

North Korea ***One Day***

North Korea remains one of the hardest places on earth to be a Christian. Those who are discovered to be Christ's followers are held in concentration camps as political prisoners; thousands more live out their faith in secret. There is little escape. Defecting to China is fraught with danger. And even those who reach South Korea find life outside the 'hermit kingdom' a huge struggle.

Please use this special guide to stand in prayer with North Korean believers for 31 days, as part of our *One Day* campaign. And join us as we press for freedom of worship for North Korean Christians so that one day their suffering will end.



North Korean leader Kim Jong Il

North Korea profile

Believers in North Korea risk their lives to follow Christ. Being found with a Bible can get you killed. North Korea has one of the world's most repressive regimes, a place where freedoms of association and worship – even thought – are non-existent.

National life revolves around the cult worship of dictator Kim Jong Il and his late father, Kim Il Sung. Having a religious faith – and recognising a greater authority – is considered highly subversive.

So Christians are forced to hide their faith. Those who are caught are sent to concentration camps as 'dissidents' and are subjected to brutal treatment.

Thousands of North Koreans have escaped to China but here too they live in hiding because of China's insistence on repatriating defectors. Even those who reach safety in countries such as South Korea often struggle to adjust to life outside their homeland.

Hermit kingdom

The North Korean regime revolves around repression, brutality and fear. Believers risk their lives to follow Christ.

Day 1: Life for North Korea's Christians is likely to become even more precarious amid growing national instability: famine, military tensions with South Korea and succession plans for heir apparent Kim Jong Un. Pray for a miracle: that this crisis will lead to greater freedom.

Day 2: Christian meetings and Bibles are banned so believers are forced to meet secretly or hide their faith. Pray that, just as God hid His people from the Egyptians with a cloud in Exodus 14, He will do the same for North Korean Christians.

Day 3: A Release partner believes there may be up to 100,000 Christians in North Korea. Ask God to add to their number as He did in Acts 2:47.

'God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.' Psalm 47:8

Day 4: Kim Jong Il has, in the words of one defector, 'replaced God with himself'. His late father, Kim Il Sung, was reportedly born into a Christian family. Ask God to reveal Himself dramatically to Kim Jong Il.

Day 5: Pray for a change of heart in officials charged with enforcing the regime's repressive policies. Pray that

discontent in their ranks will help bring about greater freedom.

Day 6: North Korea remains politically isolated. Pray that the 'hermit kingdom' will begin to seek international co-operation, for the wellbeing of its citizens. Food shortages over many years have caused the death of millions.

Day 7: Pray for the success of Release's petition (see box opposite) urging the North Korean Government to allow freedom of worship. Pray that the embassy officials in London receiving the petition will convey its message to their Government.

Day 8: Pray that one day North Korean Christians will be free to share the Gospel and contribute openly to rebuilding their nation.

Life behind bars

North Korea now has 14 huge concentration camps for political prisoners, including Christians – and these camps appear to be expanding.



Day 9: Pray for all Christians held in North Korea's notorious concentration camps. Prisoners endure brutal treatment in appalling conditions.

Day 10: Christian prisoners cannot pray without the fear of being punished if caught. Bibles are banned. Pray that their silent witness will draw many to Christ.

Day 11: Pray that Christian prisoners can find fellowship with the Holy Spirit and with their fellow Christians, even if in silence under the watchful eye of their guards.

Day 12: The guards in concentration camps are guilty of unspeakable crimes against humanity. Ask God to touch their hearts so they begin to feel compassion not contempt for those in their charge.

Day 13: A major cause of death in North Korean camps is malnutrition. Pray that North Korea will respect, rather than ignore, human rights protections enshrined in international law.

Day 14: Former North Korean prisoners who have given testimony of their experiences in prison show that their scars are psychological and spiritual, not just physical. Ask God to heal their trauma.

Day 15: Pray that one day justice will flow through North Korea like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream (Amos 5:24). Pray that all prisoners of faith will be released.

‘The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me... to proclaim freedom for the captives.’ Isaiah 61:1

Far from home

Untold numbers of North Koreans defect to China each year, many hoping to reach South Korea. The journey is long and dangerous.

Day 16: China stubbornly insists on repatriating North Korean defectors found in its territory, so they are forced to live in hiding. Pray that China will bow to international pressure and scrap its repatriation policy.



Day 17: Pray for defector Mr Sung who saw his mother and brother beaten to death by North Korean border guards. Pray that Mr Sung, now a pastor in South Korea, can help many defectors like him to overcome painful memories.

Day 18: Pray God's protection over the estimated 350,000 North Koreans living in China today as illegal immigrants. North Korean women are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and abuse.

Day 19: Many defectors attempt the long journey through China to South

Korea. Thank God for brave activists, many of them Christian, who risk their lives to help defectors travel to safety. Release's support enabled 30 refugees to travel through China to a neighbouring country last year.

Day 20: Ask God to bless the ministry of Release partner Helping Hands Korea which serves North Korean defectors by offering pastoral care and support, safe houses and Christian literature and Bibles.

Day 21: Ask God to meet North Korean defectors in the loneliness and alienation they often feel as they adjust to life outside their homeland. Many face discrimination and rejection, even in South Korea.

Day 22: Pray for a Release-supported ministry which offers discipleship and vocational training to North Koreans living in South Korea who have recently become Christians.

Sign our *One Day* petition calling on the North Korean Government to allow greater religious freedom – and urge your friends to sign it too. Go to www.releaseinternational.org/current or ring 01689 823491 for a copy of the petition form.

Day 23: Pray for church leaders in South Korea who minister to North Korean defectors. Release contacts say it is often hard for defectors to accept Christ fully because of their previous indoctrination with North Korea's *juche* ideology which applies divine characteristics to Kim Il Sung.

Day 24: Pray that one day North Korean Christians will be able to move freely in and out of their nation. Thank God in faith that one day their testimonies of endurance will be heard internationally.

Bringing Christ home

A century ago, Pyongyang was known as 'Asia's Jerusalem' due to Christianity's strong influence. Some are risking their lives to bring the Gospel back to North Korea.

Day 25: During the Korean War (1950-53), many Christians fled to South Korea or were martyred. Those who remained and survived therefore know what it is to stand firm. Pray that they will find innovative ways to spread the Gospel undetected.



Day 26: Christians organise gospel leaflet drops delivered into North Korea by slow-release balloons. Pray that these leaflets will plant seeds of faith in everyone who finds them.

Day 27: Pray for all involved in the 'Underground University' which is discipling North Korean Christians outside the country. Some will return to their homeland as missionaries. Thank God for their courage as they risk their lives for the Gospel.

'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.' Psalm 23:4

Day 28: Thank God that at least one North Korean has come to Christ after seeing Christians being executed for smuggling Bibles into his homeland.

Day 29: Pray that even now God will prepare Christians inside North Korea for future leadership and discipling roles, for when religious freedom comes.

Day 30: Three churches have been built in Pyongyang – but they are widely considered to be mere showcases for foreigners. Pray that, as God breathed life into the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37), so His Spirit will touch people who gather in these churches.

Day 31: Pray that one day North Korea will send out missionaries and evangelists to fulfil the Great Commission of Matthew 28 and make disciples of all nations.

The information in this prayer guide may be reproduced in church magazines and news bulletins, provided Release is acknowledged as the source.

Sources: Amnesty International, BBC, International Christian Concern.

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