

Table of Contents

- ***North Koreans overcome border guards in bold escape to China***
- ***North Korea rolls out trial of GPS devices to monitor border guards***
- ***A eulogy to North Korean women in business training***
- ***The European Union's engagement policy towards North Korea***
- ***North Korean traders shun email correspondence with foreign partners***
- ***Bandi's book "The Accusation" smuggled from North Korea now published in 18 languages***
- ***Stranger than fiction: How forbidden book was smuggled out of N. Korea***
- ***North Korean police restrict citizen movements across country***
- ***Pyongyang, Moscow seeking to expand N. Korean labor accord***
- ***Women and children are the main victims of North Korea's humanitarian emergency***
- ***How information is smuggled into North Korea***
- ***Christian Pastors arrested for smuggling defectors out of North Korea, will likely be charged***
- ***A dissident book smuggled from North Korea finds a global audience***
- ***North Korea's Hidden Revolution***
- ***The Accusation***
- ***North Korea bans mobile internet usage for overseas citizens***
- ***North Korea: crimes against humanity demand justice ICNK Backs Recommendations of new UN Reports***
- ***North Korean regime is finding new ways to stop information flows, report says***
- ***Actions speak louder than words***

North Koreans overcome border guards in bold escape to China

Radio Free Asia (21.04.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2oS5qHi> - Seven North Koreans from three families overpowered border guards and seized their weapons in a dramatic escape across the Tumen River to China on April 15, multiple sources inside the North told RFA's Korean Service.

The defectors were from a small village in Musan County, North Hamgyong Province near the Chinese border and their escape took place as North Korea was marking the 105th birthday of the late North Korean founder Kim Il Sung amid heightened security for the national holiday.

"On April 15, the late Kim Il Sung's birthday, three family units of Musan County beat the border guards and defected. As this incident happened during the special security week, the Border Guard and law enforcement agencies were put on high alert," one source in North Hamgyong Province told RFA on April 18.

"The defectors were a total of seven from the three family units who resided in Dosori village in Musan County," the source added.

"The law enforcement agencies believe the defectors had no choice but to attack the border guards and steal their weapons when they were in danger of being caught by the approaching guards," said the source.

It was not clear if any guards were injured and the whereabouts of the seven escapees is unknown.

A second source in North Hamgyong Province reached by RFA on April 20 added details on the events of April 15, whose repercussions are being felt all along the North's long border with China.

"During the escape process, three adults in the families ambushed and muzzled two patrolling guards before tying them securely to trees, and then seized their automatic rifles, removed the magazines and threw them into the (Tumen) river," the second source said.

"Dozens of border guards stationed in Musan County were mobilized the next day, the afternoon of April 16 to dive into icy cold Tumen River to search for the magazines, but failed to find them up to now," added that source.

"Right after the incident happened, the People's Security Department and the Border Guards headquarters in Musan County prohibited the movement of county residents, and at the same time informed China of the incident, dispatching an investigative team over on the Chinese side of the border in an effort to arrest the seven defectors," the source said.

When asked about the incident by RFA on April 21, a Chinese embassy official in Washington said only: "I do not know."

Both of RFA's sources in North Hamgyong said Saturday's dramatic escape took place against the backdrop of tighter state controls on border guards. Guards used to take bribes to turn a blind eye on defections into China, but now face stern punishments for allowing escapes, including public execution.

The tighter security, "coupled with the spreading rumors of a nuclear war, have made lots of residents determined to defect solo, without the border guards' help, as they feel they might die helplessly. This kind of thinking among the residents affected the incident involving the seven family members," said the second Hamgyong source.

North Korea rolls out trial of GPS devices to monitor border guards

Radio Free Asia (05.04.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2naWWFQ> - North Korean authorities have started attaching GPS satellite tracking devices to guards on duty to intensify border security in a trial run of the technology before rolling out a full-blown plan to outfit all patrols with the gadgets, sources inside the country said.

"Satellite tracking devices were introduced to the fourth company of the border garrison in Onsong county [in North Hamgyong province], that suffered flood damage last year," said a source from the province which borders China.

"The reason why the satellite tracking devices were introduced to the fourth company first is that the company is guarding the main path for defection and smuggling," he told RFA's Korean Service.

Attached to the guards' automatic rifle straps, the satellite tracking device has enabled the battalion headquarters to improve security because it prevents guards from going AWOL from their posts along the border as often as they have done previously, the source said.

A source from Yanggang Province told RFA that a trial run for the satellite tracking devices were introduced to the fifth battalion of the 25th brigade of the border garrison stationed in Kimjongsuk county along the Yalu River on the border between North Korea and China.

"However, I cannot understand why the satellite tracking device was introduced in such a remote location," he said

The North Korean-made satellite tracking devices that have been given to members of the battalion only have a registration number, a small oval-shaped LCD display, and a power switch, he said.

"The guards have no idea how the satellite tracking device works," the source said. "The monitoring equipment for the satellite tracking device is not in the company. It is located in the headquarters of a battalion, so it is hard for guards of the company to figure out how the satellite tracking device works because it is monitored by the battalion headquarters."

