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World's major human rights groups unite to campaign for investigation into North Korea's crimes against humanity

<http://www.fidh.org/World-s-major-human-rights-groups>

FIDH - Worldwide Human Rights Movement

Seoul-Tokyo, 8 September 2011. The world's three largest international human rights organizations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), along with 40 other organizations from around the world, today launched a major global campaign to seek the establishment of a United Nations (UN) Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity in North Korea.

The International Coalition to Stop Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea (ICNK), launched in Tokyo today, includes human rights campaigners from around the world, including Asia, Latin America, North America, and Europe (see list below). Reflecting the global commitment to hold the North Korea government accountable for widespread and systematic violations, human rights organisations such as Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Jubilee Campaign, People In Need, Freedom House and the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea have joined forces with organizations such as Kontras (Indonesia), Odhikar (Bangladesh), Conectas (Brazil) and the Inter-American Federation of Christian Lawyers to put the spotlight on one of the world's most abusive human rights situations. Survivors of North Korean prison camps, and their groups such as Free NK Gulag, added their support to the Coalition.

"The time has come for the UN to establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity that characterize North Korea today," said Phil Robertson, Deputy Director of Asia Division at Human Rights Watch. "We demand the world pull back the curtain on the egregious human rights violations that make the North Korean Government one of the most brutal regimes on earth."

The initiative follows a two-day conference in Tokyo on crimes against humanity in North Korea, attended by human rights activists, survivors of North Korean prison camps, diplomats and members of the Japanese Diet and the South Korean National Assembly. Participants heard a video address by former South Korean President Kim Young Sam. Three survivors of the North Korean prison camps and family members of Japanese abductees also provided their testimonies. Other speakers included Japanese Member of Parliament and former Minister of State for the Abduction Issue Hiroshi Nakai.

The Coalition will campaign for the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry, drawing on the words of the former UN Special Rapporteur, Vitit Muntarbhorn, who, in his final report to the UN demanded an "end to impunity" in North Korea describing violations as "harrowing and horrific," "egregious and endemic," and "systematic and pervasive." He urged the international community to "mobilize the totality of the UN to promote and protect human rights in the country; support processes which concretise responsibility and accountability for human rights violations, and an end to impunity."

On July 8, 2010, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry, condemning the North Korean Government for its "ongoing, grave, widespread and systematic human rights violations perpetrated against its own people."

"Establishment of this important coalition will help move human rights to center stage in all of the international community's interactions with North Korea," said Ha Tae Keung, President of Open North Korea. "It's critical that UN member states take up this call and include language to establish a Commission of Inquiry in the coming annual UN resolution on North Korea."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. The full statement summarising the objectives of the Coalition 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:

1. Advocates International Global Council
2. Amnesty International
3. Asia Justice and Rights
4. Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances
5. Asian Human Rights & Humanity Association of Japan
6. Burma Partnership (Thailand)
7. Christian Lawyers Association for Paraguay
8. Christian Solidarity Worldwide
9. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (USA)
10. Conectas (Brazil)
11. Council for Human Rights in North Korea (Canada)
12. Freedom House (USA)
13. Free NK Gulag (ROK)
14. Free North Korea Radio (ROK)
15. Han Voice (Canada)
16. HH Katakomb (ROK)
17. Human Rights Watch
18. Human Rights Without Frontiers (Belgium)
19. Inter-American Federation of Christian Lawyers
20. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
21. COMJAN (Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to North Korea)(Japan)
22. Japanese Lawyers Association for Abduction and Other Human Rights Issues in North Korea
23. Jubilee Campaign (USA)
24. Justice for North Korea (ROK)
25. Kontras (Indonesia)
26. Liberty in North Korea - LiNK (USA)
27. Life Funds for North Korean Refugees (Japan)
28. Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights (ROK)
29. NK Intellectual Solidarity (ROK)
30. No Fence (Japan)

31. North Korea Freedom Coalition
32. Odhikar (Bangladesh)
33. Open North Korea (ROK)
34. People In Need (Czech Republic)
35. PSALT NK (Prayer Service Action Love Truth for North Korea)
36. The Simon Wiesenthal Center (USA)
37. The Society to Help Returnees to North Korea (Japan)
38. Students Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea (ROK)
39. Young Defectors' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (ROK)
40. Yuki Akimoto, Burmainfo (Japan)
41. Tomoharu Ebihara
42. David Hawk, Visiting Scholar, Columbia University, Institute for the Study of Human Rights, and author of Hidden Gulag
43. Ken Kato, Director, Human Rights in Asia (Japan)
44. Tomoyuki Kawazoe, Representative, Kanagawa Association for The Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea / Member, Reporters Without Borders
45. Suzanne Scholte, Seoul Peace Prize Recipient & Defense Forum Foundation (USA)
46. Dr. Norbert Vollertsen