

# North Korean dissident Thae Yong-ho running for seat in South Korean parliament

Asia News (11.02.2020) – <http://bit.ly/2Hh6arE> – The former high-ranking diplomat, who will run for a conservative party in a Seoul constituency, is critical of the Moon Jae-in administration. If elected he will work for Korean unification. Over the past two decades, 33,000 North Koreans have sought asylum in South Korea, but few are prominent members of the North Korean regime.

Thae Yong-ho, a high-profile North Korean dissident, is running in South Korea's parliamentary election on 15 April.

The conservative Liberty Korea Party (LKP), the main opposition to President Moon Jae-in and his centrist Democratic Party, made the announcement today Thae is expected to run in Gangnam, a wealthy constituency in Seoul where conservatives have been traditionally strong.

If elected, he will become the second defector from North Korea to win a parliamentary seat in South Korea – the first was Cho Myung-chul who was elected in 2012 with the LKP.

The North Korean defector said he wants to work for the unification of the two Koreas, which have been divided along the 38th parallel since the end of the Second World War.

He explained that he decided to run after the South Korean government deported two North Koreans back to the communist north. The [two fishermen are accused of killing 16 fellow crew members](#) on their fishing boat and then fleeing to the South.

Thae, a former deputy ambassador to the United Kingdom, is convinced that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un will never give up his nuclear arsenal.

He joined the LKP because in his view Moon's policy of overture towards Pyongyang is unrealistic.

The South Korean president has tried to mediate between the United States and North Korea, partly following the Sunshine Policy of his liberal predecessors.

Thae escaped to South Korea with his family in 2016; back in North Korea, the communist regime has accused him of stealing public funds.

According to the South Korean Ministry of Unification, more than 33,000 North Koreans have fled to South Korea in the past 20 years.

Most (24,000) are women who fled rural areas to escape poverty. A few North Korean government officials and members of the armed forces have requested political asylum in the South.

The highest ranking official to do so was Hwang Jang-yop, a senior member of the ruling Workers' Party. He was very close to Kim Jong-il, the father of North Korea's current strong man. He passed away in 2010.