Authorities introduced the satellite tracking system because some border guards who were on duty crossed into China to commit robberies or else fell asleep in bunkers when they should have been monitoring the border areas, he said.

"Moreover, it is also a preventive measure for keeping border guards from entering residents' houses during work hours," the source said.

Yet, it remains unknown whether the current satellite tracking device only confirms the location of a guard or records surrounding sounds and voices as well to prevent them from smuggling or assisting defectors, he said.

"However, once the guards of the company confirm how the satellite tracking devices work, then they will be able to cope with them," he said.

A eulogy to North Korean women in business training ***Looking back at a three-year business training program for women.***

By Andray Abrahamian

The Diplomat (03.04.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2oLRF4w> - "I want to go into business," she said, "to show that women can be good business leaders too."

When Geoffrey K. See, Choson Exchange's founder, first heard a female North Korean university student say this in 2007, two thoughts came to mind. First, there is so much

we do not know or understand about North Korea. Second, there must be a way to help people like her — young and highly motivated entrepreneurs with aspirations to create new business opportunities.

From 2009 to 2012, Choson Exchange conducted occasional training programs in entrepreneurship, economics, and law in North Korea. We created programs looking at topics in two main streams. The first was economic policy, focusing on issues such as domestic banking and financing of agriculture, Special Economic Zone management, and exchange rate policies. The second was entrepreneurship and business skills, including everything from budget management to marketing to soft skills, such as team building and pitching for investment. Since 2009, we've had over 1,200 workshop attendees and have brought over 100 North Koreans abroad to study.

However, the aforementioned student's words had a lasting impact and in 2013, after then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton catalyzed global interest in women's issues, we were able to find enough support to launch a "Women in Business" program. This became Choson Exchange's longest-running program until it ended in 2016, in a field where efforts to support entrepreneurship in North Korea are often stymied by domestic politics and international tensions. In this case, funders surveying a world in which women entrepreneurs need support have grown cold on the DPRK, which presents sanctions, reputational, and logistical risks that other places simply do not.

Why Women in Business?

According to the 2001 World Bank study, *Engendering Development*, countries with less discrimination against female participation in the economy have better outcomes across a wide variety of metrics. Countries with more inequality, the study noted, "pay the price of more poverty, more malnutrition, more illness, and more deprivations of other kinds." When women run businesses and get the promotions they deserve, not only do companies do better, societies do better. In 2013, we felt the time was right to support women in business in the DPRK and sought to prove such a program was viable.

The North Koreans we work with were initially dubious of the enterprise. This was partly because of the extra work it would require to get the new program off the ground. But it also meant they would have to pitch the idea to companies who were generally skeptical about business training in Korea as a whole, and preferred to send males to management training programs. In fact, when we started, some North Koreans suggested we focus on medicine or agriculture instead.

Moreover, some of our interlocutors saw this program as discriminatory: "You should take me on this study trip to Singapore," one smooth-talking young man argued. "In the end, to get anything important done here you'll have to speak to men, anyway."

"That kind of attitude is exactly the reason we're only taking women," our executive director replied. Funny — we never saw that guy at a program again.

International observers were also skeptical. There was positive economic policy experimentation in North Korea from 2010-2013, but questions remained about whether it was real and sustainable and about the depth of the DPRK's interest in entrepreneurship. It was well known that at the grassroots level — in the growing market spaces — women were playing a huge role in the economy, but it was uncertain whether they also had the potential to do so with bigger companies as well as start-ups.

While this skepticism was understandable, there was recognition that North Korea has an evolving social contract and a changing economy, one that recognizes market forces like

never before. It was our view that these positive trends made it all the more important to support female entrepreneurship in whatever ways were possible.

Impact

The kinship between our workshop leaders and participants was at times inspirational. The recognition of common challenges fostered solidarity that helped to bridge the huge cultural, political, and economic divides between the foreigners and the locals. Seeing cross-cultural mentorships emerge, however time-constrained, was quite special.

In this three-year period, we trained 504 participants directly, and another 1,000 indirectly through sharing of materials. This was spread over nine workshops in North Korea and five programs abroad. These activities persisted despite numerous disruptions — the “semi-war mobilization” of 2013; another tearing up of the armistice; and the execution of Kim Jong-un’s uncle, Jang Song-thaek. One particularly frustrating period was the four-month Ebola quarantine in 2014-2015, during which time virtually no one went in or out of the DPRK. Despite these challenges, and thanks to our dedicated North Korean partners, we managed to get an overseas workshop implemented just days after the travel ban was lifted.

Using gender issues helps our volunteer workshop leaders open spaces to raise topics that are seldom discussed, such as the importance of networking among business leaders and minimum wages. Implementing a minimum wage, for example, almost always has the greatest benefits for women, as they tend to occupy the most precarious jobs in society. But it implies a wage and flexible labor-taxation social contract, something still sensitive in a country resistant to the idea of an official tax system.

