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North Korea frees Canadian church leader 'on sick bail'



*Lim looks over one of the Light Presbyterian Church's agricultural projects in North Korea
(Photo: Lisa Park/Light Presbyterian Church Toronto)*

Hyeun-soo Lim, the Korean Canadian church leader sentenced to life in prison with hard labour, has been freed today (9 August) "on sick bail", says a North Korean state news agency. Convicted in December 2015 by the country's Supreme Court of numerous charges, including an attempt to overthrow the government, he had been detained in North Korea since February 2015.

His release comes weeks after 22-year-old American student Otto Warmbier [died at home](#), a week after he had been belatedly [freed](#) after his 15-month detention for stealing a small flag from his Pyongyang hotel.

This still leaves three Korean-Americans detained in North Korea, two of whom taught at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology – Tony Kim and Kim Hak Song. Tony Kim, like Hyeun-Soo Lim, was involved with work in orphanages, and it was for this he was apparently detained, not his teaching at the University.

The third, Kim Dong Chul, a South Korea-born businessman and naturalised US citizen, is serving a sentence of 10 years of hard labour for "espionage".

Meanwhile, a North Korean man, Kim Seung-mo, 61, was arrested in early June on "spying" charges after meeting Christian relatives in China.

Hyeun-Soo Lim, head pastor at the Light Presbyterian Church in Toronto, had visited North Korea more than 100 times to distribute humanitarian aid for nursing homes, day-care centres and orphanages.

Lim's family had been disappointed in 2015 when [Canada's newly elected government failed in attempts to secure his release](#).

But his release now comes one day after a special envoy of the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, had arrived in Pyongyang.

Background

Lim's church [lost contact with him](#) in January 2015; it was thought that he had been quarantined as part of the government's attempt to prevent the spread of Ebola. In February 2015 it was revealed that Lim had been arrested and charged with slandering the North Korean leadership and its system of government. He was accused of trying to overthrow the country and establish a religious state.

During a press conference in July 2015, [Lim was forced to read out a public confession](#). Usually North Korea pronounces a sentence within weeks after such a "confession", but this time it took five months.

"Most likely, diplomatic efforts to secure Lim's release failed," World Watch Monitor was told in December 2015. The source, who cannot be named for security reasons, said North Korea had probably hoped to get more out of the negotiations. "Whatever that 'more' is, we don't know. Pastors like Lim, who have seen so much of how North Korea treats its prisoners, cannot easily be released. Unless Canada makes an offer North Korea can't refuse, I don't see Lim returning home anytime soon," the source said at the time.

Lim was involved in humanitarian aid and not with the “underground” church. It is believed his arrest and sentence would have had no impact on this church network, “but a case like this does outrage the North Korean government”, the source said. “North Korean Christians could be dealt with even more harshly if they are exposed.”

Since Lim’s arrest, North Korea has applied a stricter visa policy. Last month, after Warmbier’s death, the US ordered that no US citizen is to be allowed to visit North Korea.

Previous case of life sentence

In May 2014, North Korea sentenced South Korean pastor Kim Jong-Wook to a life of hard labour. As a missionary, Kim operated from the Chinese border city, Dandong, where he provided shelter, food and other aid to North Korean refugees who crossed the border seeking relief from the famine in their country. Kim also taught the refugees about the Bible.

North Korean agents infiltrated his network and convinced him to visit their country, which he did on 8 October 2013. Kim was expecting to find out what had happened to some refugees with whom he had lost contact, but instead he was arrested, interrogated and possibly tortured.

In February 2014, Kim told assembled North Korean television cameras he had spied for the South Korean government, had given money to North Koreans to set up 500 “underground” churches and attempted to overthrow the regime. After a trial in May 2014, North Korea’s state media reported that prosecutors had sought the death penalty for Kim, but the court imposed the life sentence after the pastor had “sincerely repented”.

Enemies of the state

To understand North Korea, it must be remembered that it links Christianity with South Korea and the United States, considered to be enemies of the state. Ever since North Korean Christians fled communist oppression and made a run for the South during the Korean War in the early 1950s, they have been seen as traitors. After the war, tens of thousands of Christians were arrested, forced into hard labour or put to death. A small remnant of the Christians who stayed went underground to live their faith in secret.

The successful arrests of Kim and other missionaries – such as Korean-American Kenneth Bae, and Australian John Short, both of whom were later released – are part of the reason why North Korea has been extending its crackdown on Christian activities in its own country and the Chinese border area.

Observers believe that Christians make the North Korean authorities feel insecure by – allegedly – spying for the enemy, meeting in secret and not revering their government enough. Comparisons are sometimes made with the Jews and what they represented in Nazi Germany – the Christians in Kim Jong-Un’s regime are seen as disloyal, which is not just a transgression of the law, but also a sin of the gravest kind that deserves severe punishment.

Horrors of Camp 25

“I was locked up for years in Camp 25 near Chongjin [a camp for political prisoners where many Christians are thought to be held],” said one North Korean refugee. “I will

never forget the prisoners who were too weak to continue their work. The guards would pick them up and put them on an automatic belt that threw them into a large oven while they were still alive.”

Despite all the arrests, the North Korean government has not won its “war” against Christianity. The Church has survived almost 70 years of severe persecution. According to Open Doors, an expert source on North Korean Christianity, there are about [300,000 Christians in North Korea](#), which has for the last 11 years topped its [World Watch List](#) of the most repressive places to live if you are a Christian.

Anger and tears as Otto ‘completes his journey home’

World Watch Monitor (20.06.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2sP1WBJ> - The family of 22-year-old Otto Warmbier confirmed his death yesterday (19 June), just a week after he was released, in a coma, from 15 months’ detention in North Korea.

In a statement, the family said it was their “sad duty to report that our son, Otto Warmbier, has completed his journey home”.

They said he had been “unable to speak, unable to see and unable to react to verbal commands”.

“The awful torturous mistreatment our son received at the hands of the North Koreans ensured that no other outcome was possible beyond the sad one we experienced today,” they said.

