

The United Nations Security Council Must Hold a Debate on North Korea's Human Rights Situations

1. On Human Rights Day (10 December), the UN Security Council hosted a human rights debate every year from 2014 through 2017. The debate is symbolic because it shows that the international community takes North Korea's human rights situations seriously. It has been a major channel to present a unified voice of the international community in support of human rights in North Korea, the world's worst human rights violator.
2. The voices demanding urgent action against North Korea's human rights abuses have gradually disappeared since the nuclear negotiations between the United States and North Korea, and the human rights debate was not held last year. This year, the United States is withholding its support from hosting a human rights debate on North Korea during its turn leading the UN Security Council. The UN Security Council meeting on human rights in North Korea can only be held with the approval of at least nine of the fifteen members of the UN Security Council. The U.S. position is the most important to secure sufficient votes in the 15-member council.
3. We, Hanbyun, are deeply concerned about the abrupt cancellation of the UN Security Council meeting on human rights in North Korea. We regret that universal human rights have been withheld by political issues even at the United Nations. Given that the UN is responsible for maintaining international peace and security and promoting human rights and fundamental freedom, the international community would be disappointed if the UN Security Council meeting on human rights in North Korea does not take place.
4. We regret to submit this statement a day before the 71st Human Rights Day. North Korea has recently increased its military threats and conveyed negative messages in every dialogue. Given the circumstances, even if the U.S. and North Korea hold a summit again later this year, they are not likely to discuss the improvement in North Korean human rights. The next U.S.-North Korea summit would be historic; however, we would be skeptical if it merely serves political purposes. In order to improve bilateral relations between the U.S. and North Korea, addressing human rights issues in North Korea is indispensable.
5. We urge the United States to work more actively with the international community on the UN Security Council meeting to improve human rights situations in North Korea. We condemn North Korea for violating the denuclearization agreement and human rights and urge the UN Security Council to make policy decisions that prioritize human rights issues.

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Lawyers for Human Rights and Unification of Korea(Hanbyun)
Standing Rep. Kim Tae Hoon, Co Rep. Seok Dong Hyun, Lee Hun, Chae Myung Sung