans would make appropriate gestures.

The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Council dealing with the issue of persons with disabilities requested permission to go to North Korea.

The North Koreans allowed them to come. They were limited in terms of who they were able to speak with, but they were able to be there. They were able to make the point with regard to treatment of persons with disabilities.

We're probably a long way from doing that

on religion, freedom of religion. But we're making progress. We need to continue to press. We need to continue to push the North Koreans on those areas.

And this was an area, I think, where having the Special Rapporteur was particularly important. We were able to put the weight of the United States in Geneva and in New York on these issues, and it does make a difference.

So having a representative of the United States there that focuses on those issues, other diplomats at the U.N., American diplomats at the U.N., were positive and helpful in terms of dealing with these issues.

But it helps to have someone whose principal focus is on the human rights issues to be able to make progress. So that's kind of where I think we need to be going, why we need to have this position filled, and why I think we need to continue to press our administration to make progress on that.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, Ambassador, and your successes there actually serve as a model for all future special envoys to the area. So thank you.

AMBASSADOR KING: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: I will turn to Commissioner Ueland for a question.

COMMISSIONER UELAND: Thank you very much, Commissioner Davie.

I really appreciate all the witnesses joining us today and magnificent recommendations as well as personal witness about conditions in North Korea, really significant. So, Ambassador, indeed, the work you did as Special Representative I think was incredibly successful, and, as Fred says, it is a great model in this instance.

I want to ask three questions quickly, one for each of our three other witnesses.

For Shirley Lee, I'd like to know your thoughts, if we are, we as the United States, were to impose targeted human rights or religious

freedom sanctions in North Korea to individuals or people, the party, as well as others, what specific political entities or individuals would you recommend be targeted?

For Inje, what are some of the most persecuted groups and targeted groups in North Korea?

It seems to me that there's a specific, even harsher level of abuse put on Christians, and I'm curious why that is.

And then for Jinmyung Choi, did the political lectures given by officials, as you went through indoctrination and this terrible treatment, did they specifically ban religion? And what would the punishment have been for you if someone was actually caught, if you were caught, practicing religion?

Thanks, again, to all of you for being with us today.

Shirley, if you could start, that would be great.

MS. LEE: Right. I'll address your question on targeted human rights sanctions.

I think to focus—something that the U.S. has done before is to sanction the Propaganda Department of the Korean Workers' Party. And that is something that is intimately connected to religious freedom violations because they are the ones who produce the materials that indoctrinate people to persecute religion.

Ministry of State Security is a government, it is an executive entity, but it's actually an arm of the Korean Workers' Party, and so these entities are the ones that are the most central roles in these violations and the human rights violations, and I would like to add that something that is sort of like the work that Ambassador King has done to pursue these sanctions in a strategic manner alongside allies who share the values, such as the United Kingdom, European Union, Australia.

I think it is not about a lack of interest

or will but sort of wanting someone to take the lead and to coordinate efforts in these areas that a lot of people care about.

COMMISSIONER UELAND: Thank you very much.

Inje, most persecuted groups. Is there a harsher treatment of Christians in North Korea?

MR. HWANG: Yes, commissioner. Thanks for the question.

So Korea Future's investigation has uncovered actually 306 separate cases of religious freedom violations directed towards adherents of native Shamanic beliefs and 207 separate cases of religious freedom violations enacted on Christian adherents.

So, in answer to your question, those two religious demographics are the most harshly persecuted groups within North Korea, and the rationale for the party's active persecution of these two religious groups is in the case of the Shamanism, it's the ubiquity of the practice. It's an inter-native folk belief and because—and by that

virtue it is quite universal within the North Korean culture.

And because of that reason, it has a pretty big potential to serve as an alternative ideology or a system of belief for the North Korean people.

In terms of Christianity, in the case of Christianity, it is one of the most organized religions that North Korean people come into contact with especially during the time they spend outside of Korea and in China as a part of their economic activities.

And because of that reason, the North Korean ruling party seems to fear its potential to become a viable source of alternative ideology, thanks to its organized and institutionalized nature and its proactive missionary efforts.

COMMISSIONER UELAND: I see. Thank you very much. That's really interesting. I appreciate it.

Jinmyung, those political lectures and



indoctrination you went through, did they specifically target religion, and what would have happened if you or friends were discovered to be practicing religion?

MR. CHOI: [?] never believing superstition. Our religion taught to us that superstition cannot be the foundation of our egos. There are actual [?] in North Korea, and they get sent to prison for [?].

Christians and their family members, however, are sent to prison forever.

