

The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing (TLHRC)
Escaping North Korea: The Plight of Defectors
Thursday, September 23, 2010

Steve Kim

Oral Testimony:

My name is Steven Kim, founder and president of 318 Partners Mission Foundation. In 2000, I was in the province of Canton, China helping North Korean refugees flee from the Chinese police. I was arrested, however, in September 2003 for carrying out what my team calls the "Schindler's Mission," and sentenced to five years in prison. My advocates in Washington, D.C. pressed the Chinese government to reduce my sentence to four years. Immediately upon returning home to the United States in September 2007, I established 318 Partners Mission Foundation to continue the "Schindler's Mission."

In May 2008, God set a seal upon my heart to rescue trafficked North Korean women in China. This became the focus of 318 Partners' rescue ministry.

We receive rescue requests for trafficked women from several different sources, namely North Korea Refugee Women's Coalition in Seoul, missionaries in China, NGOs founded and led by North Korean defectors, and news and radio reporters. We successfully rescued 66 North Korean refugees since May 2008. Among them, over 80% are trafficked women, who are forced into prostitution or abusive marriages.

I identified three chronological patterns of trafficked victims in the past decade of my rescue ministry. In the 1990s, North Korean refugees escaped to China simply because they would starve to death if they stayed. Knowing how desperate and vulnerable these women are, the Chosun-jok, or ethnic Korean-Chinese, targeted these women and learned to become expert traffickers. Eventually, the Chosun-jok established a thriving market of prostitution because these women could not report to the police in fear of repatriation to North Korea. These women are mainly sold to single farmers in China. By 2020, nearly 30 million men in China of marriageable age will be without female counterparts. The market of prostituting North Korean women is growing alarmingly fast in China because of this severe gender imbalance.

In early to mid 2000, the majority of North Korean women were trafficked into China because they lost their business as inexperienced merchants. To compensate for the loss of their only income, they crossed the river into China. Inevitably, traffickers trapped and sold them into sexual slavery, only this time, they were sold deeper into the country, such as to Heilongjiang or Shandong province.

In late 2000, the traffickers erected a system of trafficking that yielded immense profit. After gathering three to six women in North Korea, the broker bribes the border guard to let them cross into China. Once in China, another broker leads these women into the inner provinces and sells them for three to five times their premium price. Afterwards, the inner-province brokers bring the women to a final buyer, usually to farmers or to brothels, and there they are sold for ten to twenty times their initial price.

Currently, we have quite a number of rescue requests from women trapped in the cyber-porn industry. The owners of these cyber-porn businesses are Chosun-jok who run their business in an apartment and force the women, usually four to six cramped into a single room, to perform "services" in front of the webcam for endless hours. These women are usually in their early

teens to their thirties. It is very easy for these owners to keep these women from escaping because they have nowhere to go. However, if they are caught from running away, they are subject to severe beatings and are threatened to be sold to an even more notorious “boss” or even worse, to be reported to the police, whereupon they would be repatriated and sentenced to death in North Korea.

We can address this trafficking crisis by pressing the Chinese government to recognize these women as refugees, not “economic migrants” or “illegal aliens.” If this is established, these women can report to the police without fear of repatriation.

If China still refuses to recognize them as refugees, we must at least convince China to let UNHCR protect them from being trafficked. Additionally, if missionaries and brokers are allowed to assist these women to the “freer” third country, either Cambodia, Thailand, or Laos, these women can request asylum in these countries’ embassies.

I would like to add the testimonies of those who made it to a free country through 318 Partners. Thank you for your time and this much needed opportunity to testify on behalf of trafficked North Korean women in China.

Written Testimony:

January, 2010

16th Rescue Trafficked Women

Young-Ok Kim (Born 1982) Ham Kyung Province, NK

She left NK on 2006, and was sold to a Chinese man in Heilongjiang Province, China for 7,000 Yen (US\$1,050.00). Currently she is on the run from that man.

