



Canada



Mission permanente de la France  
auprès des Nations unies



## **Concept Note for 2017 UN Side Event on North Korean Human Rights**

Monday, December 11, 2017, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

UN HQ Conference Room 1

### ***North Korea Human Rights: The Terrifying Experiences of Forcibly Repatriated North Korean Women***

*Hosted by Australia, Canada, France, Japan, the Republic of Korea,  
the United Kingdom, and the United States*

Forced returns of asylum seekers to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) are rising at an alarming rate. Returned asylum seekers are subjected to torture, beatings, arbitrary detention, and in some instances, summary execution by North Korean security officials, as a matter of state policy. Moreover, the vast majority of North Korean asylum seekers are women, who are vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of sexual exploitation when they embark on the perilous journey to freedom. When these women are forcibly returned, they are often subjected to sexual violence, forced abortions, and other forms of abuse.

**Objective:** This side event will shed light on the DPRK's gross human rights violations committed against North Korean asylum seekers, particularly women, as they are forcibly returned and then subjected to torture and other forms of abuse in inhumane detention facilities. The side event will discuss the latest repatriation patterns, including the increased presence of DPRK agents operating overseas to hunt down would-be defectors, and the process of incarceration in North Korea, starting from interrogation to detention in camps such as *jip-gyul-so* (holding center), *kyo-hwa-so* (re-education camp) or *kwan-li-so* (political prison camp). The invitees, including diplomats of UN member states, relevant UN officials, media correspondents to the UN Headquarters, civil society actors as well as the wider audience via webcast, will be given the opportunity to learn more about the seriousness of abuses to which female North Korean asylum seekers are subjected to upon repatriation and the role that the international community can play in addressing these abuses.

**Scenario:** The meeting will open with the United States Ambassador delivering opening remarks to set the context. The moderator will then facilitate a discussion with a three-person panel. Michael Kirby, former Justice of the High Court of Australia, will lay out the issue and explain how the problems identified by the COI remain unresolved. North Korean defector, Ms. Hyeon-A Ji, will then provide her personal story about the plight of female asylum seekers during their journey and upon forcible repatriation and will recount the harrowing treatment and conditions she was subjected to in the North Korean prison system. David Hawk, former Executive Director of Amnesty International USA and author of the *Hidden Gulag* and the

*Parallel Gulag*, will provide an assessment of how the North Korean prison system works and make recommendations on what the international community should do to address these problems and improve the human rights conditions of North Koreans. Co-hosts will then deliver short remarks before the floor is opened for questions and answers. The Australian Ambassador will deliver closing remarks.

Logistics: The meeting will be webcast live on UNTV for global viewing and members of the press will be invited to ensure full media coverage. Civil society actors will be invited to attend and participate. Consecutive translation for Korean to English will be provided.

**Draft Agenda (90 minutes)**

- **Opening Remarks by the United States Permanent Representative (2 minutes)**
- **Panel Discussion Moderated by U.S. Ambassador Kelley Eckels-Currie (50 minutes)**
  - Presentation by Former Chair of COI on DPRK Human Rights (10 minutes): Former Australian High Court **Justice Michael Kirby** will speak about the Commission of Inquiry's findings and recommendations and how the international community must do more to address the North Korean regime's human rights violations against its people.
  - Testimony from North Korean Defector (30 minutes): **Ms. Hyeon-A Ji**, who experienced multiple forced repatriations and detentions in the DPRK before eventually escaping to the ROK will explain her journey and what happens to women who try to escape from North Korea, including when they are sent back. Ms. Ji's family left the DPRK in 1998, following which her father was arrested and disappeared. The rest of her family was also caught and she was repatriated three times and detained at *kyohwasos*. Ms. Ji was forced to abort her first child and tortured while in detention. She finally escaped to South Korea in 2002 and now works as an activist and author.
  - Presentation by NGO Expert (10 minutes): **Mr. David Hawk**, author of *Hidden Gulag* and the *Parallel Gulag*, who will talk about violations of human rights pertaining to women in detention facilities such as *kyohwaso*, *kwanliso*, and others in the DPRK.
- **Remarks from Permanent Representatives of Co-hosts Canada, France, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom (10 minutes)**
- **Questions and Answers with All Participants (26 minutes)**
- **Closing Remarks by the Australian Permanent Representative (2 minutes)**