Last week, his father Fred had said there was “no excuse for a civilised nation to have kept [Otto’s] condition secret and to have denied him top-notch medical care”, and that he and his wife, Cindy, had gone for 15 months “without a word from or about” their son.

He added that he didn’t believe North Korea’s explanation for the coma being that Otto had contracted botulism (caused by a toxin), which they had treated with a sleeping pill. Doctors in the US also disputed North Korea’s explanation, though they said there was no evidence he had suffered physical abuse. Before his death, it was confirmed that Otto had suffered severe brain damage.

A statement from US President Donald Trump said: “The United States once again condemns the brutality of the North Korean regime, as we mourn its latest victim.”

Mr Trump vowed that his administration would redouble its efforts to “prevent such tragedies from befalling innocent people at the hands of regimes that do not respect the rule of law or basic human decency”.

Background

Otto Warmbier had been detained since January 2016, and was later sentenced to 15 years’ hard labour, for attempting to steal a propaganda sign from his Pyongyang hotel.

At a televised news conference a month after his arrest, Warmbier said he had stolen the sign for a “deaconess” at his Friendship United Methodist Church in Ohio, after she promised to give him a used car worth \$10,000 if he brought back the sign. However, the senior pastor at the church in Wyoming, Ohio, told CNN at that time that he did not know

the person identified by Warmbier as a deaconess there, and said Warmbier was not a member of the congregation.

North Korea is ranked No. 1 on Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of the 50 most difficult places to be a Christian.

A North Korean man, Kim Seung-mo, 61, was arrested earlier this month on "spying" charges after meeting with Christian relatives in China.

In April, Tony Kim and Kim Hak Song were arrested, having both worked with North Korea's Christian-run Pyongyang University of Science and Technology.

Previously, in 2015, 62-year-old Korean-American missionary Kim Dong Chul was detained and Korean-Canadian pastor Hyeun-soo Lim was given a life sentence for charges including trying to overthrow the government. Like Tony Kim, Lim was involved in humanitarian work with orphanages.

How North Korea's Political Ideology Became A De-Facto Religion

On Tuesday, the highly insular North Korea conducted a massive artillery drill to mark the foundation of its military as tensions with the United States continued to escalate.

By Antonia Blumberg

The Huffington Post (27.04.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2prbe4B> - Like many aspects of North Korea's political and economic systems, its military came into being under the late president Kim Il Sung. Born into a Christian family during a time of Japanese colonial rule in Korea, Kim rose to power with a vision of an isolated, almost hermit-like independence for his fledgling country.

It was under Kim that the political ideology of "juche" — a guiding philosophy that places commitment to the state above all else — took hold in the 1950s and solidified in subsequent decades.

Juche's pervading influence on civic life explains why freedoms of any sort, including religion, are scarce in a nation that treats its current and past leaders as heroes of mythic proportion.

Juche literally means self-reliance. As a political philosophy, it entails utter independence to the exclusion of any kind of outside influence. Kim described the ideology in a 1955 speech in the aftermath of the Korean War by saying: "All ideological work must be subordinated to the interests of the Korean revolution." In other words, the state, its leaders and its political vision come before the interests and identities of individuals.

In practice, said Korean history scholar Donald Baker, juche — and the unconditional loyalty it demands of the citizens — has "evolved into a functional equivalent of religion."

As a result, organized religion is tolerated at best and viewed as secondary to juche, which operates to maintain North Koreans' faith in the government and in the Kim family. "Juche serves as an ideological tool for unifying the country," Baker, a professor of Korean history and civilization at the University of British Columbia, told HuffPost. "It says, 'We don't need God. Instead, we rely on the leader.'"

Like religion might, *juche* even promises North Koreans a kind of immortality through their dedication to the state.

"In *juche* human beings are defined as members of a sociopolitical community," Baker said. "There's no individual apart from the community. Immortality comes about in that if your body dies, as long as your community survives you'll have some sort of continued existence."

As scholar Grace Lee wrote in an article on *juche* published in the *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*: "When Kim Il Sung unilaterally declared *juche* to be the governing principle of all aspects of North Korean life, as well as the ideological basis of all state policies, the philosophy gained the full authority of Kim Il Sung's godlike status."

There are an estimated 40,000 statues of the late president throughout the country. Every home in North Korea is required to have portraits of Kim and his son and successor, Kim Jong Il, who died in 2011, displayed. The portraits are treated like sacred objects and must be kept clean and well-maintained.

The bodies of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il are embalmed and on display at Pyongyang's Kumsusan Memorial Palace, a site known as the "palace of the sun" and treated like a shrine. Like his father, Kim Jong Il is also revered with an immortal status and carries the title "eternal leader."

Kim Il Sung's grandson and the current leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, is often referred to as having "a sacred bloodline," Baker explained. As long as he and his descendants survive, the *juche* community lives on.

Some say *juche* builds upon Marxist ideals, which governed the country for the first half of the 20th century, but Baker argues the ideology has more to do with Korea's history of Confucianism than with communism.

"Confucianism has a focus on the family and on community," Baker said. "There's the idea that your identity comes from your family and your community. You're alive as long as your descendants remember you."

Confucianism, a spiritual philosophy that developed in China some 2,500 years ago, was a guiding ideology in Korea for centuries and dictated an antagonism toward organized religion long before Kim ever came into power.

Under Confucianism, citizens were required to observe certain rituals, including funeral rites. When someone died, their children were required to honor the deceased by commemorating a tablet with their name on it and bowing before it during rituals. In Catholicism, this treatment of a sacred object was considered to be idolatry. Paul Yun Ji-Chung, a Korean Catholic man alive in the late 18th century, angered the government by failing to perform the tablet duty after his mother died. He was executed in 1791.

Pope Francis beatified Ji-Chung in 2014, bestowing upon him a blessed status one step away from sainthood.

