

Empower the Women Who Sustained North Korea

A United Nations Commission on the Status of Women Parallel Event

Speakers

- Suzanne Scholte, Moderator (President, Defense Forum Foundation; Chairwoman, North Korea Freedom Coalition)
- Ann Buwalda, Moderator (Executive Director, Jubilee Campaign)
- Jihyun Park (North Korean defector, resettled to the United Kingdom)
- Deborah (North Korean defector, resettled to the United States)
- Jade (North Korean defector, resettled to South Korea)

Objectives

For the past six years, the North Korea Freedom Coalition has featured North Korean defector women speakers at the United Nation Commission on the Status of Women. There, they shed light on the situation of women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and detail their struggle and eventual escape.

This year, our three North Korean speakers have each resettled in different countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). In addition to sharing about their lives in North Korea, they also share about their experiences in resettlement in these three countries. Most importantly, they offer insight into how people can empower North Korean women, the very population that sustains North Korean society and economy.



Key Messages

- North Korean women, through sheer self-determination to save themselves and their families, created the market system. Despite such vast contributions, however, they have no personal rights or freedoms, and there is major gender inequality.
- Because of the subservient views towards North Korean women and girls, domestic and interpersonal violence, as well as sexual violence, are very common. At the same time, they are exploited through hazardous labor, domestic servitude, and military conscription.
- North Korean women are often unaware that their human rights are being violated, as there is no concept of human rights in North Korea whatsoever.
- North Korean citizens, feeling they have no future if they stay in the DPRK, risk imprisonment, corporal punishment, and family separation when they defect.

Recommendations

- It is important that NGOs and other advocacy groups continue to introduce North Korean human rights into all dialogues possible, with special emphasis placed on women's rights and empowerment.
- Countries with North Korean defector populations have a responsibility to aid the community through education on refugee's issues and human rights; providing passports and documentation to prevent statelessness; implementing other programs for welfare, trauma therapy & healing, and cultural/social adjustment.
- All countries of the free world must join together with a unified voice to condemn the North Korean regime and its repeated and egregious violations of human rights.