

Confrontation at the United Nations: North Korea Challenges Obama's "Hostile Policy" Against the DPRK

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In-depth Report: [NORTH KOREA](#)

On Monday February 16, North Korea's Ambassador to the UN, Jang Il Hun, held a press conference with several journalists who cover the UN. It was a holiday in NY and the UN headquarters buildings were closed for the American President's Day. The press conference was held at the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Mission to the United Nations in New York. At the press conference the Ambassador explained that not only was February 16 a holiday in the US in honor of American presidents but it was also the date that his country celebrates the birthday of their great leader Kim Jung Il.

The Ambassador said that the press conference had been called to make public the positions of the DPRK on the so called "Conference on North Korean Human Rights: the Road Ahead", to be held the next day in Washington by the governments of the US and South Korea. He explained that this conference was part of the US government's hostile policy toward the DPRK, a political policy that the US had pursued for almost 70 years since the division of Korea. The US, he pointed out, was responsible for the division of Korea.

The Washington conference was intended to mark the first year anniversary of the United Nations Human Rights Council's COI Report, a report Ambassador Jang said was fabricated, based on false testimony of witnesses, many of whom remained anonymous.

Ambassador Jang said that the DPRK had complained about the conference to the US government and asked that the US cancel it. This request had been made through the contact in the US State Department, which is the channel for communication between the DPRK and the US. The US and DPRK do not have formal diplomatic relations. In the event that the US refused to cancel the conference, Ambassador Jang explained that DPRK asked to "take part in the conference as the party concerned."

The response from the US government, reported Ambassador Jang, was that the conference was being held by private organizations and as it was not a government event, the US government could not cancel it. Nor was it possible for the US government to invite the DPRK to attend. Ambassador Jang reminded journalists that the US government had held a conference during the Opening of the UN General Assembly which took place this past September. When the DPRK requested to attend, the US government refused the request. (1) Hence to claim that the US government was not responsible for denying the DPRK the right to attend a conference about DPRK Human Rights that the US government held was clearly a false claim.

The Washington conference was held on February 17 at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). An article in the Korea Times newspaper on February 10 had reported that "South Korea and the United States" would "host a conference on Feb. 17 in commemoration of the first anniversary of the U.N. Commission of Inquiry (COI) report on North Korea's state-perpetrated human rights violations."

The article explained that Seoul's Yonsei Center for Human Liberty along with three other think tanks and human rights institutions in the U.S. would organize the conference. (2) Given that a number of speakers at the conference were current or previous government officials, and the role that several of the speakers played in promoting a hostile policy toward the DPRK on behalf of the US, South Korean or other similar government entities, US government claims that the meeting was not sponsored by government entities could only raise serious questions about the accuracy of such a claim. Clearly the conference was supported by the US government, and speakers with a record of hostility toward the DPRK and tacit or vocal support for regime change were, it appeared, those who were included in the program.

The agenda of the program was devoid of speakers with diverse views on what would be an appropriate course of action toward building friendly relations between the US and the DPRK. While it was noted that the DPRK had sought to negotiate over the human rights issue before the UN General Assembly resolution on the issue had been passed in December, one could only wonder how negotiation had been rejected, yet the parties involved in the conference claimed they sought to improve the human rights situation in the DPRK.

Notable was the fact that by rejecting any US government policy of negotiation with the DPRK, speakers at the conference appeared to be intent on seeking not improvement of human rights in the DPRK but regime change. Discussing how to use UN channels and processes to bring about this end, however is contrary to the obligations of the charter of the UN. Thus language used in several of the talks at conference substituted the threat of referral of officials of the DPRK to the International Criminal Court (ICC) as the weapon in place of overt discussion of regime change.

On December 22, the Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights, Ivan Simonovic had held a stakeout for journalists after he had presented a report to the UN Security Council about alleged human rights abuses by the DPRK. At the stakeout a journalist asked if Mr. Simonovic had confidence in the evidence against the DPRK. His response was that this was an area where he had "mixed feelings." That the COI report was not "what can be used in a court of law." (3)

One focus of those pursuing a hostile policy against the DPRK is the creation of an office sponsored by the UN in Seoul, South Korea to gather so called evidence against the DPRK.

The claims against the DPRK, many of which are based on so called anonymous witnesses, have raised serious questions about reliability. One of the most publicized stories by a defector who has been public in his accusations against the DPRK, has been acknowledged by the defector to be a false story.

In January, Shin Dong-hyuk acknowledged that he had falsified a number of claims that he had made about his experiences in the DPRK. These claims about the DPRK were the subject

of a book by Blaine Harden which has been widely promoted and translated into a number of different languages. Harden acknowledges the central role that Shin played in promoting human rights complaints about the DPRK. Harden writes(4):

“Shin had become the single most famous witness to North Korea’s cruelty to its own people. He posed for photographs with the American secretary of state, received numerous human rights awards, and traveled the world to appear on television news programs like 60 Minutes. His story helped launch an unprecedented United Nations inquiry that accused North Korea’s leaders of crimes against humanity.”

