

# International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief

March 27, 2015

H.E. Mr. Ja Song Nam  
Permanent Representative of the Democratic  
People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations  
820 Second Avenue, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We write today collectively to share our concerns about the religious freedom situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). We come from a variety of countries with different parliamentary systems in various regions, but we all are deeply troubled by ongoing reports of violations of this fundamental freedom. We respectfully ask your government to ensure that all individuals in your country can fully enjoy freedom of religion or belief without fear of harassment or other forms of intimidation that restricts their basic rights.

With the release of the United Nations Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry report in 2014, the DPRK's troubling record on human rights was brought to light for the entire world to see. The report reflects the concerns of an entire body of nations and was a key item of discussion at the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. As parliamentarians representing UN member states, we are especially alarmed by the report's characterization of the "almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, information and association." Genuine and meaningful freedom of religion or belief bestows upon every individual human being the right to think as they please and to believe or not believe as their conscience guides them.

The report notes several specific violations of freedom of religion or belief that are particularly disturbing, such as: Christianity is considered a political crime and Christians practicing outside state-run churches are persecuted; intrusive surveillance prevents or restricts the ability to adopt beliefs that are not controlled and propagated by the state; and the appalling treatment of those found to have had contact with Christian churches outside the DPRK, such as imprisonment, forcible disappearances and even executions. These acts not only violate international standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the DPRK is party, but they are morally indefensible.

In December 2014, an overwhelming majority of UN member states approved a resolution condemning the DPRK's conduct and calling for the abuses to end, forwarding the matter to the UN Security Council for further consideration. We encourage you and your government to see this moment of increased and intensified global scrutiny as an opportunity to reform your country's practices, policies and laws that limit religious freedom.

Pursuant to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry's report, we strongly encourage you to lift all restrictions inconsistent with international standards on freedom of religion or belief.

Mr. Ambassador, your country has the unique chance to heed the call of reform. We, as parliamentarians from different jurisdictions and faiths, respectfully urge you to seize this moment and chart a new path that respects freedom of religion or belief.


Yours sincerely,



Baroness Elizabeth Berridge  
United Kingdom



Abid Raja, MP  
Norway



Aykan Erdemir, MP  
Turkey



David Anderson, MP  
Canada



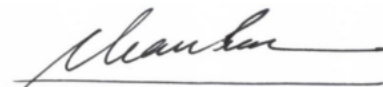
Leonardo Quintao, Deputy  
Brazil



Senator David Fawcett  
Australia



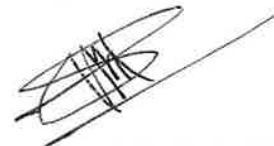
Roberto de Lucena, Deputy  
Brazil



Senator Thanh Hai Ngo  
Canada



Heribert Hirte, MP  
Germany



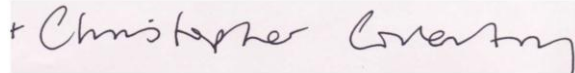
Shwe Maung, MP  
Myanmar



Asiya Nasir, MP  
Pakistan



Cheryllyn Dudley, MP  
South Africa



Rt. Revd. Christopher Cocksworth (House of Lords)  
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Gerardo Amarilla De Nicola  
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