COMMISSIONER UELAND: Wow. I appreciate that very much.

Commissioner Davies, thanks for your sufferance in allowing me to squeeze in three questions in one slot.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, commissioner.

We know that you may have to depart in a few minutes so we're glad that you were able to ask these questions, and we appreciate the responses

from our participants, our witnesses.

I'll turn now to Commissioner Wolf. Do you have a question you'd like to ask?

COMMISSIONER WOLF: Well, thank you very much, commissioner.

And I really do appreciate the testimony. I wish everybody in America could have heard what went on. I think we're so focused here in America on inflation, what's taking place, and different things that we don't think about that, but it was a very powerful, powerful testimony.

I wrote down a couple of quick questions. One, is anyone being considered to be the Special Envoy?

Two, there were only two members of Congress who currently serve who have been to North Korea. One is Speaker Pelosi, and the other is Congressman Joe Wilson from South Carolina. Do you think it would make sense for them to ask to visit again?

And a gentleman who I served with in

Congress, Congressman Tony Hall, a Democratic member who was my very best friend, has been to North Korea seven times, and he said he would be willing to go. So would it make sense for Mr. Hall to join Speaker Pelosi and Joe Wilson to go?

And then the third question is what country in Europe that's friends with us has a great relationship with North Korea so is there a way to kind of work it through?

And then the last question had to do how many people honestly in North Korea believe this propaganda that's fed to them?

With that, I'll just yield the floor back, and, again, commissioner, thank you and thank the witnesses. I appreciate so much your testimony.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, Commissioner Wolf.

Maybe we'll turn first to Ambassador King, and then we'll allow all the other participants to offer reflections on Commissioner Wolf's questions.

So we'll start with Ambassador King.

AMBASSADOR KING: The White House hasn't asked my opinion on who to appoint as Special Envoy. There are indications that, in fact, there is some consideration being given to it.

There is no names that have been floated yet. The White House, as you know, is very careful about not naming an individual until the preliminary vetting has been completed.

And at this point, that hasn't happened. Politics unfortunately has gotten in the way. During the early part of the Biden Administration, for the first year, ambassadorial appointments were being held up by the Senate, and these were in most cases individual senators who were expressing concerns or using it as—actually they weren't concerned about filling these positions. They were concerned about stopping the administration from moving forward until they got some concessions.

In particular, a congressman, who will remain unnamed but who comes from Texas, was stopping the appointments, and that created a

backlog. It created some difficulty, and it took the first year of the Biden Administration to get that issue resolved and be able to move forward.

It took until a little over a year before the United States was able to appoint and send to South Korea our ambassador in South Korea.

So the politics is unfortunately getting in the way, not so much politics about whether we should do this on human rights issues, but the politics that gets more unpleasant, and that I think is the difficulty.

The other thing is the administration has obviously got a lot of things going on. On the other hand, it doesn't require a lot of senior level attention to make a decision that we are going to appoint a Special Envoy and have someone put together the list and then make the decision and move forward.

I'd say we need to continue to press the White House for action and encourage that, and comments from members of Congress are particularly

helpful in terms of moving things forward.

The second question was a question about Europeans that have good relationships with North Korea. We have a good relationship with North Korea. I mean with Europe, European countries dealing with North Korea. We do not have an embassy in Pyongyang. We work through the Swedish government which has an embassy there.

And particularly when issues involving American citizens come up, it's handled through the Swedish government. We have informal communication with North Korea, and we're able to do that, but the Europeans play a very important role.

There are a number of European countries that have embassies or at least had embassies when embassies were functioning there--Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, several countries there.

And we've been able to work with those countries in terms of approaching and encouraging North Korea to move in a more positive direction on issues related to religious freedom and human

rights.

You asked the question about whether people in North Korea believe the propaganda? One of the things that is particularly important in terms of dealing with North Korea on human rights issues is providing alternative sources of information.

One of the greatest difficulties in North Korea is getting messages through. North Korea is one of the tightest countries in the world. North Korea is not connected to the rest of the world on the Internet. Cell phone calls from outside North Korea don't get into North Korea with the exception of a tiny, tiny number of people who do have cell phones with the capability of making calls out of the country.

We need to make sure that information is reaching North Korea to encourage people there to understand the alternatives as to what's going on actually, the news alternatives, as to what's going on in the rest of the world.

We spend resources on radio broadcasts to North Korea. Voice of America, Radio Free Asia are particularly important sources. There are radio broadcasts coming in from South Korea. Even radio broadcasts from China provide an alternative view of what's going on in North Korea.