The Catholic leader also honored more than 100 priests and laity who met a similar fate to Ji-Chung in Korea. One man, Bishop Francis Borgia Hong Yong-ho of Pyongyang, was imprisoned in 1949 under Kim and is believed to have died in a prison camp.

North Korea continues to view Christianity with distrust. The government sees the 2,000-year-old faith as a tool of foreign powers, Baker said, evidenced by the arrival of missionaries who came from abroad throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Buddhism,

one of the other main religions maintaining a fragile presence in the country, is largely seen as the product of the past.

The government allows religious organizations to exist, but membership is small for a country of some 25 million. There are an estimated 10,000 members of the Korean Christian Federation, North Korea's Protestant organization. North Korean authorities have reported roughly 3,000 members of the country's Catholic association, about 10,000 in the Buddhist federation, and some 15,000 in the indigenous Korean Chondoism movement.

Pew Research Center reports higher numbers of religious affiliation in the country, derived from estimates from the World Religion Database, with some 480,000 Christians, 370,000 Buddhists and 3 million adherents of folk religions in North Korea as of 2010.

But the Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook notes: "Autonomous religious activities [are] now almost nonexistent [in North Korea.] Government-sponsored religious groups exist to provide illusion of religious freedom."

"One of the reasons they allow religious organizations to operate is for international cooperation," the scholar said. "They can send representatives to religious conferences, like the International Council of Churches, and spread propaganda." Namely, an international presence at faith conferences allows the country to maintain a facade of religious freedom.

Folk religious practices, including shamanism and fortune-telling, exist in parts of the country, according to Ji-Min Kang, a North Korean writer for The Guardian. Kang, who left North Korea in 2005, reported that it's common for people in North Korea to turn to shamans and fortune-tellers for help in their daily lives. "Many North Koreans invest their money in fortune-telling," Kang wrote in a 2014 article. "North Koreans, you see, would rather trust the spirits than the party or nation."

The government is outwardly opposed to fortune-telling, but Kang said there are rumors that even the country's top elites and officials consult fortune-tellers or, if they're men, send their wives to do so.

Activists have indicated that citizens get around the government's restrictions on religion by worshipping in secret churches. Reports of an underground church network helping smuggle refugees out of the country have painted an inspiring image of resistance in recent years. But Baker is skeptical about the presence or impact of such a reported network.

"Most of the Christians who could fled to the South during the war. It'd be very difficult to maintain a Christian community in North Korea because you really don't have any privacy," he said. "Government officials could break into your home at any time to make sure you have your Kim Il Sung portrait displayed. And none of the refugees I know who have left have said they know anything about an underground church."

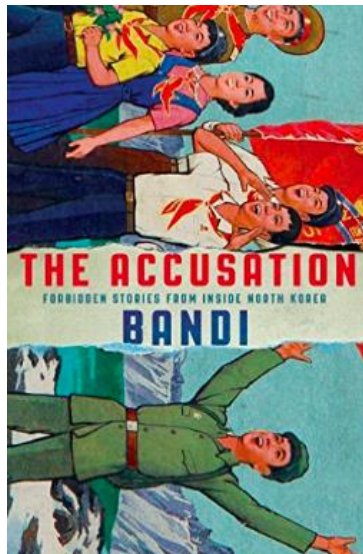
Resistance to the government's overwhelming demand for loyalty in the form of religious organizing is scarce — or at least inconspicuous — because "people are too afraid to even engage with religion," Baker said. Where the government does occasionally crack down, though, is on foreigners. If a tourist so much as leaves a Bible in their hotel room, they could be arrested at the airport and detained for questioning.

In 2015, Korean Canadian pastor Hyeon Soo Lim was arrested during a humanitarian trip to North Korea and accused of using religion to try to destroy the country and help foreign powers lure North Korean citizens away. The 62-year-old was sentenced to life in prison with hard labor. His fate remains uncertain.

Bandi's 'The Accusation', smuggled out of North Korea, is a victory for world literature

The seven stories and compelling biographical afterword collected here depict the struggles of North Koreans living under the fist of Kim Il-sung.

By Michael Barron



The Culture Trip (17.03.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2nNd63M> - The canon of the 20th century is marked by writers who were sent off to prison or exiled, who were savagely beaten or tortured, or who were executed for their words. Literature is made richer by the risks writers have taken to get their work past censorship and into sympathetic hands—risks that are still very much a reality in many parts of the world. PEN International tracks hundreds of persecuted writers around the world each year, tirelessly documenting the status of their cases, and promoting awareness and advocacy with international campaigns, including a Day of the Imprisoned Writer.

And yet it's because of the risks involved that we know about the cruelties of the Gulag, or of life in the prisons of the Khmer Rouge, or of the persecutions of Cuban revolutionaries. Add to this dissident literary canon *The Accusation*—a collection of seven stories set in North Korea during the twilight rule of Kim il-sung (the grandfather of Kim Jong-un), and the "Arduous March," a period of famine that followed his passing. While there are North Korean writers who, after defecting to the South, have contributed scathing words about life in the North, the publication of *The Accusation*, written by the pseudonymous Bandi (meaning "firefly") is the first work by a writer still living in the Hermit Kingdom to be smuggled out for international publication.

Rendered in English by the preeminent translator of Korean literature Deborah Smith, *The Accusation* is revelatory in its unveiling of North Korean society. As a single-party totalitarian state, privilege is granted only to its members, whereas low social standing is only a step away from penance. The characters who inhabit *The Accusation*, based in large part on the experiences of real people, all fall victim to the ideologies of

the Party, and the nuance of their penitential woes and belated disillusionment can be sobering to read. As South Korean writer Kim Seong-dong writes in his afterword:

“Bandi took upon himself the role of a spokesperson denouncing the misery inflicted on the North Korean people by North Korean-style socialism, a system riddled with internal contradictions...one by one, he collected instances in which citizens were forced to swallow this painful reality, without being able to breathe a word of complaint.”

