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NORTH KOREA | Defectors address panel discussion on crimes against humanity to mark North Korean Freedom Week

Three North Korean defectors will discuss North Korea's horrific human rights violations in a discussion panel event in the House of Commons on April 25, chaired by Fiona Bruce MP and hosted by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and the Henry Jackson Society, to mark North Korea Freedom Week.

The event, titled "The World's Most Closed Nation: Exposing Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea", will feature a panel discussion with Kim Joo-il, a former soldier in the North Korean Army; Shin Dong-hyuk, who was born in a North Korean prison camp and escaped at the age of 23; and Yun Tae-yang, Parliamentary Candidate in South Korea for the Grand National Party and North Korean escapee. It is a unique opportunity to hear personal experiences of life in North Korea and to discuss what action can be taken to stop these crimes against humanity and end impunity.

North Korea is one of the world's most repressive regimes, in which there is no space whatsoever for freedom of speech, assembly, movement, press, conscience or religion. No dissent is tolerated at all, and the regime controls the people through an extensive system of surveillance and propaganda. An estimated 200,000 people are detained in an extensive system of prison camps. Hundreds of thousands of prisoners have died due to starvation, inhumane living conditions or execution, and many more endure shocking torture and regular beatings. Whole families are jailed for the perceived political crimes of a relative, under a policy of 'guilt by association' that inflicts punishment on up to three generations.

CSW, as a member of the International Coalition to Stop Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea (ICNK), joins over 40 human rights organizations from around the world in calling for a United Nations Commission of Inquiry into North Korea's Crimes Against Humanity.

Benedict Rogers, CSW's East Asia Team Leader, said, "First-hand testimony of life inside North Korea's prison camps is rare and incredibly valuable. While the world focuses on North Korea's security issues and its leadership, the regime's brutal abuse of its own people, amounting to crimes against humanity, does not receive the attention it deserves. We are delighted to be co-hosting this important meeting in Parliament as part of North Korea Freedom Week, and we believe it will be a unique opportunity to raise awareness and contribute towards exposing the human rights crisis in the world's most closed nation."

To attend please RSVP to: deeba.mufti@henryjacksonsociety.org

Notes to Editors:

1. Event details:

Time: 5.30 – 7pm

Date: Wednesday 25th April 2012

Venue: Committee Room 9, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

To attend please RSVP to: deeba.mufti@henryjacksonsociety.org

2. CSW's East Asia Team Leader, Benedict Rogers, and Amnesty International's North Korea researcher, Rajiv Narayan, will also speak at the event.
3. There will be a candlelit vigil in Parliament Square following the panel event.
4. A book about Shin Dong Hyuk's life, written by Blaine Harden, was published in March 2012: Escape from Camp 14: One Man's Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West.
5. Please include the following linked text in any online articles using the above information... Find out more about religious freedom in North Korea from Christian Solidarity Worldwide.