

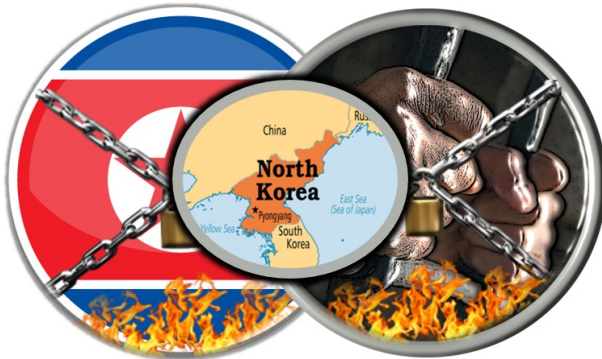


PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted Christians in North Korea

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)



Total Population: 1,439,323,776

Self-Proclaimed Christian Population: 1% – **Evangelical Witness: 0.5%**

Non-Religious: 69%

The Gospel Is Unstoppable

08/04/2022 Washington D.C. (International Christian Concern) - Not even the dim candle was visible from outside the home under the cloak of the night sky. Only Milky Way stars could illuminate the dark village in Chongjin, North Korea. Blankets covered the window of Illyong Ju's family home as they huddled around black, metal contraband-a radio with access to the outside world.

Most nights, Illyong Ju and his two sisters would lie beneath the cosmic mosaic of the Milky Way's beauty, listening to the melodic tune of her flute. But tonight was special.

His grandfather, parents, and sisters gathered around their small, rickety table to share a meal, illuminated by the faint flicker of the lone candle. Though they were poor, they were happy together, he recalls.

After dinner, the family gathered around the radio to listen to the illegal foreign broadcast. Blankets covered the window, and the volume was barely audible to the family that was sitting right next to it. If anyone caught wind of what was happening, they would surely be executed. But it was worth it.

"North Korea is a country where there is no freedom. There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of religion. And there is [not] even freedom of [thought]," said Illyong Ju.

He carries with him the stories of his family and friends who suffered greatly at the hands of the dictatorship.

"My grandfather was a hero. He was a war veteran in North Korea. One day, in a conversation with his only friend, he mentioned about human rights issues in Jewish ideology. The North Korean government took him to the political prison camp," he said. "My father lost his father when he was only nine years old."

A person can be sent to prison camps or executed simply because of a relationship they are tied to. Illyong Ju's aunt and her family are locked away in prison camps right now, only because his aunt's father-in-law was a known Christian.

His cousin's entire family was executed on the charge of "showing gospel." Illyong Ju recalls another believer, Mrs. Kim, who escaped to China and was sent back to a North Korean prison camp.

"She got tortured and raped and in the full pain, she prayed to Jesus, 'Jesus, I am full of pain right now, but how painful were you? You were crucified for me.'"

After that confession, he said, she was able to "live Heaven's life in the prison camp." She evangelized and converted six fellow prisoners in the camp. Every morning, they gathered together and worshiped God with silence-only seeing each other's eyes.

"I am lucky. My family was lucky. We escaped and we survived," Illyong Ju said. "Every day, my life in Seoul is like a dream. Just one flashing moment in South Korea was only my dream when I was in North Korea. And today I'm living that dream."

But there are thousands of believers like Illyong Ju who remain in North Korea, suffocating under the brutal regime's persecution. These believers are desperate for freedom.

"I don't want to talk about death, persecution, and darkness. Instead, I want to talk about life, resilience, and hopefulness," said Illyong Ju. "Our brave brothers and sisters, fellow believers in North Korea, are preaching the gospel. Even this moment. They are multiplying disciples. They worship on the mountains, hills, and underground."

The gospel is unstoppable, moving forward, and spreading life inside of North Korea, Illyong Ju says.

"I want to say to the people who are in the persecution, please don't lose your hope. We are fighting for you, and our God is fighting for you-and we win. God is, and has already won. So please don't lose your hope and please stay firm."