

## **Submission to the Pre-Sessional Working Group of the Committee to End Discrimination Against Women**

### **On human rights violations of North Korean women in detention facilities of North Korea (Articles 1, 2, 3, and 6)**

The North Korean regime has established as many as 182 prison camps across the North in the name of preserving "North Korean version of communist system". According to 70 interviews with former prisoners who were in prison in periods between 2002 and 2015, women experienced beatings, torture, murder of infants and forced abortion, physical abuse, sexual abuse and rape, witnessed public or were notified of closed-door execution, as well as verbal abuse and intimidation and were forced into a fellow inmate monitoring system.

The most notoriously well-known prison facilities in North Korea include the political prison camp (정치범 수용소), the ordinary crimes re-education camps (노동교화소), the central district short-term Labor-training facilities (중앙단련대), the municipal level short-term labor-training facility (시 단련대), the police detention facility (보안서 구류장), the security agency detention facility (보위부구류장), the collection facilities (집결소), and the indoctrination facility (교양소).

The largest proportion of women in prison camps are those who have been transported, sold or trafficked to China and then forcibly repatriated by Chinese authorities to North Korea. They all experience sexual violence and humiliating treatment in the process, including having to stand naked in front of other inmates and guards, or vaginal searches for money.

We present in this submission three witness testimonies that we find representative of abuses taking places against women in detention facilities in North Korea.

Case 1 : Lee Hyun-Ok (이현옥), 42, North Korean escapee from Hoeryong, North Hamgyong Province, who left in 2012.

Hyun-ok was deceived and trafficked into a Chinese farmer's house in 2008. While pregnant, in the summer of 2010 Chinese authorities detained her, and she was forcibly repatriated to North Korea. At the police detention facility of Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province, she was beaten severely with her two arms and legs tied to a pillar during the investigation process for having been trafficked, lived with a Chinese man and being pregnant. The North Korean security officers threw water on her when she passed out resulting in the miscarriage of a two-month old fetus. She did not receive any medical treatment despite of constant bleeding caused by the miscarriage. Instead, right after the investigation was over, one month after her miscarriage, the authorities sent her to a short term labor-training facility, where she was forced to work for one year.

Case 2: Yoo Mi-Ok (유미옥), 29, North Korean escapee from Hoeryong, North Hamgyong Province, who left in 2013.

Brokers deceived Mi-ok, took her to China and sold her to a Chinese farmer in March 2009. In February 2010, Chinese authorities detained her and sent her back to North Korea, where she was sent to Junggori ordinary crimes prison camp for two year from September 2010 to October 2012, for being trafficked and living in China. In prison, she was forced to labor in a wig factory for 15 hours every day. Among her inmates, 80% of the 1,000 prisoners held there were North Korean women repatriated to the North by the Chinese. Mi-ok said prison guards fed prisoners with rotten corns, and that she saw or heard of more than one prisoner dying every day because of the small rations of improper food rations and the extreme conditions of having to do more than 15 hours of hard labor like farming, and logging.

Case 3: Jo Gum-Ok (조금옥), 46, North Korean escapee from Musan, North Hamgyong Province, who escaped in 2005.

Gum-ok was also trafficked into China and sold to a Chinese farmer in August 2001. She was caught and forcibly repatriated in 2004. In detention, the male security officer searched her naked body for money, touching her breast and dipping his hand into her uterus. She was raped continuously even after the investigation process. She couldn't resist at all in fear of severe punishment she would receive if she was found guilty of being a spy or having a religion while in China which are considered punishable by the most severe punishment in North Korea. She was sent to a short term labor training facility for months. She escaped to China again in 2005 and arrived to Seoul in 2007.

Questions for the North Korean government:

- How many women are forcibly repatriated from China to North Korea every year since 2002? What sentences did this women get?
- How many of these women were victims of trafficking or forced prostitution during the same period?
- How many women were subjected to forced abortions every year since 2002?
- How many women died while being in detention facilities every year since 2002 after being forcibly repatriated from China? What was the cause of death?
- How many cases of sexual violence in detention facilities have been file every year since 2002?

Recommendations to the North Korean government

- Respect and ensure the women's rights and end discrimination against women of any kind.
- End criminalization of victims from trafficking and forced prostitution.
- Ban forced abortions.
- Enforce criminal prosecution of crimes of sexual violence against women.
- Hand over the dead bodies of the victims to their relatives and allow the victims' family members to collect the dead bodies.