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NORTH KOREA Human rights organizations call for action on International Human Rights Day

Over 40 human rights organizations from around the world, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Freedom House, and Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), are marking the 63rd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by calling for international action to stop crimes against humanity perpetrated by North Korea's dictatorship.

The International Coalition to Stop Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea (ICNK), which was launched in Tokyo on September 8, 2011, is campaigning for the establishment of a United Nations Commission of Inquiry into crimes against humanity in North Korea.

North Korea is widely recognized to have one of the worst human rights records in the world. As countries celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on International Human Rights Day on December 10, the ICNK calls on the international community to immediately investigate the widespread and systematic use of torture, arbitrary detention, abduction and public executions carried out by the North Korean government. An estimated 200,000 North Koreans are imprisoned in a system of prison camps characterized by dire conditions, extremely poor food rations, denial of medical care and regular use of torture.

"If International Human Rights Day and the values enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are to mean anything, the international community should take action to end impunity in North Korea," said David Hawk, Visiting Scholar, Columbia University and author of *The Hidden Gulag: Exposing North Korea's Prison Camps: Prisoners' Testimonies and Satellite Photographs*. "The best possible way we can mark this important anniversary is by establishing an investigation into crimes against humanity in the world's most closed nation, North Korea."

The European Parliament called for the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry in a resolution on July 8, 2010, and the former UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in North Korea, Vitit Muntarbhorn, in his final report to the UN, demanded an "end to impunity", describing North Korea's human rights record as "harrowing and horrific," "egregious and endemic," "systematic and pervasive" and "in its own category". He called on the international community to "mobilize the totality of the UN" to take action to protect human rights and ensure "responsibility and accountability for human rights violations".

"The principles we celebrate in the International Human Rights Day tomorrow are universal. For that reason, tomorrow must be a day of action for North Korea, a day in which the world says to Kim Jong-il's regime 'enough,'" said Benedict Rogers, East Asia Team Leader at Christian Solidarity Worldwide. "The establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry on North Korea is long overdue, and action to end the misery in the prison camps is urgently needed."

ICNK consists of human rights organizations from across Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America, including countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Japan, South Korea, Brazil, Paraguay, the Czech Republic, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The full statement summarizing the objectives of the ICNK is as follows:

The International Coalition to Stop Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea unites the world's major international human rights organizations, campaigners for freedom for North Korea and survivors of the North Korean gulags in a global campaign seeking a full investigation of the regime's crimes against humanity through a United Nations Commission of Inquiry.

The Coalition aims to bring together all the key organizations and individuals working on North Korean human rights, because we believe that a common, united effort will influence international political and public opinion and send a powerful message to the regime.

The Coalition fully recognizes the need to deploy a wide range of skills and initiatives to bring change to North Korea, and completely respects the individuality of each Coalition member. Coalition members will be free to pursue a variety of approaches, but will unite in a common campaign to seek the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry.

Coalition members will include organizations and individuals from across the world, including throughout Asia, North America, Latin America and Europe.

2. Members and supporters of the Coalition are as follows:

§ Advocates International Global Council

§ Amnesty International

§ Asia Justice and Rights

§ Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances

§ Asian Human Rights & Humanity Association of Japan

§ Burma Partnership (Thailand)

§ Christian Lawyers Association for Paraguay

§ Christian Solidarity Worldwide

§ Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (USA)

§ Conectas (Brazil)

§ Council for Human Rights in North Korea (Canada)

§ Freedom House (USA)

§ Free NK Gulag (ROK)

§ Free North Korea Radio (ROK)

§ Han Voice (Canada)

§ HH Katakomb (ROK)

§ Human Rights Watch

§ Human Rights Without Frontiers (Belgium)

§ Inter-American Federation of Christian Lawyers

§ International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

§ COMJAN (Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to North Korea)(Japan)

§ Japanese Lawyers Association for Abduction and Other Human Rights Issues in North Korea

§ Jubilee Campaign (USA)

§ Justice for North Korea (ROK)

§ Kontras (Indonesia)

§ Liberty in North Korea - LiNK (USA)

§ Life Funds for North Korean Refugees (Japan)

§ Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights (ROK)

§ NK Intellectual Solidarity (ROK)

§ NO FENCE (Japan)

§ North Korea Freedom Coalition

§ Odhikar (Bangladesh)

§ Open North Korea (ROK)

§ People In Need (Czech Republic)

§ PSALT NK (Prayer Service Action Love Truth for North Korea)

§ The Simon Wiesenthal Center (USA)

§ The Society to Help Returnees to North Korea (Japan)

§ Students Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea (ROK)

§ Young Defectors' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (ROK)

§ Yuki Akimoto, Burmainfo (Japan)

§ Tomoharu Ebihara

§ David Hawk, Visiting Scholar, Columbia University, Institute for the Study of Human Rights, and author of *Hidden Gulag*

§ Ken Kato, Director, Human Rights in Asia (Japan)

§ Tomoyuki Kawazoe, Representative, Kanagawa Association for The Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea / Member, Reporters Without Borders

§ Suzanne Scholte, Seoul Peace Prize Recipient & Defense Forum Foundation (USA)

§ Dr. Norbert Vollertsen