

All-Party Parliamentary Group on North Korea Session with Justice Kirby

On 16 December 2020, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on North Korea launched their Inquiry into human rights in North Korea between 2014 and 2020. Members of the APPG held a call with Michael Kirby, eminent jurist and former Chair of the United Nations Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry on Democratic People's Republic of Korea (2013-2014) to discuss his research, findings and recommendations.

Attendees: Fiona Bruce MP, Lord Alton of Liverpool, Michael Kirby, David Burrowes, Benedict Rogers, Ewelina U. Ochab, Timothy Cho and Joanne Moore.

Fiona Bruce MP:

The reason we want to meet with you, Michael, is that the All-Party Parliamentary Group is conducting an Inquiry, we're just starting now, on human rights violations in North Korea between 2014 and 2020. In other words, developments since your very detailed and very respected report - the United Nations Commission of Inquiry of 2014. We are aware that contained very many issues that are live, if I can call it that, and we want to ensure both the UK Government and the international community remain alive to these concerns and so our aim is to update it, if we can call it that, we are very aware yours was an official report and we are an All-Party Parliamentary Group so we're not actually part of the UK government, but we're in a privileged position where we can submit reports to Ministers and they do respond to us and they will meet with us. Our aim is to identify concerns since your report, and hopefully recommendations for the UK government on how to engage with this issue further. Our hearts go out to the people of North Korea and our focus has always been the human rights violations in the country.

We thank you for coming today Michael. There are a number of colleagues with us who will have questions to ask. But before I continue, may I, for the record, formally introduce you so we are all aware of your professional background.

Michael Kirby is an eminent jurist. When he retired from the High Court of Australia on 2 February 2009, Michael was Australia's longest serving judge. He was appointed to the High Court of Australia in 1996 and served thirteen years; in later years, he was Acting Chief Justice of Australia, twice. In 2013-2014, he was appointed Chair of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights Violations in North Korea. I recall Michael that you travelled the world taking evidence, including coming to the Houses of Parliament in the UK.

Obviously, it was a very detailed and substantial report, and I would, if I may, quote a couple of sentences from it, which really don't do it justice, but these words have been repeated many times, including in this House. It concluded that:

'systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been, and are being, committed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, its institutions and officials. In many instances, the violations of human rights found by the Commission constitute crimes against humanity...The gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a state that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world.'

Thank you so much for what you did then and being with us today. And if I may, I will start with the questions to you and then I will handover questions to the others.

Our first question is: how did North Korea and the international community respond to the Commission of Inquiry?

Michael Kirby:

The international community responded with great concern, even alarm. Because we used a different model in gathering testimony and preparing and producing our report, it isn't too much to say that when the report was delivered in March 2014 to the Council on Human Rights it caused something of a sensation. That was because the report, on virtually every page, has quotations from the people of North Korea, many of whom escaped through China into South Korea, others of whom went into other countries, including some to the United Kingdom who we interviewed in the Commission of Inquiry during the course of our investigations.

The fact we did our inquiry in the manner that is familiar to English speaking people by public hearings, by going out and inviting people affected, inviting the media, responding to public concern, scholars and others was something different in United Nations reports which do tend to follow the civilian approach of dealing with matters in a relatively secret administrative way and not in the public way [in] which your Committee is conducting the present Inquiry and which in Australia, and other English speaking democracies we tend to do it. Upfront, in the open, involving witnesses... and the witness testimonies spoke truth to power in the United Nations and in the world and that gathered a lot of interest. It resulted in votes in the United Nations Human Rights Council, in the General Assembly and ultimately referring the matter to the Security Council which were extremely strong votes and they indicated deep concern in the United Nations system for what we had revealed. There were some countries that could generally be expected to be hostile to, or not supporting the report, but they were a very small number, no more than 20 and they were the usual countries each time: Russian Federation, Cuba, People's Republic of China, Venezuela, Laos and other countries that were hostile to human rights investigations. That was the span of differences. But the fact that the General Assembly received it, and the General Assembly accepted our recommendation and referred our report to the Security Council and the fact the Security Council accepted that referral put it on its agenda, and it is still on the agenda at the Security Council which is very unusual in the United Nations system.