Sun-Nyu Kim (1973) Ham Kyung Province, NK

She was sold on 2002 to a Chinese family. With this family she had a baby boy. The boy is 5 yrs old. When arrested to the Chinese police in Jan. 2009, she was repatriated to NK. However, the opportunity for escape happened again from NK to China.

Kwang-Ok Choi (1966) Ham Kyung Province, NK

This woman escaped from NK in 2002. She was repatriated twice to NK but, has lived in Heilongjiang Province till recently. She escaped from the family in which she was living. She is hiding for now and is asking for help.

17th rescue Results (3 North Korean orphans from China)

Name: XX Go Born: 1998 Llang Kang Province, NK

Name: XX Go Born: 2003 Llang Kang Province, NK (Brother & sister)

Name: XX Chun Born: 2006 Llang Kang Province, NK

These orphans have gone into South Korea on around April 22nd and, after an inspection, are currently receiving special education and protection for orphans at a government appointed safe house. 318 Partners is planning to contact these children soon through a South Korean administrator. As you well know, these children all want to come to America. We are having contact with the family that wants to adopt them.



18th rescue (2 orphans living in North Korea)

The 18th rescue was special in that it was the first rescue attempt to bring out 2 orphans from inside North Korea. At the end of March, the rescue team in China made contact with the guardian of the children, and plans were made for a rescue at the Tumen River banks on a certain day at a certain hour. Although, after all the game plans were set for crossing the river, both parties were standing by ready at the scene of the proposed rescue at the appointed time, the guide for the children on the North Korean side lost her nerve when she saw North Korean

border guards patrolling the river banks and was not able to give the proper password, resulting in the failure of the rescue. This set back the whole process of the rescue to square one. For this rescue, PSALT has given a tremendous amount of financial support, so we are crestfallen that nothing came of the rescue attempt, and we are just so sorry to you all related to PSALT. We are still asking around for news of the children's welfare, but we have not received any response. Because it is summer, nowadays, the river has swollen and all attempts by those fleeing North Korea to cross the river have been suspended. We will keep you abreast as news reaches us.

April 22, 2010

19th Rescue Trafficked Women

Song-Hyun Choi (1990) Ham Kyung Province, Left NK in May, 2007

Personal Account of Song Hyun Choi

I left NK through On Sung, North Ham Kyung Province. At first I was sold to a Chinese man in a farm town in Heilongjiang Province for 15,000 Yen (US\$2,000) by a Korean Chinese in Yanji. It was terrible for a young girl like me to be exposed to such things, but I had no choice. I was forced to obey this man to survive. Moreover he kept on threatening me if I disobeyed him. The consequences would be repatriation to North Korea. I was hopeless. For an 18 year old girl with no knowledge of geographical information and knowing nothing of their language I was totally isolated. I had to live with a man who was 13 years older than me, by force without any opinion on preference.

Frankly, for my age, I should have the opportunity to go to college and have a dream life married to a dream husband. But I was desperate for a girl who was under 20, being sold and forced to live like this. I had no freedom to go out because I was North Korean, who was in danger to be arrested and repatriated to NK. That man didn't allow me to go out at all. I wanted to make money for my family in NK, but I had no chance to go out to make money. I was only a sexual play mate to that man every night.

One day I had a chance to go out and I fled from that house. I just came to Yanji city and I was referred to a place where I could make lots of money, which was the Computer Chatting industry. I am working under heavy surveillance and I have no freedom.

Please help me to escape from this atmosphere. I want to go to Korea. I will wait for your good news. Thank you. April 19, 2010 From Yanji. (Choi was contacted to a regular client for asking help)

19th Rescue-2

Mi Kyung Jang (1988) Ham Kyung

Escaped December, 2008

Personal Account;



My name is Jang Mi Kyung. I left my home town in December, 2008. I was living with my mother but no father, we were very poor. So I decided to cross the river to work at a restaurant making 500 Yen (US\$80) a month. I followed a man who was going to get me a job. But soon as I crossed the river, I found I was trapped and I couldn't work at a restaurant because I was North Korean.