We learn rather quickly just how easy it is to cross and be disciplined by the Party. Curtains the wrong color? That’s a charge. Flood ruins the Party’s crops? Blame the impoverished farmer. Misdemeanors even trickle down to private family matters: one character is imprisoned for traveling without a mandatory pass to visit a sick mother; a husband, wife, and child are banished from Pyongyang when the mother of her epileptic two-year-old puts his needs before the veneration of the Great Leader.

The full absurdity of Kim Il-sung himself is not lost on Bandi, who manages to slip in a few digs at the former dictator. In one story, a woman fed up with waiting 32 hours for her train, leaves the station and walks along an empty stretch of highway toward her destination when, ridiculously, who should appear on the road but Kim Il-sung’s motorcade. It stops before the frightened woman, and in the preposterous encounter that ensues, she is able to glimpse the Great Leader’s more earthly features such as “a bulging paunch that bent his arms in the shape of a Cyrillic Φ ” and the malleability of the country to bend to his will:

“Only now was Mrs. Oh able to grasp just what kind of Class One event could shut down both the road and rail. Kim Il-sung was traveling along a route where both options were possible, so they took the train when that was most convenient, then switched to the car whenever there was an opportunity to enjoy the coastal scenery.”

Seriously? Yes, seriously.

The Accusation provides a real-life analogue to *1984*, down to brazen examples of Newspeak and Forever War employed by the Party, but this extreme authoritarianism also plays to Bandi’s talent as a writer. He is a keen observer of how North Koreans suffer, and like a sleeper aware of his own nightmare, commands an uncanny ability to frame the ludicrous situations that fester under its rule with arresting solemnity.

According to Kim Seong-dong’s afterword (which is as gripping as Bandi’s own stories), Bandi is a state-sanctioned writer, a member of the Chosun Literature and Art General League which, along with every other art institution on North Korea, is overseen by the Party’s Department of Propaganda and Agitation. They are the institution responsible for sanctioning literary publications and the writers who are allowed to publish in them. (Surprisingly, along with the mainstay hammer and sickle, the emblem of the Worker’s Party is bisected by a calligraphy brush to symbolize “intellectualism.”) While talent is but one criterion it takes to be a North Korean writer, apparently Bandi was among its very best and became a regular contributor to these Party-approved periodicals, while privately honing his craft of chronicling the people who have suffered under the Kims.

Movements to smuggle *The Accusation* began when a relative of Bandi’s confided her plans to defect and, in return, he confessed to her his secret manuscript; it ended many months later when it was ferried back to Seoul by a messenger—entrusted by his relative and Do Hee-yun, a representative for a North Korean refugee advocacy group—who nestled it between *The Selected Works of Kim il-Sung* and *The Legacy of Works by Kim Jong-il*. As the publication of *The Accusation* spreads like wildfire into numerous

languages, an increasing number of voices are calling for Bandi to receive the Nobel. In 2015, however, Do Hee-Yun claimed not to have heard from Bandi in months and feared his arrest and possible execution, yet more recently publications have cited Bandi as alive. I choose to believe that he has not been found out, and that while Bandi may have risked his life to publish this astounding contribution to literature, he has not ultimately had to pay for it.

THE ACCUSATION

by Bandi

translated by Deborah Smith

Grove Press (US) | Serpent's Tail (UK)

Hardcover | 256 pp | \$25.00

This book can be purchased on Amazon here:

<https://www.amazon.com/Accusation-Forbidden-Stories-Inside-North/dp/0802126200>

Christian Pastors arrested for smuggling defectors out of North Korea, will likely be charged

By Leah Marieann Klett

The Gospel Herald (16.03.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2mrLSUp> - Two South Korean Christian pastors have been arrested in China for allegedly helping to smuggle North Korean defectors out of the country.

Reuters quotes Yonhap news agency as reporting that one of the pastors was arrested with his wife as the pair tried to board a flight from China to South Korea, while the other was arrested at a Chinese hotel.

The wives of the two had been released but the pastors remained under arrest, the news agency said.

Pastor Peter Jung, who heads Justice for North Korea in Seoul, told Yonhap the two South Korean nationals were "protecting defectors" but were tracked down by Chinese police who promptly arrested the religious clerics and their families.

"The arrested pastors openly stated to Chinese authorities they were helping North Korean defectors out of fear they would be subject to inhumane treatment if repatriated to the North," Jung said.

He added that Chinese police are seeking to charge the South Koreans for operating a human smuggling operation.

The arrests come amid an ongoing crackdown against Christian evangelizing in China and a mass expulsion of South Korean missionaries. According to Asianews, authorities recently arrested four missionaries and deported at least 32 more. The missionaries had been working in the northeast Yanji region of the country - which borders North Korea - for decades, providing assistance to fugitives fleeing North Korea.

"Chinese authorities raided the homes of the missionaries, citing a problem with their visas, and told them to leave," a human rights activist told AFP.

The outlet notes that while missionary work from the foreigners is illegal in China, evangelism from South Korean missionaries has been overlooked on the grounds that these missionaries prove humanitarian service.

According to Reuters, China has a strictly enforced policy of sending back illegal entrants from North Korea, whom it considers economic migrants. For over a decade, North Korea has ranked no. 1 on Open Door USA's [World Watch List](#) of countries where believers face the most persecution.

"Worship of the ruling Kim family is mandated for all citizens, and those who don't comply (including Christians) are arrested, imprisoned, tortured or killed," reads the report. "Entire Christian families are imprisoned in hard labor camps, where unknown numbers die each year from torture, beatings, overexertion and starvation. Those who attempt to flee to South Korea through China risk execution or life imprisonment, and those who stay behind often fare no better."

A dissident book smuggled from North Korea finds a global audience

By Choe Sang-Hun

The New York Times (19.03.2017) – <http://nyti.ms/2nW6osy> – It was a dog-eared manuscript, 743 pages bound in string. But for Do Hee-youn, an activist campaigning for human rights in North Korea, it was nothing less than stunning.