We found that ideas and concepts about meeting consumer demands and marketing strategies were important to businesswomen, especially if they had a clear impact on their economic livelihoods or ability to start or grow a business. We hoped, therefore, to be able to support a formal women’s business network. That didn’t come to pass, but our repeated emphasis on women peer support networks was well-received as audiences quickly realized how they could grow their businesses with advice and support from others in similar positions and with relevant experience. One participant, a restaurant owner, implemented an idea proposed by a workshop leader to organize networking dinners. In the future, such peer groups could be a vehicle for a variety of projects, including micro-financing.

Social Changes and Outlook

During the course of our Women in Business program, the broader business environment in North Korea changed. In 2010, the role of businesses — especially smaller ones — in society was somewhat tenuous. Now there is a widespread recognition that business activities are an unavoidable and positive force.

Businesses such as retail, food and beverage services, and small-scale manufacturing appear to have a high number of female entrepreneurs. Those that attend our programs tend to come from more vocational backgrounds, while the “best educated” women (i.e. those from top universities) still seem to prefer professional careers or government jobs. We worked hard over the past few years to gain greater mainstream acceptance for female entrepreneurship, and our efforts paid off with higher levels of female participation in our program — from just over 50 percent in the beginning to 70-80 percent for in-country and over 90 percent for overseas programs. Exposure to our programs has encouraged some of our more educated female participants to consider business as a career. Choson Exchange’s long-term relationships with partners, especially

younger females, gave us champions for the Women in Business program that will pay dividends in the future.

Despite this program coming to a close, we will keep encouraging high female participation in our programs going forward, even if we can no longer find support in this funding climate to start and sustain more robust programs. This speaks to a trap that we unfortunately fell into. Long-term initiatives require long-term strategic planning, but that just hasn't been possible with the piecemeal funding available for training in the DPRK right now. We're incredibly grateful to the many sponsors we've had, but future programs need to find a model that can be self-sustaining — something difficult to do today as North Koreans are unwilling or unable to pay for this kind of education. Geopolitical uncertainty and the optics of working in North Korea also act as a constraining factor for long-term international donors.

For women, high-level representation in businesses continues to be rare — at the upper levels, male-dominated state-owned enterprises still command the economic heights. It will be important to find ways to institutionalize female business associations and advocacy so that strong women entrepreneurs can move beyond being seen as familial breadwinners towards being national business leaders. Not too far in the future, we can reasonably envisage the base of talent we have seen over the last four years scaling upward, copying some of Asia's female business leaders and building the VietJets, supermarkets, and nationwide café chains of the DPRK. Hopefully someone will be around to help them get there.

The European Union's engagement policy towards North Korea

HRWF (05.04.2017) – On 29 March, a conference dealing with literature and human rights in North Korea was held in Seoul. Ms Zsuzsa Anna Ferenczy, political adviser at the European Parliament, presented a paper entitled "The European Union's engagement policy towards North Korea". Below is an excerpt from her paper, the full text is available here: <http://hrwf.eu/human-rights/our-reports/>

EU Assistance to North Korea

In line with its critical engagement, the EU has been a provider of assistance, humanitarian and food aid since 1995. Most of the projects it currently funds - under the responsibility of the European Commission - relate to **food security, health, water and sanitation** and are of benefit to the most vulnerable people in the country. Initially a food aid assistance program, it has increasingly moved from regular food aid to structural food assistance and, in particular, the provision of inputs and technical assistance to enhance agricultural production. These projects are carried out by various implementing partners some of whom are resident in the country. For example **Handicap International** is one such organization since March 2001. **Action Against Hunger** was present on the ground from 1998 to 2000 providing assistance to malnourished children in Hamgyong province in government-operated facilities, but confronted with the impossible access to the most vulnerable groups, the NGO decided to withdraw.[1] **Welthungerhilfe**, or World Hunger Aid, German NGO has been present on the ground since 1997, spending more than 60 million on projects to improve food, sanitation and water supply. In 2015 its country director, who has been working in the country for 10 years, was expelled, but the NGO continues providing aid on the ground.[2] **Médecins Sans Frontières** closed its projects in North Korea in 2015, after 20 years of working

there. The EU's humanitarian assistance to North Korea started in 1995, when serious flooding affecting 5.7 million people made the country appeal for the first time for aid. Member States have their own development and aid projects in North Korea along complementary lines to those of the EU. The member states present are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Romania, Sweden (since 1973), UK.

[1] <http://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-peoples-republic-korea/action-against-hunger-stops-its-activities-north-korea>

[2] <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-northkorea-germany-ngo-idUKKBN0MT12120150402>

North Korean traders shun email correspondence with foreign partners

Radio Free Asia (03.04.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2o5Bstk> - Traders in North Korea have shunned email as a method of communicating with their foreign partners because the state exacts exorbitant fees for sending and receiving messages, and their correspondence is subjected to heavy scrutiny by official censors, according to sources who do business in the region.

A Chinese merchant who spoke on condition of anonymity told RFA's Korean Service that traders in North Korea choose to avoid communicating with foreign clients via email because of the challenges they face in the notoriously closed country, despite the impact it has on their business.

In order to establish an email link with a North Korean trader, foreign partners must first "register their email address with North Korea's security authorities to get approval," the source said.

