

Ms. Han Ga Hee
North Korean Defector
Announcer and Sound Engineer, Free North Korea Radio
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations
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Good afternoon, everyone.

Thank you so much for having me in this hearing to testify in front of honorable members of the Congress.

My name is Han Ga-hee. I am a defector who met with God in China and could defect to South Korea because of His Grace.

I was a victim of human trafficking. Throughout all those dark days of my life in China, the only light I saw was from the Bible which someone I met in China handed to me.

When the traffickers sold me to a Chinese man, and threatened me with a knife as I resisted, I still could have hope and survive to get to the land of freedom, and I believe it was because I would not worship and pledge my allegiance to the Kim Regime in North Korea and sought my freedom in God.

What I found in South Korea was truly shocking and overwhelming to me; the United States is not the evil invader who threatens North Korea, but on contrary, they are in the front line to fight for the freedom and human rights of North Koreans, my parents, brothers and sisters, and myself, who are living under the lies of the dictatorship.

This is what I would have never known if I did not listen to Free North Korea Radio when I was in China.

I was an avid fan of Chinese and South Korean soap-operas even before I left North Korea in 2002, and also often listened to the radio broadcasting to North Korea, which was run by South Korean government back then. But it was not until few years later that I heard the familiar voices of North Korean defectors through the transistor radio. One day, through my defector friend at church, I heard about Free North Korea Radio, the independent radio station broadcasting to North Korea, just started their service, and while listening to their programs, I learned the term ‘North Korean defector’ for the first time.

At first I thought it was a scheme of South Korean National Intelligence Service to lure North Koreans to get them to South Korea for propaganda purpose.

The reason why I thought like that was because it was exactly the same plot of a propaganda movie called ‘Operation Psychology’. The movie is about how the South Korean government lures North Koreans, takes all their important information and kills them. Without any doubt, I truly believed that the movie was a real story. Not only myself, but any North Korean who saw the movie would have the same thought.

However, as I listened to the programs of Free North Korea Radio every day, listening to my fellow North Koreans speaking from Seoul to their friends and family in North Korea, my

suspicion melted away and I finally decided to defect to South Korea.

The most impressive piece I have ever heard from Free North Korea Radio was the program called 'I was the friend of Seong Hye-rim', talking about Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il's affairs with many women. It divulged how corrupt and immoral, 'human trash' they were, which startled me who had naively worshiped and admired them as Great Father. The most shocking thing was hearing Hwang Jang-yop, the creator of the Juche Ideology, and of whom North Korean regime said in their propaganda had been assassinated by the South Korean government. But, he was alive and well and on the Free North Korea Radio's program and giving a speech. It was truly an eye-opening experience to learn about the world, and how blind I had been.

Then, I had to decide hiding in dreadful fear of repatriation. My life was at the crossroads to death and life. I could stay in China, or I could fight for life and freedom which was not free. I believed that seeking freedom, although it could put my life in danger, was better than just hiding in China and waiting for death. So in August 2008, I left China to go to South Korea.

Throughout my journey, I was with my old Bible all the time. For me, it was hard to even understand what the words meant, but I read it through twice. And I prayed and prayed God to lead my way safe, and let me get to South Korea as soon as possible so that I could speak to my fellow North Koreans living under the darkness with my own voice and deliver the message of truth. I crossed the Gobi Desert to get to Mongolia. All I had in my hands were a compass that the broker gave me and told me to just head North. When there seemed to be no road, God's love and grace led my way, and after eight months, I finally arrived in South Korea.

The first thing I did after the arrival was to find whether Free North Korea Radio really existed. As I finished the resettlement training program, I visited the station. To my greatest surprise, it was actually run solely by North Korean defectors.

Finding all the things I had known about the station were true, I decided to devote myself to its work to speak to my friends and family in North Korea. Back then, I had never even known what a computer was, but I determined to self-train to become a sound engineer, and since 2010 I have been working at Free North Korea Radio as a sound engineer as well as an announcer.

I know my work can put my family still living in North Korea at risk, but someone has to carry on this operation, and if I shun my work, the day which North Korea can rejoice with freedom and light might never come.

'Freedom is not free.' This sentence which I saw at the Korean War Memorial here in Washington, D.C. is now the compass in my heart pointing the road to life, and makes me grateful for everything I am enjoying right now.

There are so many things that I want to tell you today, but I understand there's a time limit. So I will stop here. Thank you so much for listening to my story.

*Here below is the testimonies of North Korean defectors who decided to defect after listening to Free North Korea Radio, just like me.

First of all, the strongest advantage of Free North Korea Radio over other radio stations

comes from the fact that it is run by North Korean defectors; they know the North Koreans as well as the society the most and the best. The information they deliver to North Koreans comes from their own experiences living in both South and North Korean society. This is why their words explaining the truth about North Korean dictatorship is well received by the listeners.

Since its first operation in 2004, Free North Korea Radio has the widest network of stringers in a variety of levels of North Korean society, covering from top level elites in the Central Party and government to ordinary citizens in the border areas.

From such a network, Free North Korea Radio has covered several exclusives about North Korea, including the execution of Jang Sung-Thaek, the uncle of Kim Jong-un, and the currency reform in 2009.

Also, according to the surveys of 100 to 200 recent defectors which Free North Korea Radio conducts two times a year, 5 to 10 percent of respondents answer that they decided to defect after listening to Free North Korea Radio; some of them even give the specific titles of the programs that influenced them, such as 'South Korea, in the Eye of North Korean defectors', 'A Diary of North Korean Defector Student' and 'The Last Woman of Kim Jong-il.'

The respondents often say that the radio programs produced by South Korean broadcasting stations feel somewhat distant because of their South Korean accents, but the message Free North Korea Radio delivers is more easily received as it feels like one of their friends is talking to them. Also, after they listened to Free North Korea Radio's program on capitalism and market economy, young North Koreans started to compare the economic system they had, and even decided that North Korea is a country with a very unique capitalist system.

Among our listeners, there are people who got to know God as they listened to the mission programs which airs 15 minutes every day. Also, like myself, there are North Korean refugees in China who call to the station to ask for help to come to South Korea. Free North Korea Radio has been actively engaged in rescues of these North Korean refugees.

Lastly, I also attach the pictures on Free North Korea Radio's operation in the last year. I hope this information would give the idea to US Congress about how actively the station has been working to create greater information inflow to North Korea.

I sincerely hope that the US government and US Congress can help North Korean defector organizations, who are at the frontier of sending in information to North Korea, and who are working vigorously in order to bring freedom to North Koreans and end the oppression they live under because of the Kim dictatorship.

Thank you very much.