

South Korea Religious Freedom Roundtable Report:



Steering Committee Meeting convening in Seoul, So. Korea

The Korea RT was launched in Seoul, South Korea last year under the organizational name: International Coalition for Religious Freedom in North Korea. Protections for religious freedom are virtually nonexistent in North Korea. As noted in the Special UN Commission of Inquiry, there is an “almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and and DPRK ‘considers the spread of Christianity a particularly severe threat,’ with serious consequences of imprisonment, torture or death”.

The Steering Committee held a strategy meeting on January 29, 2020 in Seoul to review 2019 efforts and 2020 plans and next steps. This RT was formed in 2019 and has held 3 roundtables since its inception. The highlights include a high-level roundtable held on August 15th which included high-level defectors from North Korea and previously incarcerated pastors, university professors, government representatives and civic leaders. In November, the inaugural annual North Korea Religious Freedom Week was held with seminars and a concluding prayer vigil.

The following 2020 proposed action items were discussed which included the planning of a major 2-day event which includes a Coalition Roundtable convening August 14-15 (During Korean Liberation (Independence) Day); a 2nd annual North Korea Religious Freedom Week in November; the development of a Leadership Academy for Korean Unification; and developing a partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. The steering committee concluded by submitting a request through Co-Chair, Dr. Jin Shin which was presented at the recent IRF RT in DC asking the Trump Administration the following:

* We request the U.S. Administration include Religious Freedom in a comprehensive approach to the Korean Peninsula along with denuclearization and peaceful reunification.

NGOs and religious leaders can connect Seoul Korean counterparts and diaspora to the International Coalition for Religious Freedom in North Korea for updates together with this vital International Religious Freedom Roundtable. Upcoming meetings of the coalition in the U.S.A. include a forum in Washington after the upcoming Korean elections in April. For updates and further information contact: Dr. Paul Murray (pmurray@globalpeace.org) or Dr. Jin Shin (jinshin@cnu.ac.kr).