Traders in North Korea must explain to authorities whether their foreign partners are "friendly" towards the country and why it is necessary to communicate using email, but even if given approval, the two sides face additional complications.

"Even if emails addresses of foreign companies are successfully registered, North Korean partners cannot directly receive the emails that are sent to them," the source told RFA.

"Pyongyang's communication center officer censors the contents and delivers only approved messages to the North Korean traders."

The traders must then pay a fee to the authorities as recipients of an email, he said.

"I heard from a North Korean trader that if we send a facsimile to Pyongyang, the recipient will have to pay 4 euros (U.S. \$4.26), but recipients have to pay more for emails," he added, without providing an amount.

When a North Korean trader replies to a foreign partner's email, they must first submit the content of the message to Pyongyang's communication center, where an officer will censor it before sending it on to its final destination.

Replies cost even more money to send than receiving emails, the source said.

"All of the expenses should be paid by North Korean trade companies, since the

correspondence is part of official business, but in North Korea, individual traders must cover the costs," he said.

"I can understand why North Korean traders hate communicating via email."

Foreign companies affected

A second Chinese merchant, who also asked to withhold his name, said that mainly Chinese foreign companies operating inside North Korea are also affected by challenges associated with using email and have sought to set up their own Internet service to circumvent requirements.

"Foreign companies operating in the Rason Special Economic Zone can establish their own internet service and communicate with their home countries by email," the source said, referring to the warm-water port in the northeastern part of North Hamgyong province bordering China and Russia.

"However, the monthly internet fee is 5,000 yuan (U.S. \$726), which is a ridiculously large amount of money, so there are not a lot of foreign businessmen who do this."

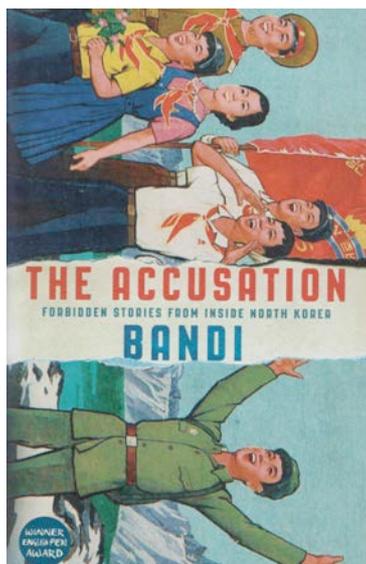
Authorities have long tried to block various forms of information from entering North Korea in an attempt to keep unwanted foreign influences from seeping into the isolated nation.

Leader Kim Jong Un is believed to be particularly sensitive about news of the outside world getting into the North because of its ability to undermine his regime's propaganda efforts and threaten his support base—made up largely of the country's elite.

North Koreans regularly use cell phones smuggled into the country from China to access telecom signals in border areas to make international calls and surf the Internet via their handsets.

Local phones and internet access are restricted to the North's own networks, though, as Pyongyang seeks to prevent the spread of information from abroad.

Bandi's book "The Accusation" smuggled from North Korea now published in 18 languages



This book can be purchased on Amazon here:

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

HRWF (03.04.2107) - On 29 March, a conference was held in Seoul to announce that the literary work *"The Accusation"* had just been published in English, the 18th language in which many English-speaking countries are now having access to this book written by a North Korean author under the pen name of Bandi (*). The organizer of the event entitled *"International Literature and Human Rights Conference"* was **Mr Do, Hee Youn** who had been instrumental in the smuggling of the book from North Korea. A dozen publishers from the UK, USA, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Poland... had been invited to the event.

The conference was well attended by human rights NGOs, academics and young students from the different universities in Seoul. Defector writers currently writing and publishing in Seoul were also present indicating increasing interest in new and creative ways of addressing the North Korean challenge. Such a new way is indeed to bring human rights and literature together.

The keynote speaker, **Willy Fautré**, from *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (Brussels), addressed the issue with a paper entitled *"Human Rights in North Korea: Pyongyang in the Dock"*:

"Since 1948, North Korea has been ruled by a single family, the Kim dynasty, which has imposed a single ideology, the Juche, to a population that is now estimated at around 25 million people. North Korea is a one-party system which has in its grip all the powers: legislative and executive as well as the judiciary. North Korea has never tolerated the emergence of a civil society outside the one organized by the Workers' Party. North Korea is the last country in the world which still has a Stalinist-type Gulag. North Korea is ranked by all the human rights organizations as the most repressive state in the world, and rightly so. In North Korea, there is no freedom of conscience, no freedom of thought, no religious freedom, no freedom of expression, no freedom of association and assembly, no political freedom." (Full speech available on request)



International Literature & Human Rights Conference in Seoul (29 March 2017)

Some quotes from the speakers

Mr. Do, Hee Youn director of the Seoul-based NGO "Toward a Happy Unification", was quoted as saying:

"Bandi's book is the scream of the people. Everybody should read the book to let the world know about what is happening in North Korea. This is my wish but for the message to be delivered worldwide, we have to unite our efforts and to act together."