So these are important things that we need to do in terms of providing an alternative. Whether people believe what they're taught, they don't have a lot of alternative ideas floating around, and I think that's one of the reasons why it's important that we need to continue broadcasts into North Korea.

Radio is one of the few ways we have of getting information there. We're able to get information in with using chips to allow people in North Korea to watch things on their television. They don't have a lot of computers there, but it's an effort we need to continue because it's extremely important.

COMMISSIONER WOLF: Thank you.



COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you,  
Ambassador.

Would any of our other speakers or  
witnesses like to address the questions raised by  
Commissioner Wolf?

MS. LEE: May I?

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Yes, Shirley. Please  
go ahead.

MS. LEE: I'll answer I think two of the  
questions. One was on the potential benefit or  
otherwise of people visiting North Korea from  
Congress.

And this is my personal opinion that I  
think it is what is made of it so it is not the  
visit itself so much as the mindset and strategy  
that they go in with, what the policy of the Biden  
Administration is at the time, what else is going  
on at the time, because, as I mentioned in my  
testimony, the North Koreans see their relationship  
with America, not just as a military confrontation,  
but as a political warfare confrontation.

So to go in with this mindset of sort of convincing Kim Jong Un to think differently, that is where America has the least leverage almost.

Where America has the most leverage is in pushing at the buttons that force Kim Jong Un and the Workers' Party elite to consider different options, to think, oops, this is too painful, let's do it this way, let's go that way.

So I think it can be something valuable if it is done as part of a larger sort of strategy, and with regards to the question of whether North Koreans believe this, I mean obviously no one can speak for all North Koreans.

It's not like you can go in and do surveys, but I think it is possible to answer this in two parts. One is the question of whether or not they believe in it, they have to pretend to believe in it because that's what the rules say.

And the second, I just want to emphasize it because I think it is so important and true, that there are no alternatives allowed. So it's

not a question of whether they believe it or not. It's, well, what else is there to believe?

And I think, I hope those are some interesting thoughts.

COMMISSIONER WOLF: Great. Thank you very much. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you.

Jinmyung or Inje, any thoughts here?

MR. HWANG: During our investigation, we also found out that the North Korean state makes, does its best to make sure that individual North Korean citizens internalizes its indoctrination contents.

So I think one thing that we may have to consider is not whether the people actually believe that Kim Jong Un and Kim Il Sung can shoot rainbows out of their hands. It's just that it's something that's integral and endemic to their culture and there is the culture and their identity as a North Korean to talk about it as if it has actually happened.

It's a question that it has actually happened. It's not—as Jinmyung said, it's not something that people are going to consider as they are being exposed to the indoctrination contents. It's, in a way, if you are living on the water, you wouldn't be able to tell whether something is wet or not.

This is the kind of environment, totally saturated environment, that the North Korean state tries to cultivate and enforce. So maybe, I think one of the things that we can, another angle that we can approach this question from is to not ask whether people sincerely believe the teachings of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.

I think we should actually ask whether they are simply immersed in it and have, as others have pointed out, have no other way of thinking, no other way of verbalizing or any other way of envisioning their place in the world.

COMMISSIONER WOLF: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you.

Jinmyung, any thoughts?

MR. CHOI: Yes. [?] maybe children, they believe.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you.

I'll turn now to Commissioner Schneck to see if you have questions or comments for our participants and witnesses?

COMMISSIONER SCHNECK: Thank you, Commissioner Davie.

I want to thank all of the witnesses today. This has just been an extraordinary session that's—it's really been, yeah. I mean extraordinary is putting it mildly.

Ambassador King, USCIRF completely supports your call for a Special Envoy, and anything that we can do to reiterate that with the administration, you can count on us to do.

And Jinmyung, I have to say I am just tremendously impressed with your courage. I'm impressed with the extremely powerful testimony that you've provided today. I have to say that

it's something that I will never forget and I greatly appreciate.

The only question that I have is one that I would pose to Shirley Lee and Inje Hwang. And that's in regards to the suggestion that in some way, in both bilateral relations and international relations, the world community begin to highlight Kimism and the Ten Principles in such a way so as to distinguish it and objectify it, I would say, for consideration in order to, I guess, perhaps pushing this a little bit further, in order to kind of weaken its grip in the way that we think about North Korea and perhaps weaken its grip within the North Korean population.

You mentioned sanctioning a particular, I guess, people within the North Korean regime, along those lines, but I'm curious what other practical ways in which the world community and the United States government, in particular, might be able to better highlight the way these principles work and the way Kimism works in this whole situation.

