



Sanctioning the Ministry of State Security for the Cause of Human Rights Violation in North Korea

North Korea is an unprecedented nation that commits crimes against humanity. Although we are living in the 21st Century, North Korea is still operating concentration camps that are similar to that of Hitler's Nazi concentration camps; furthermore, throughout the history of mankind, various devices of torture were created within North Korea's torture chambers.

The Ministry of State Security (MSS) is the foremost government institution of North Korea's reign of terror, and is controlled by Section 8 of Organization and Guidance, a department under the Korea Worker's Party (KWP). The KWP has a direct reporting system under Kim Jong-un and threatens the North Korean residents by creating a fearful environment. Should an individual be caught by the MSS, he or she would have to undergo unendurably brutal punishments, where both physical and mental pains are inflicted. The recent incident that amplifies the nature of the MSS would be of the American university student, Otto Warmbier, where MSS should be held accountable.

Until now, the MSS has always practiced double standards whenever it has to deal with its enemies. Bureau No. 2 and the Foreign Anti-Spy Department were established to respond to domestic and foreign affairs separately. Should foreigners who underwent the official immigration procedures get arrested for political reasons, he or she will less likely be abused or tortured within North Korea. The North Korean government may be aware that their intentions of coaxing foreigners to be pro-North Korea would fail; instead, the North Korean government uses these foreigners as a mean to impede international community's pressure towards human rights violation in their regime.

For instance, in the cases of U.S journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee, the North Korean government never tortured them but instead created and maximized their fear. Euna Lee testified that she was extremely terrified when she heard she will never be able to see her daughter after being sentenced to 12 years of serving correctional labor camp. It was also similar in the case of Kenneth Bae, the Christian missionary whom was accused of having plans to overthrow the North Korean government. Until now, North Korea has kept its own principle of not torturing foreigners who are accused of political crimes.

However, foreigners who have not gained international awareness, especially those who were abducted, experience torture similar to what North Korean residents would have to endure. The North Korean government may deny its involvement to inflicting physical harm on these foreigners, even if these foreigners have died due to physical injuries. The example of abduction can be seen from the case of American Pastor Kim Dong Shik, who was abducted in China during 1990s by the MSS. Since he did not abide to the demands of the North Korean government, he was brutally tortured and died in the prison under the MSS. In contrary, those who accommodated to the demands of the North Korean government such as Pastor Ahn Seung Woon was introduced in North Korean media as a voluntary North Korean returnee.



Otto Warmbier's profile is very similar to Pastor Kim Dong Shik's, with the only difference of whether or not their cases received public exposure. Since Otto Warmbier's incident received international exposure, the North Korean government could not detain him for an indefinite amount of time. However, at the same time, the North Korean government did not want to issue a lenient release. Therefore, in order for MSS to make Otto Warmbier accommodate to its demands, it is highly possible that long-term assault has been inflicted on Otto Warmbier, except on easily exposed areas such as his face or visible parts of body. During the assaults, he may have encountered a dangerous medical emergency; however, since he did not receive first aid within an adequate time period, which hindered his chances of staying alive. Another example of brutality in the North Korean towards foreigners would be on American Pastor Robert Park, who entered North Korea and openly stated his will of transforming the regime. Seen as an enemy by the North Korean government, Robert Park was brutally beaten by the soldiers at the borderline and was taken to the MSS in Pyongyang where he was put through sexual torture.

The MSS has classified the condition of Otto Warmbier as confidential. Even the officials of North Korean Foreign Ministry who were negotiating with United States were unaware of Otto Warmbier's condition until the last moment, indicating the tremendous amount of effort the MSS has put into concealing their crimes. This incident serves as a reminder to the U.S., as well as the international community that concentration camps continue to exist and that brutal treatments against humanity, torture and abuse occur on a daily basis in North Korea.

How should the international community address these brutalities and crimes against humanity committed by the MSS? If sanctions do not target the main cause of human rights violation – the MSS – cessation of violence committed against ordinary citizens and the transformation of the North Korean Government will be less likely to happen. These sanctions must target individuals within the North Korean embassies and diplomatic missions that belong to the Foreign Anti-Spy Department under the MSS. Also, there must be sanctions implemented against economical entities under the MSS that earn hard currencies for the Kim's regime, such as Shinheung Trading Company, which deals with seafood trading and importation of household appliances and furniture.

To work towards placing further accountability on the North Korean government and MSS, NKSC will research and come up with measures that can directly impose sanctions against the MSS and will devise new measures to pressurize North Korea through the U.S. and the United Nations, ultimately aiming for collapse of Kim's regime.

Lastly, NKSC would like to express a sincere condolence to the tragic incident of Otto Warmbier, as well as other victims such as Paster Kim Dong Shik and would like to call for international community's attention on this matter once again.