That man who brought me wanted to return and he needed money to get going, he paid by a Chinese Korean broker and had left. I didn't know what was going on that time, but, I was told to follow that man to a farm town in Heilongjiang Province. I was married forcefully to a Chinese man where there were only Chinese.

I had to make money for my sick mother but had no chance there. Later I found that the man had paid 15,000 (U\$2,000) for me. Now I have no choice but to live as his sexual play mate. I can't go out. This is like Hell to me. I am now sick myself. After 6 month later I could understand their language a little.

Then, one day, I fled from that place. I thought I couldn't live like this forever. I just got on a bus and came to Yanji where I luckily met a NK neighbor, who could give me help. She told me she wanted to go to S. Korea and asked me to go along. So I have decided to go to S. Korea. I would like to make money in S. Korea so I can feed my family in NK.

I like to have freedom of my own. Please help me to get going to S. Korea, Please! Thank you.

19th Rescue-3

Keum-Ju Kim (1983) Ryang Gang Province

Escaped from NK in Feb, 2009

Personal Account;



I left NK in 2009 following a woman into China because it wasn't easy to live on my own in NK. She was my neighbor who I knew very well. She knew that I was living poor, she had suggested me to go to China to have a better life there. She told me that in China, I wouldn't go hungry. So, because of my status in NK, I was forced to follow her. I crossed the river with her by the guidance of a border security guard. I came to Yanji with her and she made money from a Korean Chinese boss and left. I was alone. Since then, I was taught how to do computer work and what was the so called Computer Chatting Industry. I didn't know what the meaning of Chatting was in the beginning. He guided me on how to do everything in the very beginning. He threatened me that if I don't follow him, he would report me to the police. If I don't do what he told me to do, he will curse me. I had to follow what he told me to do and followed the client's request.

I only know that I am in Yanji city but I don't know where I am. I had never been out since. It is very hard for me to live like this. I would rather go back to NK living without freedom and poverty.

By then, I had a Korean client who wanted to help me out of there. I asked him to help and he told me he would find a way. He gave me your number to reach and finally I was given a chance for now that I could get out of this place. Can I go to S. Korea and live free over there? I want to leave here as soon as possible. Please help me. Thank you. (She has been rescued and now in S. Korea)

Sept. 14, 2010

20th Rescue Information

Keum-Hee Lee (Born 1981) Ham Kyung Province, NK

She escaped from NK in 2004. This woman was sold to a man where she had a son. She was severely abused by her husband by beatings regularly when the man was drunk. She is now fleeing from that man, hiding in a place far from that man. She was referred by a NK Women Coalition in Seoul, Korea.

This is the contact number in China through a landlord phone. (Mi-Ok Lee 151-4xxx-61xx)

20th Rescue Trafficked NK Women

Soo-Young Kim, 18 Years, month old NK mother in Yanji.

She was working in a Karaoke Bar, where she met a man who had a son, 7 years in age, married man. From this man, she got pregnant and had a baby in 8/14/2010. But, this man had

sold this baby to a family who did not have a child. The baby's father had this kind of thing and very occasionally beat her and threatened to report her to the police that she is a North Korean woman. Her neighbor was so pitiful to her but no one knew how to help her.

We have no idea where she is hiding now. But if I go to China, I could find her. I will go there in August, 2010. When I meet her I would like to help her. But I want you to help this girl, out of China to be free to Korea.

(The one who was asking to help is Kim, PSCORE, Seoul-based North Korean Refugees' Organization.)

She has been rescued on 9/6/2010. She is now in Thailand, waiting for the Korean government to contact her. Her and being transferred to S. Korea

20th Rescue -3

Mi-Kyung Kim (Born 1990)

Sold to the place where Computer Chatting in May, 2009.

She has no idea where she is but she seems that she is nearby Korean Consulate in Yanji or Shenyang. No parents. Raised by her Uncle. Arrested by the Chinese police once. Had bad heart. Could connect by MSN, internet phone. (xxfrbx8@live.co.kr)

I am 21 years old. My name is Mi Kyung. I am working at a place where a Chinese Korean is boss for Korean client. Crossed into China in May, 2009. My parents passed away so I was raised by my uncle. When I got old enough, I was uncomfortable to live at my uncle's house. One day a man I knew told me there are good place to work in China, so I just followed him to get a good job and to be independent by myself. But I found I was sold after the man left.

