



U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing

U.S. Policy and Freedom of Religion or Belief in North Korea

Opening Remarks as prepared for delivery

Frederick A. Davie, USCIRF Commissioner

Thank you, Vice Chair Cooper and good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us today.

As Vice Chair Cooper mentioned, North Korea violently represses all expressions of faith. The U.S. government and the international community must work together to end these kinds of atrocities. However, nuclear and security issues tend to dominate bilateral and multilateral negotiations with North Korea, and they often overshadow human rights and religious freedom concerns.

The reality is that security and human rights concerns are not mutually exclusive. It is absolutely critical that the U.S. government closely integrate security and human rights as complementary objectives in its policy toward North Korea. To this end, USCIRF recommended that the U.S. government and Congress reauthorize, as

soon as possible, the North Korean Human Rights Act and fill the Special Envoy for North Korean Human Rights Issues, as mandated by the law. Unfortunately, the position has remained vacant since 2017. This important position would ensure that U.S. government policy toward North Korea closely integrates human rights and security.

I would now like to briefly introduce our witnesses. I will keep my introductions short, to leave as much time as possible for questions and answers. More detailed biographies of the witnesses will be shown in the chat box and can also be found on USCIRF's website.

First, we will hear pre-recorded remarks from Rep. Ami Bera, who is Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, Central Asia, and Nonproliferation and introduced the North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act of 2022, along with Rep. Young Kim. Next, we will hear from our first witness Robert King, former U.S. Special Envoy for North Korean Human Rights Issues. Ambassador King is currently a Senior Adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Next is Shirley Lee, Consultant at Korea Future. Then Inje Hwang [In-Jay Hwang], an investigator at Korea Future. And after Inje we will hear from Jinmyung Choi [Jin Me-on Choi], a North Korean defector who will

share his personal account as a witness of religious freedom violations in North Korea.

I would now like to give the floor to Chairman Bera for his recorded remarks.