That is where things stood when President Trump initiated quite a different strategy having started his presidency with strong attacks on North Korea, in calling Kim Jong-un 'little rocket man'. He very soon afterwards formed the view that he should make an attempt at discussion to get a deal, this is what he said he would try to do, and he went ahead and met the Supreme Leader in Singapore, and again in Hanoi. That was not a successful meeting in Hanoi, they met informally in the de-militarised zone, and in none of those [meetings] did he [Trump] ever refer to human rights. It was the view of the Commission of Inquiry that certainly the issues of nuclear weapons and the dangers of nuclear weapons are major concerns of the international community and they include concerns of a human rights character. But there will be no peace on the Korean peninsula so long as the international community does not deal with the issues of human rights. That is why I strongly welcome the decision of the All-Party Parliamentary Group to revive the interests of the United Kingdom and pursue this. I believe with the change of administration in the United States, this is a very timely report and I hope it will lead onto closer co-operation between the United Kingdom, United States and other countries and the possibility of that happening was illustrated by a very strong statement that was issued by Germany only a week ago in the Security Council. Germany had the support of Belgium, Estonia, France, UK, US, Japan and the Dominican Republic in making a strong appeal for revival of concern and interest in human rights. If that statement is not available to the Group, I will make it available to them. It is a wonderful thing to have lived long enough to see Germany taking such important and strong stand on human rights and they took the lead in this statement and it deserves support.

Fiona Bruce MP:

Thank you very much for that very full answer to my question. I'm going to pass now, if I may, to Lord Alton for the next question.

Lord Alton of Liverpool:

Thank you very much Fiona, and good evening to you Michael. [personal remarks]. Coming into Parliament this morning I was reading, thanks to Ben actually, he drew my attention to an article about the Uyghur crisis and it's been written by Ephraim Mirvis, the Chief Rabbi, who quotes Elie Wiesel at the beginning of the article who says, "Whoever listens to a witness becomes a witness." A very powerful statement. In many respects what you did in the run up to the 2014 publication was to provide us with a witness statement so that we can no longer say that we didn't know. I am certain that when historians come to record these times, rather like how we look back at Alexandr Solzhenitsyn and Natan Sharansky and some of the great diggers from the Soviet era, those who spoke out and provided evidence and witness statements are the ones we now go back to and say, "ok we did know those things." It resulted in many ways in the Helsinki process that put together, as you have just done, those two pillars, one the security issues and the other human rights and as you know that was the founding principle of the APPG.

It is wonderful that the Group continues, though it is sad that we still have to in many ways. In your report Michael, you say this is a state without parallel and you draw comparisons with the Reich and the terrible things that were done in that time and you conclude that these were crimes against humanity. Though I agree with you that it was good to see the response of individual countries and it is good there is some revival of interest not least in the Human Rights Council. In the Security Council the ever-present threat, particularly of a Chinese veto, of a reference as you recommend to the International Criminal Court, is one of the unresolved issues of our time. How can you crank up the judicial mechanisms internationally to ensure that serious allegations of the kind you adumbrate in your report are investigated and acted upon? So, I was pleased to hear what you just said about some of the changes that are perhaps occurring both in the Human Rights Council and the new administration at the White House, how that might change the dynamics.

But also, if you could say a word about South Korea as well - only yesterday an appeal was made by dozens of human rights organisations, I was one of the signatories to the letter, urging the Republic of Korea to be more outspoken about human rights violations and to end the silence there has been. If any country on earth is a witness and has seen the statements it is surely from some of the nearly 30,000 people who have fled from North Korea now living in the Republic of Korea who, like Timothy who is on this call, have been tortured in North Korea [and] are able to tell us first-hand what they experienced. My question to you is, how are we going to break the logjam, how are we going to get a judicial mechanism internationally to actually function, if there's always going to be a veto? Is it time to create our own independent judicial tribunal sitting in the region made up of democratic countries outside the normal United Nations mechanisms? What is your wise advice in taking this forward? We want to make recommendations to the UK government to break the logjam and not just to shine a light on them and say all over again these are the terrible things that are happening, but this is the way we must put the international community itself in the dock and say you must act on this and do something significant.

Michael Kirby:

First of all, I would like to pay respects and attribute to you David for your faithful pursuit of issues not just in North Korea, but in many other troubled areas of the world. It is the concerned

citizens and leaders who continue to give voice to these terrible atrocities that keep the matter alive and keep it before the attention of the international community.

It is true that in the aftermath of the Second World War and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations Assembly, which named universal human rights as one of the three pillars of the new body, there were great expectations that things would get better, and in fact by the Genocide Convention and other international law of 1948 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December '48 there was effectively a promise that the world would not repeat the horrors of the 1930s and 40s, that it would not look away, that it would not ignore terrible atrocities. I have to say to you one of the abiding memories I have of the North Korea Inquiry was that of sitting in Seoul, Tokyo, London, Washington and hearing the testimony, because I am old enough to have studied the Nuremberg trials and to have read about them and to have read Professor Phillippe Sands' wonderful book on the origins of crimes against humanity and genocide to know how all that developed and how full of hope the international community was. It was just as if I had been parachuted back to those times, and here I was hearing a believable and truthful, as we thought, testimony by people telling us about what they'd been through.