Mr. Thae Yong-ho, former Deputy Ambassador of North Korea to the UK, who defected last year from London made a moving statement:

"The majority of North Koreans continue living as slaves today. The day we defected with my family I said to my children 'this is when your shackles are broken, but we have to continue to fight for our family left behind in North Korea and for all those enslaved'. We have to uphold Bandi's critical thinking, and free the slaves of North Korea. Where should we begin? We have to tell more people around the world of the realities, to make them aware of the truth of the regime. Bandi is a writer in a country where there are no readers of such literature."

Former Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil (1998-2000):

"We talk about the unification of the two Koreas, but it is a very abstract thought. Totalitarianism exists in North Korea, and the concept appears in Bandi's novels. He describes North Korea as a totalitarian state full of deception and fiction but we don't have full knowledge of what this represents. We have to deal with this kind of fantasy before we are able to emancipate slaves. The reality of North Korea is not known in the outside world. This is why we gathered today'.

Chang Hae sung, a writer in NK before his defection to South Korea:

"Literature does not exist in its pure form in North Korea, it is all state regulated. Broadcasts follow state directives. Content is allowed for three aims: to praise the greatness of the leaders, to promote their virtue and to uphold the greatness of the system. So it is truly shocking that Bandi could write such a book."

Pierre Rigoulot, from the Paris-based NGO *Comité d'aide à la population nord-coréenne* and author of the famous book *"The Aquariums of Pyongyang"* with Kang Cheol Hwan, titled his presentation *"The Accusation: A Target for Friends of North Korea, but an Opportunity for Human Rights"* (Full text in English and in French available on request). He said among other things:

"The publication in March 2016 of *La Dénonciation* by the Publishing House Piquier in France has not remained unnoticed in French-speaking countries, far from it. In France, the novel has been quoted over 40 times. However, it has not made the headlines. No debate on television. Neither the translator nor the author of the afterword in the French version of the book was invited to literary programs on television. It was not different in South Korea."

Zsuzsa Anna Ferenczy: a political adviser at the European Parliament in Brussels, spoke about *The European Union's Engagement Policy Towards North Korea* and was quoted as saying:

In spite of European and international efforts to engage with North Korea, the dictatorship has continued its provocations and **increased isolation away from the international community. Dialogue has seized.** However, academics have suggested that it is vital to facilitate as many people-to-people contacts as possible beyond government officials, through for example education and research programs. As our event on North Korea, last week at the European Parliament revealed, facilitating information into the country is essential. People are increasingly interested in consuming foreign media content, through which they discover a new reality and slowly realize that they have been living in a lie, imposed by the regime through indoctrination and propaganda.



Ms Zsuzsa Anna Ferenczy, European Parliament political adviser

Other speakers were:

Jang Haeseong: He spoke about *The Actual Condition of North Korean Literature and North Korean Defectors' Humanities from North Korean Authors' Point of View.*

Nam Jung Wook: His paper was entitled *"Bandi is not the Solzhenitsyn of North Korea"*.

and some defectors.

CNN

On 30 March, CNN reported on the publishing of the book with a report filming the publishers and the speakers of the conference at the DMZ near the Freedom Bridge while they were reading aloud the best pages of the book.

(See <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/02/asia/north-korea-the-accusation>)



Willy Fautré (Human Rights Without Frontiers) reading a recent poem of Bandi at Freedom Bridge on the border between South Korea and North Korea under the eye of CNN's camera (29 March 2017)

(*) 'The Accusation' is a collection of short stories secretly written by Bandi from 1989 to 1995 and smuggled from North Korea a few years ago. Bandi still lives in North Korea today. The collection overwhelms with powerful emotions depicting the inner life, dominated by fear and anxiety, but also by love and affection of everyday North Koreans trying to make a sense of their world. Smuggled out in 2013 by South Korean human rights activist Do Hee-youn, the manuscript was published in Seoul in 2014 but remained unnoticed. Today the book can be read in French, English, Finnish, Norwegian, Spanish, Italian, soon Hungarian, Japanese and others to follow. 'Bandi is love, Bandi is an act of great love', Mr. Do said at the conference in Seoul gathering publishers of 'The Accusation' and human rights activists, bringing together literature and human rights, two of the most essential things the world needs to encourage and embrace, protect and guarantee.

Stranger than fiction: How forbidden book was smuggled out of N. Korea

By Paula Hancocks

CNN (02.04.2017) - <http://cnn.it/2nNpaoI> - They say fact is stranger than fiction. One book smuggled out of North Korea encapsulates both.

Written by a dissident writer still living inside the country, "The Accusation; Forbidden Stories from Inside North Korea" is a collection of short stories about the lives of regular people, who live without freedom and under constant scrutiny.

Officially fiction, the book is considered to be a reflection of life under North Korean rule. The author is known simply as "Bandi", Korean for firefly, a pen name he apparently chose himself.

The South Korean activist who helped smuggle it out, Do Hee-youn, tells CNN: "It doesn't deal with political prison camps, or public executions, human rights issues. It shows normal life of North Korea citizens and it is very frightening. This book shows that they live like slaves."