Where I was sold had 4 NK women were working Computer chatting through video screen. I don't know where I am exactly but I am sure I am in Hanam, Yanji. They told me Yanji Shenyang consul office is nearby.

I was talking to the men I am chatting with, they told me that they asked Korean Embassy if they could help me, but the answer was impossible. Next to the Embassy, there are lots of police around the building. And very scary to even be near that place.

I am using a MSN Messenger ID borrowed from a Korean client. I found NK Women's Coalition by chance; I learned your phone number to call through MSN. I told them about my situation



She showed client her photo during conversation through MSN.

My boss is a Korean Chinese, and he himself told me to help me but I couldn't trust him. Last Oct in 2009, Chinese police stormed our place and arrested all other girls who were working there. I was arrested together with them but I was heart attack at that time, they were afraid if I could die, they had released me. They didn't want to have any trouble having a NK refugee die in their place.

Right now, I am alone. But I am always scare of the Chinese police might come back again to arrest me to repatriate back to NK. Boss is not watching me that crazy but never let me go out.

He gave me something to eat but not enough. I could go out by breaking window, but, if I wander in the street I am fearful I could be arrested to the police again. I don't like to do Computer chatting with strange man. I want to get out of here.

One thing comfort me is that I was lucky to meet good client so that they refer me NK Women's Coalition and how to go to S. Korea. I am young and have many things to do. I hate here. I want to escape from here soon as possible. Please help me. (March 10, 2010 Mi Kyung Kim)

November 21, 2009

Personal Testimonies of 12th Rescued Trafficked Victims

1) Name: Lee KH (Born 1975: HamKyung: High School Grad: Sewing Technician)



Aug. 2003: Cheated by a man she met at her farm field trip in NK, she came to China and was sold to a Korean-Chinese for RMB 10,000 (\$1,500).

Dec, 2003: Arrested by the Chinese police, but released after paying some penalty by a man who bought her and is living with her. With fear of being arrested again, she left that house, moved to Dalian, where she found her way to S. Korea, by leaving her home.

▲ My Story by KH Lee

I was a technician at the clothing factory. When I visited a different farm, I met a man I liked. He enticed me to come to China to make a better living with him. So I left my country, NK to China, with him on the mid-night of Aug 17, 2003. While I was staying at a Korean-Chinese house for about 10 days and sold to a place called Heilongjiang for 10,000 RMB I didn't know I was sold for such amount at that time. I lived by myself with a farmer who worked at a farm.

In Dec, 2003, I was arrested to the police because a Korean-Chinese neighbor accused me as an illegal NK in China. Fortunately, because of the man I was living with, he paid some of the penalty; I was released without being repatriated to NK. But I was so fearful that I was an illegal alien in this country. I told the man that I would be arrested again so instead I would rather go to another city to make money. With his permission, I came to Dalian and made myself a new life. Then, later I heard S. Korea would accept NK refugees as their country people and they would support me for the settlement. So I decided I would go to S. Korea.

My new brother in law went to S. Korea to make a living and he connected me to find a NK refugee organization that helped NK refugees going to S. Korea. This is how I got connected to you. Please help me to go to S. Korea. Thank you.

2) Name; Lee CS (Born 1979: Hamkyung: High School Grad: Nurse)



- Oct. 2003: Followed a man whom she loved to China, who was a human trafficker, she was sold to an old country farmer. She had lived her life with him for 6 years as a sexual partner. When she heard her neighbored NK refugee women were leaving their home to S. Korea; she just followed them to go to S. Korea.

▲ Self Story of Lee CS

I came from xx county, Hamkyung province in NK. I was just staying at my home after high school. Then, I had a chance to learn to be a nurse, where I fell in love with a man, but he happened to be a trafficker. He tempted me to go to China to live a better life, so I just followed him, my love at that time.