MS. LEE: I'll go first on this and perhaps Inje could add some thoughts.

I'll answer the last part of your question first on sort of—I really appreciate the word you used—"to objectify" because that sort of encapsulates, I think, sort of what has been missing, not out of sort of neglect but because it's hard. It's not something that necessarily North Koreans themselves can objectify either because that is the world they grow up in.

But something that is so integral to the running the strength of their system is not, it's not its economic strength. It's not its military might. It's not sort of the power of the content of its propaganda. It is its ability to organize and control this one thing.

And if you think a problem is something else, and you target it economically, you know, we've seen North Koreans suffer through the famine.

That did not really break the system because that's not what fuels the system. The

system is fueled by Kimism. And I think there is awareness, there is increased awareness of North Korea having human rights violations, having not been very friendly with other nations in its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

But I don't think there has been an awareness of why they are doing this, and I think if there is a way of incorporating this, a lot of European nations do try to maintain relations with North Korea to get this message back into North Korea because the sense we get from interviewing those who escape, especially recently from the higher levels, is they're not there because they love Kim Jong Un. They're there because they're North Koreans, that's where their family lives, and there's a point at which, you know, there's a breaking point. We have to escape.

There is no other pursuit possible within that country because they're not allowed to talk about alternative options. So I think that there's a possible role there that the outside world can



really play.

MR. HWANG: If I may, one of the things that I noticed in the course of my investigation was that the discourse on the North Korean propaganda and its indoctrination system seems to revolve around the spectacle of the cult and personality.

The people from outside of North Korea stand aghast at the absurdity of the content of the propaganda, and, to be fair, it is quite absurd.

Kim Il Sung is said to have manufactured the grenades out of pine cones to eradicate the Japanese [?]. And so, and that, and by turning our attention towards the sheer absurdity of the content, we forget that there is a systematic mechanism directed towards ensuring that the indoctrination reaches every level of the North Korean society.

And the discourse on that mechanism itself is surprisingly lacking, whether in academic content or in human rights literature. And I think

by expanding our foci, foci into the North Korean, not only into North Korean ideology and propaganda, but the mechanism through which it's disseminated, and saturate it into North Korean society could really help in our understanding of the North Korean context and also provide some lead into how we can engage with, effectively engage with the North Korean population in order to provide them with a viable alternative to Kimism.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you.

We're coming down to the final minutes of our time together here. I'll have one final question for Shirley Lee, and then others should feel free to comment on it, as well, and then I'll ask each of you if there's one thing you wanted us to take away from this hearing, policy recommendation or otherwise, what would it be?

So, Shirley, a question for you is if the United States were to impose targeted human rights or religious freedom related sanctions on North Korea, what specific political entities do you

recommend for sanction purposes that would allow the U.S. government to use its leverage more effectively?

MS. LEE: If we have to use these targeted sanctions, I'm not saying it's a bad thing, I think it should be directed at the party organization departments and the Party Propaganda Department and the General Political Bureau of the North Korea—the political wing of every executive entity of North Korea that is responsible for disseminating these policies.

The thing is this is kind of the situation. So normally in governments, governments pay their employees, their civil servants, to do their job. North Korea, in North Korea, the bureaucrats are not, they've got to make their own money because they are not funded to do their jobs. They've got to go and run their own illegal trade or do something on the side in order to do what the party tells them to do.

So it's almost like money is not what's

fueling them because these people who have nothing have to scrounge in order to implement the policies they don't believe in.

So I think it's a tool that can be useful symbolically almost, and I think there are sanctions experts out there who can talk about, for example, secondary sanctions because I think one of the reasons why these sanctions can't really bite is because there are entities in China, in Russia, who allow loopholes where the sanctions cannot really affect the actual cash flow.

So I think before you get into this area of secondary sanctions, it's sort of a difficult sort of subject to sort of have a financial effect on.

I think it's more about symbolic effect at that stage where it's part of this sort of concerted strategy to target the things that are fueling the strength of that dictatorship.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you so much.

And so final comment or final thought from

each of you. Why don't I start with Jinmyung, if you would like to comment first. I'll also say if you'd like to speak in Korean, if that would be, create a better facility for you, please speak in Korean, and I'll ask Inje if he would translate.

So, Jinmyung, if you would like to speak in Korean and give us some final thoughts, and then, Inje, if you would translate.

MR. CHOI: [Speaks Korean.]

[English interpretation of Mr. Choi's remarks by Mr. Hwang follows:]

MR. HWANG: So this is going to be a pretty rough translation. Jinmyung believes that there's many things that the American government can help with the North Korean situation, especially when it comes to the question of the refugees.