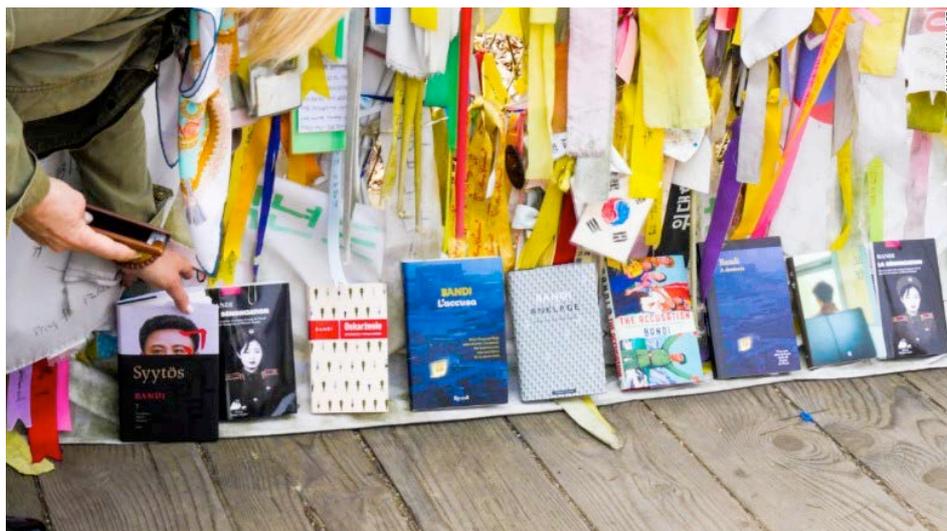
The book was first published in Korean in May 2014, and translated into French in 2015. It was published last month in the United States and United Kingdom and is now available in 19 languages.

Book discovered by chance

Do said he first heard about the manuscript completely by chance.

"We heard about a North Korean defector," Do told CNN, "A woman who had been arrested by Chinese border troops... We have been helping such cases in the past so we were helping her and we learned about Bandi and the manuscript."

The woman told them Bandi was a relative and had asked her to smuggle the manuscript out of North Korea when she confided she was planning to defect.



Copies of "The Accusation" translated into different languages are placed next to each other Thursday on the Bridge of Freedom at Imjingak in Paju.

But she was too scared she would get caught with it, Do said. A wise decision as it happens -- she was caught on the Chinese side of the border. If she was carrying the manuscript she would likely have been sent back to imprisonment, or even execution in North Korea.

"It is very difficult to bring a document out of North Korea," Do said. "We have tried in the past and failed but there were a few cases we succeeded."

Smuggled out in propaganda

Do sent a trusted contact into North Korea to make discreet contact with the author.

The hand-written manuscript was then smuggled out in between propaganda books on former leaders Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il.

"We found a way of getting the script out through Chinese tourists. We thought that disguising the book among these propaganda materials would make it easier to bring it outside so we decided to hide the copy."

The luggage was x-rayed but not hand-searched at the border, Do says, a fact that surely saved the freedom, if not life, of the courier. Once the manuscript arrived in South Korea in 2013, Do worked to find a publisher.



Publishers and literary agents read a passage from "The Accusation," a collection of short stories by a North Korean writer who is still living in North Korea.

The text was written on 750 pages of coarse squared manuscript paper, the type only writers in North Korea could possess, Do says. Bandi was part of Korean Writers' Alliance, a state-run organization that wrote literature for the regime.

Do says he is now retired and is safe but gives little else away, fearful the regime will discover his identity. Pyongyang does not look kindly on defectors who criticize the state, calling them "human scum." This is the first known writer of a book, critical of North Korea, who is still inside the country. Do says his safety is paramount.

"Bandi considered this more valuable than his own life, the love for the citizens of North Korea. He sees himself, his family and all North Koreans living like slaves, with no future under the current regime," he said.

Do says poems were also smuggled out at the same time that deal with the Kim Jong Il era and will be published later.

He has little doubt Bandi is still writing and at some point in the future will attempt to share with the world his views of life under the current leader Kim Jong Un.

North Korean police restrict citizen movements across country

Radio Free Asia (30.03.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2mVOE4m> - North Korean police have started to strictly control the movement of residents and throw those without proper documents into detention facilities as they try to fill a gap in monitoring residents'

activities neglected by state security agents, sources inside the authoritarian country said.

The country's Stasi-like secret police have been trying to control North Koreans following the regime's purge of Kim Won Hong, the agency's minister, who was expelled from office in mid-January on charges of corruption, abuse of power, and human rights abuses, they said.

Five senior officials from Kim Won Hong's office were reportedly executed by anti-aircraft gunfire after they were charged with submitting false government reports that are said to have enraged dictator Kim Jong Un.

Police have issued an order prohibiting the movement of residents throughout the country as of April 1, a source from North Pyongan province told RFA's Korean Service.

"The order says that people who have gone abroad for business trips or important matters must return to their residences by the end of March," he said.

The ban includes the prohibition of movement on April 5 when North Koreans hold memorial services to honor their dead parents and ancestors with Korean food, he said.

The detention facilities and waiting rooms in police stations are filled with people who were picked up for not carrying their proper documents with them, the source said.