After Shin Dong-hyuk acknowledged that he gave false testimony, the DPRK sent a letter to the UN Secretary General and the Security Council to draw their attention to this development.

The letter from the DPRK referring to this acknowledgement by Sin Tong Hyok (aka Shin Dong-hyuk), explained(5):

“(I)t cannot be overlooked that John Kerry, US Secretary of State and other American politicians, not content with resorting to their desperate anti-DPRK policy, have misled the world public sentiment and cheated the international community with scandalous misinformation by bringing Sin Tong Hyok to make a false testimony in the anti-DPRK ‘human rights campaign’ although they were well aware of his true nature.”

“This reminds the international community of the fact that Colin Powell, former US Secretary of State made a lengthy lie on the ‘possession of weapons of mass destruction’ by the Saddam Hussein regime at the Security Council meeting on 5 February 2003 in order to make an excuse and condition for invasion of Iraq.”

“Since the report of the COI was proved to be a fraudulent document fabricated by false testimonies of liars like Sin Tong Hyok, it is needless to say, all the ‘resolutions’ on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea forcibly adopted by the General Assembly on the basis of such false documents are invalid.”

“I strongly request that the United Nations should take an impartial and fair stand, being well aware that the anti-DPRK ‘human rights campaigns’ pursued by the United States and others are utterly irrelevant to the protection of genuine human rights, rather dangerous moves to tarnish the image of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and find a pretext to invade it.”

In contrast to the kind of hostile North Korean program held on February 17 in Washington, is a program held by the Asia Society in New York in July of 2013, titled “Avoiding Apocalypse: Searching for Peace with North Korea.” The speakers at this program discussed the importance of building a dialogue between the US government and the North Korean government. (6) In the program, former Governor of New Mexico Bill Richardson and Ambassador Donald Gregg, former US Ambassador to the Republic of Korea raised the question: “How does the US government improve the relationship between itself and North Korea?”

They pointed out the problem created by the hostile relationship fostered by US policy and called for creative thinking to change the situation. “Whether that be the appointment of a special envoy, or something else to be done by the UN, or something by the media, some

kind of thinking has to evolve,” Governor Richardson explained. The Washington conference that the DPRK has critiqued is but a continuation of the kinds of actions that have stymied the development of a friendly relationship that will foster peace. The need to foster friendly relationships between states, however, is mandated by the UN Charter and is the obligation of the member nations of the UN.

Notes

1) Ronda Hauben, “Information Warfare at the United Nations, Humanitarian Concerns or Geopolitical Power Play?”

<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2014/12/31/information-warfare-at-the-un/>

“On Sept 23, 2014 the US Secretary of State John Kerry held a meeting near UN headquarters in NYC helping to set in motion UN actions to condemn the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), commonly referred to as North Korea, for alleged human rights violations.

The subject of the meeting was allegedly a UN Human Rights Commission of Inquiry (COI) Report claiming human rights abuses in North Korea. The North Korean Foreign Minister who was attending the opening session of the 2014-5 General Assembly and his delegation were not allowed into this US sponsored meeting about North Korea.”

2) Yi Whan-woo, N. Korean human rights conference due in US, Korea Times, February 10, 2015

http://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2015/02/113_173399.html

3) Ivan Šimonović on the situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea – Security Council Media Stakeout (22 December 2014)

<http://m.webtv.un.org/watch/ivan-Šimonović-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-the-democratic-peoples-republic-of-korea-security-council-media-stakeout-22-december2014/3957338562001>

Following is a transcript of the question asked by journalist at the stakeout about Mr Šimonović’s confidence that the conclusions and findings of the COI Report are sufficiently corroborated by other evidence and Mr Šimonović’s response.

Q: “Are you satisfied that the conclusions and findings in the Commission of Inquiry are sufficiently corroborated not only by the statements of the defectors but by other evidence of documentary and visual nature from satellites?”

“And do you agree mostly from your visits to other countries and examining the records of human rights records with the conclusions of the commission that the abuses in North Korea are unparalleled.”

Mr Šimonović’s response: “Well, here I would like to share with you my mixed feelings. I do think that it is really good to have solid evidence of crimes against humanity being perpetuated. On the other hand we have to be fully aware that this threshold used for (the) Commission of Inquiry is not the threshold for evidence that can be submitted in the court of law.

There is plenty to do in further collection of documents and in further collection of other forms of evidence. We think its highly important to have those other things collected to ensure that there is accountability when there will be an opportunity to implement it in real life.”

4) Blaine Harden, <http://www.blaineharden.com/>

5) JA Song Nam, Ambassador, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Press Release, 21 January 2015, Letter Sent to UN Secretary General and UN Security Council.

6) Ronda Hauben, Out of the Box Diplomacy to Build a Dialogue with North Korea, July 15, 2013.

<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2013/07/15/out-of-the-box-diplomacy-to-build-a-dialogue-with-north-korea/>

See also <http://asiasociety.org/video/policy/searching-peace-north-korea-complete>

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