I didn't know the language, where I was at that time, I just followed him and I ended up with an old farmer who lived in the depths of the mountains. He was very suspicious that I might be running away, so he wouldn't leave home without locking the door from outside. I lived with him as his partner for 6 years. This made me sick and very tired. This was the main reason why I have followed my friend from NK into the same village, who wanted to go to S. Korea for their better life.

I have no idea how to go to S. Korea. But I just heard this through my friend who was living at the same village, sold like me. Please help me to get out of this miserable life and make it to S. Korea. Thank you.

3) Name: Kim JO (Born in 1967: Hamkyung Province: High School: Farm Worker)



Dec. 2002: When I was swindled of all my money at the market, I decided to go to China to make money for recovery. Followed a man, who happened to be a human trafficker to cross the border and sold to many different places.

June, 2006: I was informed to the Chinese police when I wasn't listening to a man, arrested, repatriated to NK and detained for 3 months at the detention center where I was badly beaten to transfer to my home town detention place.

Nov, 2006: My mother bribed some of the guards to get me free.

Feb, 2007: Crossed River into China for 2nd time. Fearing of being arrested and repatriated to NK, She has decided to go to S. Korea,

where she can live free without any fear. Met a S. Korean organization who helps NK refugees, connected to 318 partner's mission.

▲ Story of Refugee Kim JO

I was a merchant selling goods at XX city market in Hamkyung province, I was severely sick for 3 months from Sept, 2002 to spend all the money saved for the business. My mother's wealth wasn't that good either; however, she could borrow me 1,000 won in NK money to start over in business. I went out to do the buying and selling at the market. But the money I had was too little to make profit. One day, I met a young girl at the market who asked me about my business and told me if I come to China, I could make much more there. Then she introduced me to a man whom I could follow to China.

But it wasn't like what the young girl told me when I was found in China later. She was one of the team of traffickers. But, no time to regret, I have decided that I have already made it into China and I would make money on my own. We, together with other 4 NK women, walked from Changbei for 3 days to Limgang.

I asked the man who brought me to China that I wouldn't marry anyone, but want to make money, instead. But as he pretended to help me, he sold me to a man who was a poultry farmer. As I was staying there for 3 days, I realized they were going to marry me. So that night I escaped from them.

Even though I didn't know the language or area, as we walked all the way when we got there, I could find the man's house who I was first sold to. That man was so frightened when he saw me, then, immediately he was so happy to see me that I could escape from the buyer's home. He offered me 500 RMB every time I could escape from the place he sold me to.

Since then, I was sold to various places, then, I escaped from that place. But he often didn't give me 500 RMB. I felt bad whenever he cheated others and didn't get my share. So I just made myself at home till now to a man whom I met when I was sold in Jilin province. When I was settled at this man's house, I asked him that I needed to make money to support my family in

NK. He agreed and started to help me to have a business in Baisan city, where I met a Korean-Chinese woman. However her husband found me as a NK woman, he had approached me to have an affair. I immediately refused. Then, after failed numerous attempts to get to know me, he informed me to the police on Nov. 2006 as an illegal NK refugee. I was arrested and repatriated to NK.

In my hometown detention center, my mother rescued me by bribing the security official when I was in a deadly disease. I was released and, fortunately, I was recovered. Then in Feb, 2007, I left NK again but at this time for good. I have decided that I wouldn't come back to NK anymore. But it wasn't safe to live in China without any proper documents. By that time, I got a call from a NK refugee friend who had made to S. Korea. She introduced me a Korean NGO and connected to 318 Partners Mission.

Please give me your mercy and help me to get to S. Korea where I can live freely without fear of being repatriated into NK. Thank you.

4) Name: Choi MA (Born 1965: Hamkyung: High Scholl Grad: Factory Worker)



● May, 2001: Swindled all the money when doing business, crossed the border into China with a friend my neighbor. Both were sold to a farmer in Heilongjiang province when they asked for help from a Chinese family. After living a year at this place, she escaped from there and worked as a house helper and restaurant helper. But later she was arrested to the police.