The police have said that the measure will be enacted in April to prevent unexpected incidents on April 15, the birthday of North Korea's founder Kim Il Song (1912-94), who is the grandfather of the country's current leader Kim Jong Un.

But he suggested that another motive was behind the recent move.

"I think the police have cracked down on the control of residents because they want to have the privileges that the State Security Agency used to have," he said.

The Changjin county incident

A source from South Hamgyong province told RFA that the beating death of the head of a family by police in Changjin county earlier this month for not having the proper certificate required for travel on business has outraged residents across the country, the source said.

In all, police arrested six Changjin residents for lacking travel certificates, some of whom were beaten to death, he said. They sent the wife of the man beaten to death to a labor camp, and their young child to an orphanage.

"News of the incident that occurred with Changjin county's police has been spreading throughout the country and has sparked the anger of residents," he said.

Central authorities have not taken any action against the officers, even though the families of those arrested have revealed the tyranny of the Changjin county police, he said.

"I think these incidents are occurring because central authorities handed over part of the power of the State Security Agency to the police ... [who are] taking control of judicial power, while the State Security Agency is struggling with the Kim Won Hong incident," the source said.

Citizens are becoming increasingly resentful of the police because of the harsh treatment they are meting out, he said.

With growing resentment, "the police will also eventually be in a similar situation as that of the State Security Agency, which is generally feared and hated by North Koreans," he said.

Pyongyang, Moscow seeking to expand N. Korean labor accord

By Connie Kim

Airang News (29.03.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2mQbBpC> - North Korea and Russia are cozying up lately, as China takes a firmer stance toward the regime with its recent suspension of North Korean coal imports.

Earlier this month, North Korea and Russia signed a labor immigration accord, under which they agreed to send more North Korea workers to Russia.

At a meeting the following week, Russian officials reportedly expressed interest in long-term plans to expand the program.

The bilateral cooperation comes at a time when a full range of global sanctions has been imposed on the regime, even amid reports that North Korea is preparing for another nuclear test.

"We consider important cooperation with North Korea in all civil spheres and also in those areas that are not connected with weapons of mass destruction. That's why sending people to work in Russia, it's not a violation of any sanctions or any international laws because it is made within the foreign works of our bilateral agreements."

Moscow has been vocal against limits in the latest UN resolution on North Koreans working overseas, with Russian officials saying sanctions must not affect North Korean peoples' lives.

In fact, Moscow has the second most North Korean workers after Beijing, with as many as 50-thousand North Koreans believed to be working in Russia.

The U.S. State Department has raised concerns about North Korea's export of labor, saying it generates a significant amount of revenue for the North Korean government and facilitates the development of the North's illicit nuclear and missile programs.

Some experts say that Moscow's real intent lies in defying Washington's military buildup in the Asia Pacific region, while others say Moscow is interested in developing the eastern part of Russia using cheap labor.

But one thing the experts agree on is that North Korea is hoping to build its ties with Russia.

In a report last month, the North's state-run Korean Central News Agency listed Russia first among the countries friendly to the regime.

Women and children are the main victims of North Korea's humanitarian emergency

About 27.9 per cent of North Korean children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition, 4 per cent from acute malnutrition. About 23.3 per cent of women in reproductive age are also malnourished. About 31.2 per cent of pregnant women are anemic and 5 per cent of children are born underweight. Malnutrition is aggravated by poor health care and the lack of running water, sanitation and hygiene services. "The undernourishment of the people of North Korea is a very serious situation," expert tells AsiaNews. "A whole generation has stunted growth."

Asia News (24.03.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2n890mf> - Malnutrition among children and women of reproductive age in North Korea is a nationwide problem, this according to a **UN report on North Korea's humanitarian emergency**.

"Most children under 24 months, and 50 per cent of pregnant and breastfeeding women have insufficient dietary diversity leading to micronutrient deficiencies and unacceptably high prevalence of chronic and acute malnutrition.

"Appropriate nutritional and health care for mother and child from conception to a child's second birthday significantly reduces the risk of mortality and produces lifetime benefits for infants, such as healthy growth and brain development, and better educational performance. However, the impact of sub-optimum nutrition during this 'window of opportunity' in life is often irreversible.

"Dietary quality for many people in DPRK is poor, with limited consumption of foods that are rich in protein, fat and micronutrients, resulting in problems related to undernourishment including physical and cognitive development concerns.

"Nutrition Survey, conducted in 2012, the prevalence of chronic malnutrition (stunting) among under-five children was 27.9 per cent and the prevalence of acute malnutrition (wasting) was four per cent. In addition, 23.3 per cent of women of reproductive age were also malnourished.

"A 2014 Ministry of Public Health Report noted that 31.2 per cent of pregnant women are anaemic and the prevalence of low birth weight was five per cent. In addition to a lack of access to diverse and sufficient food, undernutrition is exacerbated by inadequate health and water, sanitation and hygiene services."

According to the Socio-Economic, Demographic and Health Survey (2014), "the Infant Mortality Rate in DPRK is estimated at 13.7/1,000, Under-Five Mortality Rate at 16.2/1,000, and Maternal Mortality Rate at 66/100,000 live births; well above the global averages. [. . .] There are also disparities in child mortality rates between urban and rural areas as well as amongst provinces, with under-five mortality rates 1.2 times higher in rural areas compared to urban areas.