In 2013, Mr. Do got hold of what he believed was the first manuscript by a living dissident writer in North Korea that had been smuggled out. Written in meticulous longhand on the coarse brown manuscript paper used in North Korea, the book — a collection of seven short stories — was a fierce indictment of life in the totalitarian North. The author wrote of living "like a machine that talked, a yoked human."

Thanks to Mr. Do's efforts, the book, "The Accusation," written under the pseudonym Bandi ("Firefly" in Korean), has found audiences around the world. It has been translated into 18 languages and published in 20 countries. Translated by Deborah Smith into English and published by Grove Press, "The Accusation: Forbidden Stories From Inside North Korea" hit the United States market this month.

"This is the debut of 'North Korea's Solzhenitsyn,'" said Kim Kwang-jin, a defector and researcher at the government-funded Institute for National Security Strategy in Seoul, the South Korean capital, comparing Bandi to the Russian novelist and Nobel laureate whose writing helped raise global awareness of the gulag forced labor camps of the old Soviet Union. [The Guardian](#) wrote, "In its scope and courage, 'The Accusation' is an act of great love."

How "The Accusation" came to light is a story of its own. In 2012, Mr. Do received an urgent call from fellow human rights activists in China: A North Korean woman had been caught by the Chinese police and was about to be extradited to the North, where she would certainly face time in a prison camp. Mr. Do raised cash to help her bribe her way out and to bring her to South Korea.

She told Mr. Do that before fleeing the North, she went to say goodbye to a relative, Bandi. He asked her to take a seditious manuscript he had been hiding, but she was too afraid to smuggle it across the border into China; if she was caught, she, the writer and their families would certainly have been banished into prison camps, if not executed.

She gave Bandi's real name and his North Korean address to Mr. Do, who hired an ethnic Korean in China to travel to North Korea as a tourist and discreetly contact the writer. In 2013, the manuscript was smuggled out, hidden among works of propaganda glorifying

Kim Il-sung, the country's founding president and grandfather of the current leader, Kim Jong-un.

Mr. Do was a well-known advocate for human rights in North Korea and a member of the South Korean government's National Unification Advisory Council. But when he offered the manuscript to publishing houses in South Korea, most declined, as Bandi's existence in North Korea has never been independently verified. All they had to rely on was Mr. Do's word.

Mr. Do faced an agonizing predicament. He wanted to provide as much information as he could to establish that the book was not a hoax. But he also had to protect Bandi's identity to keep him safe from retaliation by the North Korean regime. This is about all Dr. Do will say about Bandi's identity: He was born in 1950. He has belonged to the Korean Writers' Alliance, a government-controlled organ dedicated to producing censored literature for state-run periodicals of the North.

"The Accusation" was published in South Korea in 2014 by Chogabje.com, a conservative news website and publisher, but failed to gain much attention. Mr. Do persisted, pitching the manuscript to publishers abroad. A breakthrough came when a French translation was released last year. Other translations quickly followed.

Mr. Do said that the last time middlemen checked on Bandi, nine months ago, he was safe and was aware of his book's publication in the outside world. A regular guest on a South Korean radio program broadcast into the North, Mr. Do has been providing updates on the book, hoping that Bandi will hear him. "The Accusation" has earned \$10,000 in royalties. Any profit will be used to support Bandi's family and books by defector writers living in South Korea, Mr. Do said in an interview.

Only a handful of people have been allowed to examine the original manuscript. Mr. Do recently let a reporter for The New York Times check it, but did not allow it to be photographed, fearful that the North Korean regime might be able to identify Bandi by scrutinizing his handwriting.

As an additional protection, Mr. Do said that he altered the names of the characters and locations in the stories. "I assumed that they were fictional in the first place," he said. "But I did not want to take chances. The more he is known, the more I am worried about his safety."

Kim Joeng-ae, a former North Korean propagandist now in Seoul, is a member of North Korean Writers in Exile PEN Center, a branch of PEN International, the literary and human rights organization. She said that she and other writer defectors had studied Bandi's stories and concluded that they were indeed written by a North Korean.

There are expressions in his book that only a North Korean would be able to write, she said. (The version published in South Korea has footnotes to guide readers though words only used in the North.) His stories also closely followed the "seed theory," a guideline of all North Korean writers, which requires them to structure their writing tightly around a core ideology — though Bandi uses the same device to attack the party line.

Bandi was the pen name the writer chose for himself, Mr. Do said. In one of 50 poems smuggled out with the manuscript of "The Accusation" and to be published separately, Bandi explained his alias. Bandi, he wrote in a poem, was "fated to shine only in a world of darkness."

In the book, North Korea is a country where a woman is programmed to show grief over Kim Il-sung's death with flowers, streaming tears and a heart-rending cry of "Great Leader, Father!" — even as her husband is languishing at a political prisoners' camp.

In one story, "So Near, Yet So Far," a son is unable to see his dying mother because he lacks the requisite travel permit. He compares himself to "a dragonfly stuck in a spider web."

"Ultimately, this is a textbook on the human rights condition in North Korea," Mr. Do said. "What it does is to show that in North Korea, ordinary life itself is slavery."

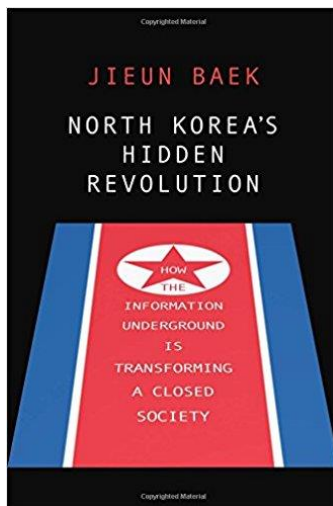
This book can be purchased on Amazon here:

<https://www.amazon.com/Accusation-Forbidden-Stories-Inside-North/dp/0802126200>

It will be presented on **22 March 15:00 – 17:00 | European Parliament, ASP Room A3F383**

North Korea's Hidden Revolution

How the information underground is transforming a closed society



By Jieun Baek

One of the least understood countries in the world, North Korea, has long been known for its repressive regime. Yet it is far from being an impenetrable black box. Media flow covertly into the country, and fault lines are appearing in the government's sealed informational borders. Drawing on deeply personal interviews with North Korean defectors from all walks of life, ranging from military officers to diplomats, Jieun Baek tells the story of North Korea's information underground – the network of citizens who take extraordinary risks by circulating illicit content such as foreign films, television shows, soap operas, books, and encyclopedias. By fostering an awareness of life outside North Korea and enhancing cultural knowledge, the material these citizens disseminate are affecting the social and political consciousness of a people, as well as their everyday lives.

