

**Allow separated families to unite, and immediately provide such persons with facilities for unmonitored communications!****- North Korean Human Rights NGOs, including Hanbyun and KARTS Oppose Further South/North Summit Talks that Ignore the North Korean Human Rights Issue (4th)-**

Time : 2018. Nov. 27. (Tue.). 11:00 a.m.

Place : At the water fountain in front of the Blue House

1. As of December 31, 2017, there were a total of 131,334 registered members of “separated families,” with 59,037 surviving and 72,307 deceased. With each year, the number of the deceased has rapidly increased and in 2016, the deceased outnumbered the survived for the first time. Furthermore, the surviving separated family population is growing more elderly. For the first time in 2013, the proportion of those aged 80 or above exceeded 50 percent of the surviving separated family members. As of late 2017, that percentage has increased to as high as 61.7 percent. Those aged 70 or older represent as high as 85 percent.
2. The issues surrounding separated families are pressing human rights issues that call for a resolution regardless of the ups and downs in inter-Korean relations. Separated families live without the knowledge of whether their family members are still alive, without opportunities to exchange letters or the freedom to meet their family members. Their right to freedom of movement and right to family unification, recognized by international human rights laws, are being severely infringed upon.
3. We, the undersigned organizations working for the improvement of the Human Rights situation in North Korea, repeatedly requested President Moon to ask North Korea to allow separated families to unite, including by allowing citizens to travel where they choose; and immediately provide such persons with facilities for unmonitored communications by way of mail, telephone, email and any other means of communication during the summit talks which already took place three times this year. However, President Moon steadfastly ignored such requests, even though it is obvious that there will be no peace without addressing the Human Rights issue. It is an apparent violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which observed its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.
4. From 2000 to August 2018, there were brief temporary 21 family reunion meetings involving only few families. Such family reunions have always been emotionally charged events. Even with the suspension of the programme, the Red Cross continues to receive applications. Out of

those applicants, only 100 would be selected at a time via a lottery to have the chance to meet briefly (in some cases only via video) under the glaring media spotlight, accompanied always by minders, never to meet again afterwards. Each passing year means fewer and fewer family members are able to be temporarily reunited, if ever.

5. Even though 9/19 inter-Korea Summit Talks mentioned ‘Separated Families’, it is only a humanitarian issue on brief temporary reunions which is dependent upon North Korea’s dispensation. Under these circumstances, we hereby clearly and unequivocally express our opposition to the upcoming South/North Summit Talks being planned again with blind eyes regarding the human rights violations of the North Korean regime including the Separated Families’ right to return to their own country and right to family. It is our hope that the North Korean human rights issue will come to garner as much attention as the recent Summit Talks have and concrete improvements can be implemented as a result.

2018. 11. 26.

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