



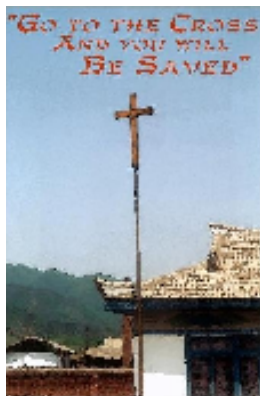
FROM THE EDITOR

North Korea has been in the spotlight of the world media since, on April 5, their leader, Kim Jong Il defying all protests by the rest of the world, launched a long range missile that allegedly had the capacity to reach Hawaii and the coast of Alaska. Not certain if this was a communication satellite or a missile with nuclear war-head, there was great relief among world leaders when the launch failed and the missile fell into the ocean. North Korea remains a serious threat, however, as their rogue leader, beholden to no one, in face of condemnation by the UN and the world's lead nations, keeps building and expanding their nuclear capacity.

While watching the news unfold, I kept praying for the people of North Korea, especially for the persecuted church, and wondered if there was anything The Bridge could do in helping the believers there.

Just then, a friend and leader of a partnering mission called and told us that he is in relationship with a group of people who minister directly among national believers, both inside North Korea, as well as among North Korean refugees who have managed to cross

into neighboring countries. This is clandestine and very dangerous work, as those involved in spreading the Gospel — if caught — face incarceration, torture, and often death. Through this network (I have checked it out and trust the integrity of this group) **we, who live in this wonderful country with liberty to freely express our faith in Jesus Christ, have an opportunity to reach across the globe and help our North Korean brothers and sisters, who suffer so much for their faith, with our prayers and finances! Blessings! R.K.**



Border crossing between North Korea and China

One of the missionaries who works within North Korea told me a moving story: Thousands of desperate people sneak illegally across the northern border into China. Most of them arrive hungry, without money and have nowhere to go. There is one glimmer of hope, however, even for the unbelievers. They have been told "Go to the cross and you will be saved". When the refugee sees a wooden cross, they run to it — and find a group of Chinese believers who open their arms to the newcomers, feed and house them, - and give them the Words of Life! Many return back to North Korea on fire for Jesus!

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REACH THE UNREACHED**

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The Bridge Report

BELIEVERS IN NORTH KOREA



North Korea, officially the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)** is located on the northern half of the Korean Peninsula. Its capital and largest city is **Pyeongyang**. The Amnok River is its border with China, and the Tumen River in the extreme north-east is the border with Russia. To the South, it borders with South Korea.

The peninsula was governed by the Korean Empire until it was occupied by Japan following the 1905 Russo-Japanese war. In 1945, at the end of World War II, the peninsula was divided into Soviet and U.S. occupied zones. In 1948, North Korea refused to participate in a United Nation's supervised election which led to the creation of two separate Korean governments and caused the Korean war (1950-53).

North Korea is a one party state under a united front led by the Korean Worker's Party. The country's government presents itself as a socialist republic, although it is widely considered by the outside world to be a *de facto* totalitarian Stalinist dictatorship. The current leader is Kim Jong-Il, the late president Kim Il-sung's son.

Due to mismanagement, heavy militarization, the inefficiency of North Korea's Stalinist-style collective agricultural system, failure in producing consumer goods, and general suppression of the population, North Korea is bankrupt. From 1995 through 1999 there was large scale famine which left app. three million people dead. In 2003, it was estimated that 13 million, more than half of the country's 23 million people, were suffering from malnutrition. Things have not improved. North Korea is dependent on foreign aid. A steady stream of North Koreans flee across the border to China in search for food and jobs, although they risk being

THE TREACHEROUS LIFE OF NORTH KOREA'S FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

caught and deported to their homeland where they face torture and sometimes death.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a thriving Protestant community in North Korea, but the Japanese occupation, two world wars, the Korean war, and the subsequent communist era, brought severe persecution against Christian believers. They were regarded as representatives of Western imperialism. Today, there are perhaps as many as half a million believers in North Korea. App. 10,000 are annually sent to labor camps and tortured for their faith. North Korea tops the list as being the most cruel and repressive government against Christians among all the countries in the world. The official religion is a quasi-religious personality cult cultivated around the late president Kim Il-sung who was deified after his death and received the title "Eternal President". He was entombed in the vast Kumsusan Memorial Palace in Pyongyang.

The following article is written by our friend who has cultivated a relationship with the Gospel workers serving the North Korean believers within their country, as well as among the refugees who have escaped into China. Donations to the two projects set forth here will be sent in full to meet the needs of the North Korean pastors.



The North Korean Communist regime's persecution of Christians is the most severe of any country in the world. Freedom of religion or religious thought does not exist. Anyone caught with a Bible is sentenced to 15 years or more in prison. The average life expectancy there is only about three years, making going to prison equivalent to a mandatory death sentence. Witnesses have testified seeing believers tortured and killed in prison. In some cases, the methods used by prison guards is to

pour molten iron on their heads. Even people from Christian backgrounds (going back three generations) are persecuted just because Christianity is in their family tree. They cannot work for the government, have limited education possibilities, and in some cases, cannot even marry unless the government approves.

In addition to religious persecution, there is no tolerance toward political dissents. Any word spoken against the government or the country's dictator, Kim Jong Il, is considered an act of treason, carrying with it an automatic prison sentence. There are no human rights. Even family members will turn in one another if they hear anti-loyal statements for fear that, not only the guilty one will be sent away,

but the rest of the family and extended family, as well.

In the early 1990's, there were an estimated 30,000 believers within North Korea. Then came the famine in 1995 which lasted a decade, during which time an estimated three million of North Korea's 23 million people, died of starvation. It is assumed that five million people fled

and crossed the border into China. There, brave Chinese Christians from the underground church working along the border, sought them out, provided food and shelter, and along with it, the Gospel message. Many have returned and worship in secret. Today, even under these harsh conditions, the number of believers is growing and thought to be close to half a million.



The Amnok River marking the 880 mile border between North Korea and China

A Unique Opportunity: Sponsor North Korean Pastors!

The typical underground church leaders lives in rural areas of North Korea. They serve between five to eighty believers each. They often have a small family and work full-time in fields and factories to receive meager food rations. This leaves them little time to visit and care for their flocks.

\$100 per year will provide living expenses for one pastor, allowing him to travel, care for his flock, and provide for his family. Please mark your donation *8356 North Korean Pastors*.

This project involves training of Christian leaders in North Korea. They are brought out to China on a legal three-month visa to participate in an intensive, three month training, which consists of one month Biblical training, one month leadership training, and one month field work and observation at Korean-Chinese churches in the area. They return to North Korea equipped to plant churches and pastor.

The cost of a complete course, including travel, is \$1,250 per person. Please mark your donation *8315 Bibleschools/Church Planters*.