"Our usual image of North Korea is of an isolated society cut off from the outside world and trapped in another time. But Jieun Baek shows that this is far from the case. Through detailed observation, exhaustive research, and extensive interviews with defectors, she reveals a society undergoing tremendous change and becoming connected to the world as never before. Despite the best efforts of the regime to control the information flow into and out of North Korea, the country is undergoing an 'information revolution' with far-reaching and unpredictable effects." – CHARLES K. ARMSTRONG, Korean Foundation Professor of Korean Studies in the Social Sciences, Columbia University.

The author, JIEUN BAEK, is a PhD candidate in Public Policy at the University of Oxford. Previously, she was a research fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University and worked at Google, where, among other roles, she served as Google Ideas' North Korea expert. Visit her at <http://www.JieunBaek.com>.

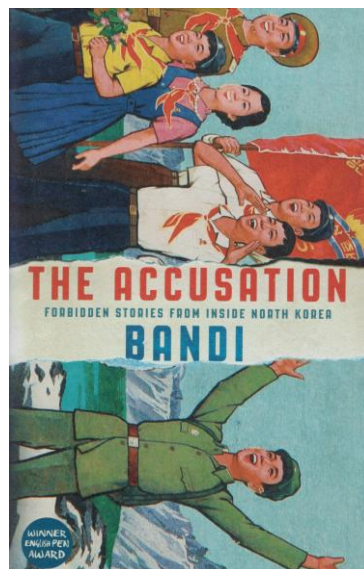
Her book can be purchase on Amazon here:

<https://www.amazon.com/North-Koreas-Hidden-Revolution-Transforming/dp/0300217811>

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The Accusation

Forbidden stories from inside North Korea



Written by an anonymous dissident known to us only by the pseudonym "Bandi", smuggled out of North Korea and set for publication in seventeen languages around the world, these profound vividly characterized stories tell of life under the totalitarian regimes of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il.

The Accusation is a deeply moving and eye-opening work of fiction that paints a powerful portrait of life under the North Korean regime. Set during the period of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il's leadership, the seven stories that make up *The Accusation* give voice to people living under this most bizarre and horrifying of dictatorships. The characters of these compelling stories come from a wide variety of backgrounds, from a young mother living among the elite in Pyongyang whose son misbehaves during a political rally, to a former Communist war hero who is deeply disillusioned with the intrusion of the Party into everything he holds dear, to a husband and father who is denied a travel permit and sneaks onto a train in order to visit his critically ill mother. Written with deep emotion and writing talent, *The Accusation* is a vivid depiction of life in a closed-off one-party state, and also a hopeful testament to the humanity and rich internal life that persists even in such inhumane conditions.

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North Korea bans mobile internet usage for overseas citizens

By Vishakha Sonawane

International Business Times (08.03.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2ml4eVc> - The North Korean government banned its citizens working in other countries from accessing mobile internet to tackle the spread of the news about killing of Kim Jong Nam, the step-brother of leader Kim Jong Un, Radio Free Asia reported Tuesday.

Pyongyang is known to have strict restrictions over internet usage in the country. However, such a ban on North Koreans working abroad was unheard of, until now.

Radio Free Asia, citing sources in Russia, reported that North Koreans working there have been subjected to random checks by local supervisors to see if the workers break the new rule.

"North Korea warned the overseas workers that they would not avoid compulsory summonses and punishment if the command is violated. Pyongyang's order is that overseas workers and also North Korean overseas diplomats' internet access should be completely blocked. After the order was given, random inspections of overseas workers' smartphones began," a source from Russia's Pacific port city of Vladivostok told Radio Free Asia.

The ban is likely to have been implemented over growing reporting over Kim Jong Nam's poisoning at Kuala Lumpur International Airport on Feb. 13, another source told the U.S. news outlet. It is widely believed that the murder was done at the behest of North Korea. However, the reclusive country denied the allegations and accused the Malaysian officials of falsifying evidence against North Korea in collusion with the country's rivals.

The internet ban, however, is unlikely to be effective, the second source told Radio Free Asia.

"Although Pyongyang is threatening the workers with punishment ... it will be hard to control them, as they are already used to frequent and unfettered internet access," the source reportedly said.

However, those found flouting the new rules will be "forcibly summoned and punished for life," the source added.

Freedom to access internet is one of the perks for the North Koreans who work abroad, the report noted.

North Korea reportedly has 28 websites in total and most of them are used for propaganda. The Kim Jong Un-led country's internet is accessed through an intranet called "Kwangmyong" or "Bright" — an internal network started in 2000, which has a search engine, news, email and a browser.

North Korea: crimes against humanity demand justice ICNK Backs Recommendations of new UN Reports

ICNK (07.03.2017) - The International Coalition to Stop Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea (ICNK) today announced its support for two new UN reports calling for the international community to hold the North Korean government accountable for crimes against humanity.

The Group of Independent Experts on Accountability, appointed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights at the request of the UN Human Rights Council last year with a specific mandate to explore approaches to accountability, asserted that "investigation and prosecution of serious crimes is critical." They called for "measures to ensure the right of victims to reparations, the right of victims and society to know the truth about violations, and guarantees of non-recurrence of violations."

"The North Korea government and its leaders should face justice for their crimes against humanity, which continue to this day," said Phil Robertson, Deputy Asia Director at Human Rights Watch. "We urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to respond positively to the Special Rapporteur's call that the recommendations of the group of independent experts be implemented without delay."