Some of the statements, particularly of the detention camps and the three generations of Korean people from the north who were put into those camps because of suspicion that they were not loyal to the regime, and [the] terrible treatment of women who had conceived children on the escape routes into China, terrible experiences of young Koreans in the north who were forced regularly to witness public executions, the entrapment of people and hostage-taking, and the taking of people from Japan to North Korea and from other countries. It was a shocking experience for me to go through. But we did what we could. We recorded the statements; they remain on the record and an imperative of the United Nations. I think we are going to see a difference. The person named by President-Elect Biden to be Secretary of State, Tony Blinken, a very experienced diplomat, is a person who has a strong record in human rights, and I don't believe he could go to a meeting with North Korea's leader or representatives of North Korea and not mention the issue of human rights. [Under Trump] It was as if it was erased, as in the post-Soviet era after Stalin erased any reference to Beria, well this was the erasure of any reference to crimes against humanity and shocking human rights offences that we found.

Now, how do we break the logjam? I'm afraid that is something that has to be left to wiser political minds because it is essentially a political judgement, but I don't think you should surrender on the possibility that action will come out of getting the matter into the Security Council. One thing that impresses an ordinary human being when they sit in that beautiful room in New York, with that horseshoe table, and you see collected in that room 15 human beings who have the ultimate responsibility for peace and stability in the world. When things come up and get on the table there is a lot of pressure. Propinquity is very important in international affairs, being together puts pressure to get some action that will address these issues. China has a large, long border with North Korea, the Russian Federation has a border with North Korea, they all know how dangerous it will be if the nuclear weapons that have been developed in the last decade or so in the North Korea fall into the wrong hands or give rise to further developments and proliferation. All of these are developments which I think mean we cannot assume either that the Russian Federation, which used to be the main financial supporter of North Korea but has not been since 1989, and China, which became the main supporter ... They must have really serious security concerns of their own.

I think you may find there are commonalities between China, Russia and other countries that indicate that there will be a point where they will require action to be taken. That point will be

reached when they see it as in their interests and the interests of their people to protect them from the danger of nuclear weapons and the haemorrhage into their countries of large numbers of people seeking to escape from DPRK. Remember always that Russia and Chinese representatives agreed to sanctions. They agreed to and imposed sanctions. Until about the time of President Trump's move, substantially, according to The Economist which is a source of very reliable information on the China/North Korea border, the result was that sanctions were enforced and increased. I think it should not be given away, I believe if the matter goes back to the Security Council, rational minds will come to bear on what on earth they can do because the bottom line is if we cannot contain the great dangers of the horrible concoction of nuclear weapons and grim and violent abuse of human rights in the case of North Korea, then it will be a major challenge in many other states that I won't mention. **[Lost connection]** That will go before the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Korea that is a very strong court. Remember that is the court that unanimously removed Park Geun-hye, the last President before Moon Jae-in. It is a strong court of independent judges and it is a convention in the international judicial circles that you don't move into other judge's territory before they've had a chance to deal with the matters themselves, although I am watching it with great anxiety of course.

Lord Alton of Liverpool:

Thank you very much indeed.

Fiona Bruce MP:

We are listening with rapt attention to all that you are saying. I'm going to turn now, if I may, to David Burrowes who is heading up our Inquiry and I know you spoke to him recently and after that to Ben Rogers.

David Burrowes:

It is a privilege to meet you again and one of the advantages of our virtual existence is to do this video meeting across the waters. What we are finding and observing in Parliament is a particular interest in crimes against humanity, not just North Korea but other areas as well. What was previously a marginal interest taken up by those here today is now a mainstream interest of Parliamentarians. As we move to the production of the report in the New Year we are really seeing this as a vital test case, as you said, to shine a light on other rogue criminal states that abuse human rights. What is also the case is, as you've mentioned previously, with the timing of the incoming Presidency of Joe Biden, I wondered whether you'd be able to suggest what our calls should be to the UK government, as they reset their relationship with the US and wider areas of human rights. What would you particular encourage us to be looking at to encourage the UK government together with the US to find ways multilaterally that we can ensure that this is all taken much more seriously?