April, 2004: Repatriated to NK

Oct, 2004: 2nd escape from NK. When working at Heilongjiang province, she tried to find a way to S. Korea, met a man who approached her for help, stayed with this man for 4 years, but couldn't make it. After 4 years,

left from this man and contacted this Korean NGO organization in S. Korea that helped me to connect to 318 Partners.

▲ Story of Choi MA

I came from xx county in NK, a merchant who sells and buys at the market by suing money from my friend. I was doing fish business. One day I wanted to buy fish cheaper direct from the fishing boat, I gave all the money I had. But he was a swindler. I couldn't get a penny back from this fisherman. So I had to leave my home to China to make money with my friend.

We were too hungry in China so we went into a Chinese family house, where we met an old couple who received us kindly by offering us some food to fill our stomach. They even offered us a place to sleep.

The next day, their son came and offered me a working place. I left my friend there and followed him. Since then, I have never met my friend again. I was introduced to a family of Mother and son, farmer.

I worked hard for a year, but I could never see any money on my hand. I couldn't live like that. So I left that house thinking of my children whom I left behind in NK. I got a job as a house worker in Mudanjiang city. But I couldn't work more than 5 months because of fear of arrest. I worked at a doctor's office but I was arrested to the police on April, 2004. After repatriation, I was confined at Onsung a local detention center till I was released and re-escaped from NK on Oct. 2004.

I worked again at Mudanjiang area at restaurants, tea house and so on. Then, I was looking for the way to S. Korea. But it wasn't easy. Whenever I met Koreans or Korean-Chinese, I always asked them to get me to S. Korea. One day, a Korean-Chinese approached me saying that if I listen to him, he would let me come to S. Korea. I followed him for 4 years, but nothing had happened from him.

I ran away from him after 4 years to the Mudanjiang city again. But later he found me and called me to come down to Guangzhou, southern province where he found a way to S. Korea. So I went there to meet him but it was again a lie. However there I could find a group in S. Korea that could help me to come to S. Korea. This is how I got to know and connected 318 Partners Rescue Mission. Please help me to achieve my dream to come to S. Korea.

5) Name: Kim HO (Born in 1969: Hamkyung: High School Grad: Farm Worker)

May, 2003: Doing business at Hyesan city. Hearing that she could make good money in China, she followed a man into China, sold to a Korean-Chinese in Shandong province for 4,000 RMB (\$600). Lived to that man for 7 years till she heard that the man who went to S. Korea having a mistress there. She felt that she had no more hope on him; she escaped and looked for a way to S. Korea. Then she heard a neighborhood NK woman friend was leaving to S. Korea, she, without hesitating, followed her.

▲ Story of Kim HO

I came to Hyesan city to do business with my sister in 2003. I have been living in the inner country my whole life; I never felt that was the border area to China. One day, a strange man approached me and told me if I come to the other side of the river, I could make lots of money in short time. So I just felt if I could go there to see if his word was true. So I followed him to see the opportunities in China.

But he was a liar. I followed him to Shandong province without knowing their language and I was being sold. After a few days passed, I realized I was sold to them, I strongly requested to go back to my country. But he told me that I was sold and if I don't listen to him, I would be informed to the police so I should keep quite. He told me my cost was for 4,000 RMB (\$600). So I had to live there for 7 years with him.

As he was a Korean-Chinese, he went to S. Korea to make money. But not very long, I heard he was having a family in S. Korea with another woman. I have lived with him by trusting him as my husband. But when I realized he was no longer being my man, I felt unsecured for myself. So I left myself leaving behind a 6 years old boy from him to come to S. Korea. But it wasn't easy to find the way to S. Korea.

One day a NK woman, whom I met at the village, told me if I wanted to come to S. Korea. She said she had a connection to come to S. Korea. I didn't hesitate anymore. I left that house to come to S. Korea. Please help me to make it to the free country where I can live in peace.



Rescue
Process
of Trafficked
Women