The independent experts stressed the need to consider creating an ad hoc international tribunal even with a referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC provides an important way to hold accountable those most responsible for gross rights abuses, but given the pervasive impunity in the DPRK, the experts argued the prosecution of some high-level perpetrators at the ICC should be complemented by other criminal accountability processes. "A dedicated international tribunal for the DPRK would allow the temporal, territorial, personal and subject-matter jurisdiction to be calibrated to meet the needs and aspirations of the victims," the experts argued.

The independent experts, Sonja Biserko, a Serbian human rights activist who served on the UN Commission of Inquiry into human rights in North Korea, and Sara Hossain, a lawyer in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, contended that "given the severity and complexity of the human rights situation in the DPRK, a comprehensive and multipronged approach is required to addressing violations." They also make concrete recommendations to the Human Rights Council, to strengthen the OHCHR field office in Seoul with additional resources to "receive, preserve and consolidate information and evidence pertaining to the human rights situation in the DPRK, through a central and independent repository, for use in any future accountability mechanism."

"The two independent experts deserve backing for their hard work and strong recommendations for achieving accountability for human rights violations in North Korea," said Eunyoung Kwon, Secretary-General of the ICNK. "Member states of the Human Rights Council should now step up to provide support and provide resources to the OHCHR Seoul office to support initiatives on extending research and ensuring effective analysis for holding perpetrators accountable."

In a separate report, the new UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the DPRK, Tomas Ojea Quintana, emphasized that "addressing human rights violations, particularly allegations of crimes against humanity, requires that perpetrators be held accountable." He called for a "two-track strategy" of engagement with the DPRK on human rights

where possible, and the pursuit of accountability. "These two tracks are mutually reinforcing, and a dual approach is necessary to produce tangible and sustainable improvement in the situation of human rights."

The Special Rapporteur endorsed the group of independent experts' recommendations and urged "all relevant stakeholders" to act and "to ensure that serious human rights violations, especially those amounting to crimes against humanity, do not go unpunished." He called on the Human Rights Council to implement the recommendations of the group of independent experts "without delay, ensuring that perpetrators of gross violations are held responsible and supporting all victims in their quest for truth and justice." He further urged the United Nations "as a whole" to address "the grave human rights situation in the [DPRK] in a coordinated and unified manner."

"Six years ago we joined together with over 40 other human rights organizations to establish the ICNK with the specific purpose of seeking accountability and justice for crimes against humanity in North Korea," said Benedict Rogers, East Asia Team Leader at Christian Solidarity Worldwide. "The UN Commission of Inquiry and its report were a landmark step on the path to accountability. The time to end the culture of impunity surrounding North Korea's crimes against humanity is long overdue."

For more information:

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The International Coalition to Stop Crimes against Humanity in North Korea is a joint effort of over 40 human rights groups worldwide that seeks to protect the human rights of North Koreans and to hold the Pyongyang government accountable for its abuses and violations of the human rights of the North Korean people.

Members and supporters of the Coalition include:

Advocates International Global Council · 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) · NK Watch (ROK) · Free North Korea Radio (ROK) · Han Voice (Canada) · HH Katakombs (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) · PSCORE (ROK) · PSALT NK (Prayer Service Action Love Truth for North Korea) · Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights (USA) · SARAM - Für Menschen in Nordkorea (Germany) · The Simon Wiesenthal Center (USA) · The Society to Help Returnees to North Korea (Japan) · Students Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea (ROK) · World Without Genocide (USA) · 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 & Defence Forum Foundation (USA) ·

North Korean regime is finding new ways to stop information flows, report says

By Anna Fifield

The Washington Post (01.03.2017) - <http://wapo.st/2mJAJL3> - As ordinary North Koreans have found ways to get information the state denies them — sappy South Korean dramas and peppy pop songs, novels, news from the outside world — so too has the Kim regime found new ways to crack down on them, according to a new report released Wednesday.

The regime has developed sophisticated new tools to check just what its citizens are up to, according to [Compromising Connectivity](#), a new report from Intermedia, a Washington-based research group.

The report underlines the challenges in getting information into the most tightly controlled country on the planet — and the challenges that North Korea watchers as diverse as the U.S. Congress and small defector-led groups face in trying to penetrate it.

“In a lot of ways, the expansion of information is continuing,” said Nat Kretchun, the lead author of the report, which draws on interviews with 34 recent defectors from North

Korea. “It’s just that we also see a lot of signs that the North Korean government is gearing up to combat it.”

Kim Jong Un, his father and his grandfather have kept a tight grip on the North Korean populace for more than seven decades by denying citizens access to information. State television, radio and newspapers laud the work of the Kim family, telling North Koreans how lucky they are to live in such a strong and happy country.

But thanks to dramas smuggled in on USB sticks and illicit shortwave radio broadcasts from the outside, an increasing number of North Koreans have realized that their brethren in the South enjoy unimaginable levels of wealth and freedom. Being caught with such banned media can result in harsh penalties, including imprisonment.

At the same time, the introduction of cellphones — albeit for domestic calls only, and without Internet access — is allowing people around the country to share information much more freely internally.

High-profile defectors such as Thae Yong-ho, who served as a North Korean diplomat in Europe for almost 20 years, have described the transformative effect of outside information and have urged governments and NGOs to flood North Korea with it.

While imposing new sanctions on North Korea last year, Congress allocated \$50 million over the next five years for radio programming and the promotion of freedom of information inside North Korea.

But the real picture is more complicated, the Intermedia report says.

“They’re clearly trying to innovate their way out of the breakdown of the security apparatus rather than going back to Kim Il Sung times,” Kretchun said, referring to the

founding president of the totalitarian state. North Korea's security apparatus began crumbling in the 1990s, after a devastating famine that gave the regime no choice but to tolerate markets — which then became a venue for sharing information.

"They now have a vision of a more sophisticated but no less controlled media environment," he said.

Take cellphones. North Koreans are now allowed such devices — including a re-branded Chinese Android-based smartphone called Arirang.

