

Diplomatic Breakthrough between North and South Korea? Open Letter to President Trump

In Letter to Trump, Over 200 Organizations and Individuals Call for Maximum Engagement in Korea

By [Kevin Martin](#)

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With this week's tremendous diplomatic breakthrough between North and South Korea, the Korea Peace Network, a grassroots coalition of peace activists, scholars and Korean-American leaders, sent an [Open Letter](#) on March 8 to President Donald Trump urging his support for peace and diplomacy. The letter was signed by representatives of 58 organizations, and by 143 other Korean-American, peace, faith and academic leaders.

Specifically, the letter asks Trump to again postpone the massive U.S.-South Korea military exercises as a gesture of good faith, as North Korea has stated it will not conduct any further nuclear or missile tests while negotiating with South Korea. The military exercises were scheduled to be held in February, but were postponed until after the Winter Olympics and Paralympics when Trump agreed to South Korean President Moon Jae-in's request to do so.

Kevin Martin, President of Peace Action and convener of the Korea Peace Network, said,

"The United States has a rare opportunity to help resolve longstanding tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and this chance must not be missed. Further postponement or cancellation of the massive war exercises, which North Korea understandably loathes and fears, makes all the sense in the world at this time when South and North Korea are negotiating on so many crucial issues."

Commenting on the letter to Trump, signed by dozens of Korean-American organizations and individuals, Martin noted,

"It is great to see so many Korean-Americans speaking out for peace and diplomacy and against war. We need to follow their leadership and amplify their voices."

As the Korean War ended with the signing of an armistice agreement rather than a peace treaty, the two Koreas technically remain in a state of war. Many hope this budding diplomatic engagement can be the first step to finally signing a peace treaty to formally end the war.

Simone Chun, who serves on the steering committee of the Alliance of Scholars Concerned

About Korea, remarked,

“The recent dramatic breakthrough in North-South relations reverses a dangerous pattern of animosity and aggression that has driven the two Koreas further apart and brought the peninsula dangerously to the brink of war. We now have a historic opportunity to begin to put an end to the longest-running war in modern history.”

Read the Open Letter to President Trump advocating continuing the Olympic Truce and suspension of US/ROK war exercises below.

President Donald Trump

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington, D.C. 20500

March 8, 2018

Re: Continuing the Peace Momentum in Korea after the Winter Olympics

Dear Mr. President:

As U.S. civil society groups and individuals deeply concerned with the future course of our policy in Korea, we urge you to support the current momentum for peace and dialogue in Korea, far beyond the end of the Winter Olympic Truce in late March.

We thank you for your decision to postpone the winter U.S.-South Korea joint military drills at the request of South Korean President Moon. Such a positive move made it possible for North Korean athletes to participate in this year's Winter Olympics in South Korea.

Moreover, it also paved the way for the recent visit of high-level delegates from North Korea to South Korea and subsequent talks with President Moon. These encouraging steps, along with the re-connection of the military hotlines between the South and North, have contributed greatly to a significant reduction in military tensions on the Korean Peninsula at this time.

We urge you to maintain this diplomatic progress beyond the end of the Olympic Truce. In order to continue the current peace momentum and engage in serious talks with North Korea, we urge you to suspend the pending large-scale U.S.-South Korea joint war drills (“Key Resolve/Foal Eagle”) indefinitely, or reduce the scale of such drills significantly, without dispatching aircraft carriers, strategic bombers or any “operation decapitation” forces which will be perceived by North Korea as a threat to its national security. These joint war drills are militarily unnecessary, diplomatically counterproductive, and far more likely to enhance rather than diminish the possibility of an armed clash on the Korean Peninsula.

In fact, past U.S. administrations suspended large-scale joint war drills in 1992, 1994 and 1995 as confidence-building measures. Putting off the military exercises indefinitely will give more time for North-South diplomacy, with U.S. support, and allow the initiation of U.S.-North Korea talks, as both the North Korean and South Korean governments now advocate.

We believe the current U.S. campaign of “maximum pressure” against the North is both provocative and dangerous. The tougher sanctions announced recently — almost amounting to an economic blockade — could easily escalate military tensions in Northeast Asia again, and possibly result in a horrific resumption of the Korean War. At a minimum they will exacerbate the misery of ordinary North Koreans and antagonize Russia and China, whose cooperation is needed to resolve the current impasse.

We agree with the majority of Americans who, according to recent polls, solidly support negotiations, not war. We strongly urge you to pursue a “maximum engagement” policy with North Korea, which is the only way to achieve permanent peace and nuclear disarmament on the Korean Peninsula.

Respectfully,

Organizational Signers

Enhee Ahn, The National Institute of Hahm Seok Hon's Philosophy
Robin Alexander, Remembering Hiroshima, Imagining Peace
Jim Anderson, Peace Action New York State
Earl Arnold, Presbyterian Peace Network for Korea
Phyllis Bennis, Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
Blaise Bonpane, Office of the Americas
John Burroughs, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy
Jacqueline Cabasso, Western States Legal Foundation
Michael Carrigan, Community Alliance of Lane County (Eugene, OR)
Jeff Carter, Physicians for Social Responsibility
Kay Kyungmi Cho, Korea Neutralized Unification Movement, LA One Korea Now
Citizens Fighting for Justice
Gerry Condon, Veterans for Peace
Joseph Essertier, World Beyond War
David Gibson, Peace, Justice, Sustainability Florida
Myung Ji Cho, Kancc-North Central Area
Robert Gould, MD, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Bay Area Chapter
David Hartsough, Peaceworkers
Cole Harrison, Massachusetts Peace Action
Mark Harrison, United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Patrick Hiller, Oregon Peace Institute
Mary Hladky, Military Families Speak Out
Madelyn Hoffman, New Jersey Peace Action
Duane Johansen, Alliance of Scholars Concerned About Korea
John Kim, Veterans For Peace-Korea Peace Campaign
Peter Kim, Support committee for Korean Prisoners of Conscience in US
Marylia Kelley, Tri-Valley CAREs (Communities Against a Radioactive Environment)
Tong-Kyun Kim, TLtC Justice & Peace Committee
Michael Klare, Professor of Peace & World Security Studies, Hampshire College
Dr. Roger Kotila , Democratic World Federalists

Yali Lee, Yali Tour
Henry Lowendorf, Greater New Haven Peace Council
Dughong Min, JTS America
Soonyoung Min-Kim, Good Friends USA
Tony Langbehn, Maryland United for Peace and Justice
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Thea Paneth, United for Peace and Justice
Rev. Rich Peacock, Peace Action of Michigan
Terry Rockefeller, September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
Roxanne, Minnesota Peace Project
Kristina Romines, Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
Carolyn Scarr, Ecumenical Peace Institute/CALC
Kate Shim, Naka
H. K. Suh, National Association of Korean Americans
Nancy C. Tate, LEPOCO Peace Center (Lehigh-Pocono Committee of Concern), Bethlehem, PA
Aaron Tovish, Zona Libre
Prof. Rene Wadlow, Association of World Citizens
Rick Wayman, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation
Prof. Lawrence Wittner, Emeritus, SUNY-Albany, Solidarity Committee of the Capital District (Albany, NY)
Kil Sang Yoon, Korean American National Coordinating Council, Inc.

Individual Signers

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cc:

Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of Defense James Mattis

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