"Those most at risk from the consequences of a lack of access to health care include under-five children, pregnant women, people living with disabilities and the elderly. Diarrhoea and pneumonia are the two main causes of death amongst under-five children in DPRK. Diarrhoea is mainly caused by lack of safe drinking water, poor sanitation and hygiene practices, and is also a contributing factor for childhood pneumonia and malnutrition. The most common cause of maternal mortality in DPRK is post-partum hemorrhage, with women who give birth at home most at risk. Approximately nine per cent of all women still deliver at home, with 67 per cent of maternal deaths occurring amongst women who deliver at home.

AsiaNews spoke to an expert with a long experience with North Korea to discuss its health emergency, especially of malnutrition.

"The undernourishment of the people of North Korea is a very serious situation," he said. "A whole generation has stunted growth. But in the last few years there has been some improvement in the lives of the people. The North Korean Government has allowed the farmers to plant plots near their house and the farmers are able to sell some of their produce on the open market.

"Last year was one of the best harvests that they have had, China though continues to supply the North Korean government with food supplies. More and more sanctions could bring down the economy and cause a famine."

How information is smuggled into North Korea

HRWF (27.03.2017) - 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. In September 2015, the Seoul-based NGO North Korea Strategy Centre published an article about one of the techniques that they use to introduce information in the country:

Smoke signals

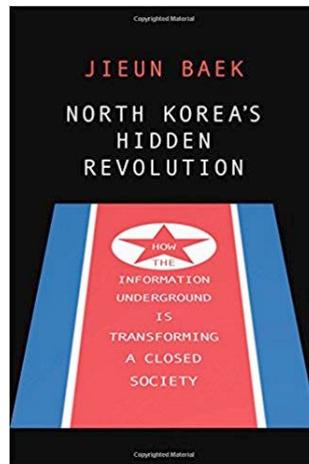
On the border between North Korea and China, along the Tumen and Yalu rivers, thousands of North Korean soldiers keep watch. In one of the most isolated and repressive countries in the world, the military's job is two-fold: stop people getting out; stop information getting in. When you look from the Chinese side, it is difficult to see the guards, but they are there, hiding in strategic holes dug in the ground, sitting quietly and observing.

Every so often the soldiers spot something suspicious floating in the river. One of the ways people smuggle foreign content into North Korea is to put it on a flash drive and hide it in cigarette boxes. You carefully wrap the boxes with plastic bags and tie them to a spare tyre. Parts of the river are only a few metres wide and there you can throw the tyre into the water. The soldiers will see you; later, when nobody is looking at them, they will pick up the tyre, take the cigarettes and find the flash drive inside.

These soldiers are typically young and curious. Being on watch can become lonely and solitary. They are tempted by this China contraband, including flash drives and DVDs with South Korean programmes and foreign movies, all of which are strictly forbidden. The flash drives carry content that is fresh and different from everything that North Koreans know.

The soldiers might watch the content on their computers or portable DVD players, or sell it on the black market. Perhaps they will report it, but then their supervisors will end up watching the content anyway. It will be quickly passed on among family and close friends, and it is through this curiosity that North Koreans are slowly beginning to understand the outside world, personal freedoms and opportunities for choice. This is why the national leader, Kim Jong-un, has recently tried to cut down on banned music through house-to-house searches.

What threatens this authoritarian regime most is external information getting into the ears, minds, and eventually, mouths of its controlled citizens.



The book can be purchase on Amazon here:

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

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."

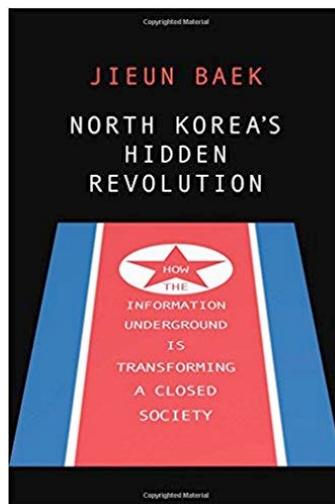
"Ultimately, this is a textbook on the human rights condition in North Korea," Mr. Do said. "What it does is to show that in North Korea, ordinary life itself is slavery."

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>.

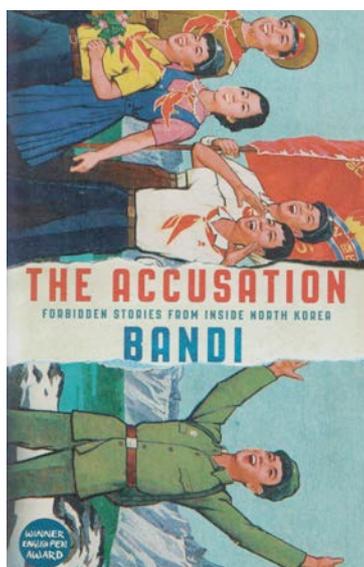
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The author will present her book on **22 March 15:00 - 17:00 | European Parliament, ASP Room A3F383**

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.

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 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 news 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.

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