As recently as 2013, North Koreans could use these to share files — including songs and text — through Bluetooth or micro-storage SD cards. But a mandatory software update rolled out in 2013 included a program called "TraceViewer" that would collect browsing history and take periodic screenshots of activity — which the user could not delete. That means the security services can see exactly what the user has been up to, long after they have removed any SD card.

The update also included a "signature system" that would prevent a device from opening any files that don't bear a North Korean state signature — and, in fact, automatically deletes them.

"Even with the network restrictions that were applied at the beginning, cellphones could have been a game-changing device in North Korea," Kretchun said. But the system update stops that from happening.

"North Korea has a unique advantage in that it can dictate what devices their people have," he said. He added that the state has made it very difficult for citizens to

undermine their technology. "They put a lot of work into making sure you have to be quite technologically sophisticated to do the equivalent of jailbreaking these phones."

Access to outside networks has also been curtailed. Residents on the border with China have been able to get signals on Chinese phones, but the regime appears to have cracked down on this, using jammers and signal detectors.

"Once, I went into a house and made a call to China and inspectors came within 30 seconds," said a 59-year-old man who used to work for a trading company near the Chinese city of Dandong. "There are inspectors going around with an eavesdropping device to control calls to China," he told the report's authors.

But North Koreans are still able to watch movies and dramas at home relatively easily.

Previously, they watched foreign movies and soap operas on DVDs smuggled into the country, but in recent years they have developed a preference for USB sticks and SD cards, which are easier to hide. They plug the USBs or SD cards into their DVD players — which are permitted, although only to watch North Korean propaganda — and make sure to have a DVD in the drive in case of a spot inspection.

Small portable DVD players called "notels" also are used for watching foreign dramas.

Using small storage devices not only allows North Koreans to hide them easily during raids but also enables them to share media with each other. All but one of the North Korean defectors Intermedia interviewed said they had shared content with others.

Despite the challenges, Kretchun said there was reason to keep trying to penetrate the North Korean regime's information blockade. "Right now, all the arrows continue to point up. People are still certainly watching foreign dramas and listening to the radio," he said.

Actions speak louder than words
The issue of North Korean refugees is, ethically and legally, a global responsibility.

By Lord Alton of Liverpool (Co-Chair, APPG) & James Burt (Special Advisor, APPG)

Korea Joongang Daily (06.02.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2kcOY9o> - Displacement and suffering have shaped the human landscape of the Korean peninsula. Annexed in 1910 and occupied until 1945 by the Empire of Japan, between 4 and 6 million Koreans were forced into slavery as laborers and up to 200,000 Korean women served as sexual slaves. Come 1945, 20 percent of the Korean population had been displaced and nearly half a million had been killed.

This legacy of loss and dislocation continued throughout the Korean War and forced hundreds of thousands of Koreans to migrate between the newly formed North and South Korea.

For the people of South Korea, memories of these times are still raw. The ongoing struggles over Japanese apologies, compensation and how to deal with North Korea all point to wounds that have yet to heal.

But for North Koreans, memories of displacement and brutalization cannot be confined to the historical record for they are also the reality of life today. A 2014 United Nations Commission of Inquiry established that extermination; enslavement; torture; rape;

forced abortions; sexual violence; and persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds are all prevalent in North Korea.

That such abuses continue is surely one of the greatest failures of the modern era's collective response to atrocities.

One consequence of this failure has been the creation of a North Korean refugee crisis. Since the late 1990s, when significant numbers of North Koreans began to flee their homeland following severe famine, it is estimated that more than 200,000 have fled to China. In that time, just 30,000 North Koreans have successfully reached the safety of South Korea, while about 2,000 have settled in North America and Europe, including close to 1,000 in the United Kingdom.

In theory, the government of China should accept North Koreans as asylum seekers and extend the many protections granted by the U.N. Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. It should allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees access to screen, determine the status and protect those in need. And it should not practice refoulement — the forcible return of North Koreans to a country where they risk persecution.

Despite this, plus many other international obligations (namely the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), China deports up to 6,000 North Koreans every year. Upon their repatriation, North Koreans, of which about 70 percent are women and girls, face torture, sexual violence, imprisonment and even execution.

What can the world do to end this illegal situation? The international community has long called upon Beijing to stop the arrests and deportation of North Koreans, while numerous U.N. speeches and resolutions have called upon the Government of North Korea to

respect fundamental human rights. The final report of the former United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, noted, "The Secretary-General remains concerned that women who seek to leave or have left [North Korea] are subject to trafficking and sexual abuse ... serious human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment."

That our words and concerns have failed to protect North Korean escapees is clear. Sitting thousands of miles from Northeast Asia, and facing the might of the Government of China, it would be easy to see desperate and fleeing North Koreans as a responsibility for someone else.

But the issue of North Korean refugees is, ethically and legally, a global responsibility. Where vulnerable escapees face journeys that risk imprisonment or death, we are compelled to provide our support.

The North Korean government is the cause of the refugee crisis and should be our longterm target, but engaging the Chinese government may provide a more feasible shortterm solution. Clearly, Beijing does not want North Korean refugees on its territory, so conscientious states should begin to quietly offer an alternative to China: namely, that their embassies and consulates would, without publicity or fanfare, take custody of captured North Koreans from Chinese authorities and aid their travels to safe havens such as South Korea or Europe. In return, China would gain further leverage over North Korea, end years of negative publicity, and put a foot on the right side of history.

This recommendation may appear improbable or unrealistic. But as Nelson Mandela frequently told us, the most arduous challenges seem impossible until they are conquered. That China would welcome a solution to an internal refugee crisis should not surprise us. Instead, it should encourage us to formulate new solutions. A day will come when all North Koreans are free. Until that day, we must do what we can to help refugees that fall within our grasp.

*Lord Alton of Liverpool is co-chair of the United Kingdom's All-Party Parliamentary Group on North Korea and a crossbench member of the House of Lords. James Burt is special adviser to the group and director of research at the European Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea.
