

Testimony of An Hyok for the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing
“North Korea: Ongoing Human Rights Violations in an Era of Chance”
September 19, 2012

Dear Honorable Representative Wolf, and distinguished members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, I would like to express my deep gratitude for the opportunity to speak about the human rights and democratization of North Korea, here at the political center of the world. Furthermore, I would like to express my deep admiration and gratitude to President Suzanne Scholte of the Defense Forum Foundation, someone who has dedicated her heart and soul for the North Korean defectors and for the democratization of North Korea, and who has made possible this opportunity to speak here today.

My place of birth is North Korea. I was born there and I grew up in North Korea. And the moment that I was suddenly taken away to the Yodok Political Prison Camp was in January of 1986. I was incarcerated for three years at Yodok, for utterly ridiculous and incomprehensible reasons.

After I was released from the political prison camp, I felt so aggrieved at the unfair treatment I received, that I attempted the challenge of going to South Korea. And I succeeded in that challenge, having entered South Korea in 1993. After entering and resettling in South Korea, I formed and started an organization called ‘The Headquarter to Abolish the North Korean Political Prison Camps’ in 2003. I am still active in my efforts to close down the political prison camps of North Korea.

And I am visiting Washington DC because I have brought with me a human rights-based movie that is based on the heart-breaking and sad reality of the escape of North Koreans along the border of North Korea and China, and the forced repatriation carried out by the Chinese government. The movie contains the truth and reality of what is going on right now along the shortest distance in the North Korea-China border which is 48 meters.

This film shows why the North Korean people are leaving their hometowns which they are so attached to and where they were born, risking their lives to escape; why the North Korean people believe that their lives are happy despite living without any rights, much like animals; why despite dying from starvation and from the cold a sibling must die at the hands of another sibling.

There are other reasons also why we brought the film ‘48M’ to Washington DC. North Korean defectors who bear the immense pain of escape and forced repatriation who did not have any other recourse to appeal what they went through, came together and planned the film, and produced it as well, because this film carries the precious experience and the shouting out to the world of 23,000 North Korean defectors.

Just a few years ago it would have been unimaginable for North Korean defectors to make a movie. Another thing that would have been unthinkable and unimaginable in the past is the fact that now North Korean defectors are producing and sending radio broadcasts into North Korea

aimed at the North Korean citizens, and also sending leaflets via balloons into North Korea, something that used to be done by the South Korean government.

The reason why we are able to rise up and continue our efforts for the democratization of North Korea despite the terror threats from the North Korean regime, and the threats in the past from the South Korean government that colluded with Kim Jong Il, and from the pro-North Korean organizations, is because of the determination to go back to our homeland, even if we were to die, and most of all because no matter what anyone says there is justice in this world and the faith that justice will always prevail. That faith has brought us to where we are now, and faith is what makes us to be able to indict the dictatorial regime of North Korea to the international community.

First of all, we want to shout out and declare that the 3rd generation succession regime carried out by Kim Jong Un will soon face its end. On the outside it seems like there is smooth transition of power to Kim Jong Un, but in North Korea right now what is being carried out is a politics of guardianship because Kim Jong Un is someone who has nothing except for the fact that he is the son of Kim Jong Il.

Kim Jong Un's uncle, Jang Seong Taek and his comrades from the past are now in total control of all the power in the regime of North Korea, and those who do not agree with their views, no matter who they are, disappear overnight and now a 'politics of purges' is being carried out.

The fact that there is another person substituting for the dictator in the dictatorship, and of a guardian planning the political actions of the dictator, are actions that go directly against the fundamental characteristics of a dictatorial regime. This also means that as Kim Jong Un gets closer to having real power, he himself becomes the target of removal. So what Jang Song Taek and his inner circle are worrying about now is whether to get rid of Kim Jong Un before he 'matures' and becomes aware of everything, or to wait and see and watch Kim Jong Un act stupidly like a 'young prince'

Kim Jong Un, without knowing the circumstance of what is going on, has been selected as the successor and is now causing a disturbance in North Korea and the world through his vigor in trying to do something new, and through acting out in insubordination against his dead father who did not really hand over true power to him, and through the control and support of Jang Sang Taek.

If we look into North Korean society with a little more interest, the organized and impeccable North Korea we saw in the past under Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il is gone and is now replaced with the desires of a young dictator who intoxicated with vigor, confidence, and arrogance, and this is reflected directly in North Korea today.

The North Korean people however, are showing complete indifference and turning a cold shoulder towards the Kim Jong Un regime. This indifference of the people, and the competition for loyalty by the members of the political elites, has led to a North Korean society that no longer looks like a triangle with the people's loyalty at the bottom of the triangle sustaining the regime at the top, but rather an upside down triangle that seems to lose its balance at the slightest shock and which looks like a weak and feeble regime.

As such, the North Korean regime is one that right now can see its demise and collapse happening soon, but if the world is careless and shows inattention, this regime can go on for half a century and become far worse than under Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il and the North Korean people will suffer even more; that is why we are working so hard and putting much effort into working for the democratization of North Korea.

We earnestly plead with you to continue to take interest in and support the North Korean defectors – we who lived under regime not as humans but rather as animals – the movie made by the North Korean defectors, the radio broadcasts done by the North Korean defectors, and the leaflets sent into North Korea via balloons by North Korean defectors.

Thank you.