As North Korean defectors make their way to South Korea, they inevitably have to pass through other nations such as China, Vietnam or Thailand, and Jinmyung thinks that the American

government could intervene in protecting the refugees from getting re-followed or repatriated as they make their way to South Korea.

And the American government's contribution in those efforts could significantly improve the situations and the safety of the North Korean defectors.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Great. Thank you. Thank you so much.

And, Inje, do you have any parting comments?

MR. HWANG: Well, I hate to be the last and least. I do happen to agree with Ambassador King's, Ambassador King's points that we need to provide cultural and narrative alternatives to the North Korean people.

And I don't think we need to, I don't think we even need to directly refute the teachings of Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. We are talking about a population who have no concept of world history as whatever world history is supposed to be.

They even learn that, they're even taught that major technological breakthroughs have originated from the Kim dynasty. Just expanding their world view, providing narrative alternatives to how they imagine the world and their place in it would help greatly in furthering the human right cause, especially in terms of freedom of religion and beliefs.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you.

And you will not be last. We're going to ask Shirley for a comment, and then we'll close out with Ambassador King.

Shirley.

MS. LEE: I think, first of all, I just want to thank the Commission for this opportunity to highlight this issue and just bring this attention because as Ambassador King has said, that this is something that requires concerted area.

It's very slow. Commissioner Wolf, you know, it's a very slow, difficult journey. There is no sort of silver bullet to it. But there are

many things that we can do that sort of haven't been done as much as it could have been done, and the best time to do that is now, to support refugees, to separate Kimism from the country, to envision the future of North Korea without this ideological system.

And to support the fissures and the cracks that have existed for years inside North Korea because this is not a natural state of affairs.

There is so much work involved in keeping people in line with this ideology, and we, all we need to do is to help North Koreans make a better choice for themselves and for the world.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Ambassador King.

AMBASSADOR KING: Let me echo what Shirley said. Thank you for having this hearing.

It's extremely important to continue to call attention to the problem. The Commission has a very important role in terms of raising the



profile of the issue and continuing the focus on it. And it's as important to remind as it is to call people's attention to it the first time.

The second thing that I would say, religion can't be dealt with in isolation. We can't say we need to have freedom of religion without saying we've got to have freedom of speech, without saying we've got to have access to information.

Human rights are not a series of discrete independent ideas. They're a unity, and we've got to have freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and I think it's extremely important that we continue this effort, that we focus on this issue, and that we press the North Koreans to make progress.

Progress is slow, but we can't give up. We've got to keep doing it. We've got to keep pressing them.

Thanks for doing it and thanks for your efforts and for your commitment.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, Ambassador. Thank you, Shirley. Thank you, Inje and Jinmyung.

Looks like we'll have a comment from Commissioner Wolf and Commissioner Schneck, if you have a final comment, please make it as well.

COMMISSIONER WOLF: Well, thank you, Commissioner.

I really appreciate, and again this is a very powerful hearing. I agree with literally everything that has been said and what I think is, and I'm not speaking for the Commission now. This is Frank Wolf, not the Commission.

I think there ought to be the power of prayer. I think the churches and the religious institutions in the West ought to be praying for freedom and the liberty and basically the change, I would even use the word "collapse," if you would, but the change of the North Korean government.

During the days of Ceausescu, who was so oppressive, there were people praying all over the

world for the end of the Ceausescu government. Did he fall because of it? We don't know, but I think the churches and the religious institutions have to come around all the good things that we're saying, and I agree with everything you said.

But the power of prayer that this administration changes in North Korea and the people of North Korea have freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of movement, and all the other freedoms that we have.

But, again, I want to thank all the panelists and thank the chairman. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Schneck.

COMMISSIONER SCHNECK: Just thank you. This was a powerful, powerful presentation, and I have to say I think everybody that was on it has been moved. So thank you all for your testimonies.

COMMISSIONER DAVIE: Again, thanks to our guests. Thanks to the staff of USCIRF for the work

they put in to making this hearing and conversation possible.

I'd also like to thank all those people from around the world who have tuned in. This conversation will be, is recorded and will be placed on the website of USCIRF for future reference.

So we want to thank everyone who has taken part in the conversation today, and we look forward to continuing this extremely important work of trying to advance freedom of religion and belief or belief in North Korea, but also understanding that freedom of religion is an expansive concept, expansive notion, that includes other freedoms and human rights as well.

So thank you all, and we will look forward to working with you as we go forward.

[Whereupon at 12:00 noon ET, the hearing was adjourned.]