

## HUMAN FREEDOM INITIATIVE

### *Freedom in North Korea*



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Extending freedom, which is essential to lasting peace and prosperity at home and around the world, by developing leaders in emerging democracies, standing with those who live under tyranny, and fostering U.S. leadership through policy and action.

## BACKGROUND

By almost any measure, North Korea is the worst place on earth. More than 24 million people live in the northeast Asian country under the rule of Communist dictator Kim Jong-Un. They are subjected to widespread human rights violations, including executions, torture, and detention, and denied fundamental rights like free expression, association, assembly, and religion.

In 2014, the Bush Institute's Human Freedom Initiative set its sights on how to improve the human condition in North Korea. The timing of this effort was meant to mark the tenth anniversary of the North Korean Human Rights Act, which President Bush signed into law in October 2004.

In contributing to a mandate for change, the Bush Institute undertook the first non-partisan effort in the United States involving the government, industry, NGO, academic, and entertainment sectors, as well as the refugee community, in the pursuit of three broad goals:

- Expose the suffering of the North Korean people.
- Put the gulags and other human rights issues on the radar screen of opinion leaders and the public.
- Develop policies with the public and private sectors to help the North Korean people.

## PROGRAM IMPACT

The Bush Institute's work on North Korea has helped break new ground in our understanding and inspired action to address one of the worst human tragedies of our time.

Since 2014, the Bush Institute has convened unprecedented meetings with stakeholders in government and the private sector to help develop policy recommendations regarding North Korea. These meetings were informed by first-of-their-kind, Bush-Institute led studies of North Korean refugee resettlement and U.S. public opinion on North Korea. An ongoing communications campaign has reached more than nine million people on social media. Events and conferences organized in Dallas, New York, and Washington, D.C., have helped to focus public attention on the issue.

**"The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world."**

**- President George W. Bush**

Two Bush Institute policy papers recommend concrete steps the United States, the international community, and others can take to improve conditions in North Korea. *Light Through the Darkness* (2015), a call-to-action report, defines a new approach for keeping the issue in the spotlight of international attention and improving the human condition of the North Korean people.

*Toward a New Policy and Strategy for North Korea* (2016) examines the links between North Korea's human rights record and the threat it poses to international security and recommends a series of actions for the new U.S. administration and Congress to address those challenges. Today, the Bush Institute is working to gain traction and inspire action. We provide expert testimony on Capitol Hill, briefings with legislative staff, engagement with Korean-American leaders nationwide to support the North Korean refugee community, and convening conferences and other events with key actors in government and the private sector with a goal to help improve lives in North Korea.

The Bush Institute is also engaged in assisting the small, but growing community of North Korean refugees living in the United States. In the last decade, several hundred North Koreans have risked everything to escape and reestablish themselves in America. After conducting two studies of the community and its needs, the Bush Institute has worked with Korean-Americans and others to establish a scholarship fund for North Koreans who have resettled in the United States. The scholarship fund will enable these escapees to pursue higher education, helping them to succeed and to build their capacity to help change North Korea.

For more information on Freedom in North Korea, please contact Lindsay Lloyd.

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