Michael Kirby:

I believe that with the advent of the Biden administration the relationship which has existed in the past until quite recently, constructive relationship, of like-minded, like-thinking support, particularly between the United Kingdom and United States will be revived. I mean my own recollection was many times visiting the State Department in Washington, meeting the very brilliant, thoughtful, informed, and experienced people who served in that Department. And unfortunately, Mr Trump took the view that they were part of the Washington swamp and didn't really utilise them to the extent that could and should have been done. I myself, was not opposed to the initiative that Donald Trump established to try another tack, because he was no doubt thinking the very same questions that Lord Alton asked me. How does one deal with

the logjam? At the time he took his initiative of seeking to have a meeting, I thought well so long as he adheres to the principles it may well be that his unconventional way of going about things might actually deliver some good outcomes. But, when one analyses it, he went in and did not seem to be well prepared or pursue the strategy of dealing with the security issues in the way that had been done, with insistence on a permanent and irreversible removal of nuclear weapons and the net result is that with the failure of his strategy but with the expansion of the nuclear weapons and missiles we are actually in a worse position and that position has been increased in its horror by the withdrawal of the US from a number of non-proliferation treaties, which I think your APPG should keep its eye on.

This issue of North Korea unfortunately has to be considered very much in the context of nuclear proliferation, which doesn't get as much attention in the international and political communities as it should. It is a truly urgent issue because of its existential threat to humanity. What is going to happen? I think we have to wait and see how the Biden administration works out. By all appearances, it seems to be he has formed an administration that seems to be not extreme in any way. It seems to be seeking to get back to a policy oriented and well-informed agenda for peace and for human rights. If that is so, then that is ready made for the influence and co-operation and support and assistance of the United Kingdom which has such a strong record for international human rights, certainly in recent years and under governments of different political persuasions. I would be reasonably optimistic. Some people would say being optimistic in the case of North Korea is an error in naivety, and it may well be, but that will be proved to be so. President Obama, famously said, quoting Lincoln, that the arc of history bends towards liberty and human rights.

If we can increase the knowledge of the people of North Korea through technology and international media about how uniquely isolated their country is. They are fed constantly day by day a diet of misinformation and a lot of evidence of violence and cruelty. I think the BBC did revive the Korean programme, I hope that is continuing and I think the [All-Party Parliamentary Group] would do well to consider giving support to the BBC's Korean language programme, because although there are jammers and interference, the Korean people are amongst the most brilliant people in digital technology. It has been demonstrated in South Korea, by the development of the iPhones and digital equipment, and it has been demonstrated in North Korea, sadly, by the development in isolation of nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems. It is fair to say that nobody expected North Korea to develop its missile delivery systems as quickly as it has done. It has been done because they have had the talent to do it, and therefore, if you can get messages of information and news into North Korea, that will be very important for freedom and human rights in North Korea, and that is no doubt why the government of DPRK have sought to stop that information including information about the report of the COI getting into North Korea. So, if you could turn your mind how to get that into North Korea, bearing in mind the laws in South Korea, but those in South Korea won't really affect what can happen in international communications, that is a line that should be addressed, and I hope the All-Party Parliamentary Group will address it.

David Burrowes:

Thank you.

Fiona Bruce MP:

Thank you very much for that response and that suggestion. If I can just say, very much through Lord Alton's leading the All-Party Parliamentary Group did spend some time, I think possibly 2-3 years, pressing the BBC to start broadcasting in North Korea again. I'm sure others were doing the same. We were delighted when they did so. I'm not sure we'd say the

material is always what we'd like to see but at least it is some broadcasting. The other thing, Michael, that might encourage you, is that in our APPG over recent years we have had a number of witnesses come to talk to us about how, often through tiny electronic devices, information has got into North Korea in recent years through the development of technology. You are absolutely right it is a way that we can reach the country and the people there and must encourage them.

May I turn now to Ben, lovely to have you with us.

Benedict Rogers:

Thank you so much Fiona it is a privilege to be with you. Michael it is a privilege to see you and hear you again. One of the dangers of following Fiona, Lord Alton and David Burrowes is they have asked, and you have addressed, in your own very substantive remarks, many of the questions that I was going to ask. I wondered if I could ask a question that builds on that and weaves some of it together and injects a new dimension. It is around the question of how to achieve a balance, if there is a balance to be achieved, between engagement and pressure. I'm thinking about that in regard to the Trump administrations' attempts to engage Kim Jong Un without putting human rights on the table. That was clearly a failure. I remember David Hawk's report many years ago that argued for a combination of the two but that does put human rights at the centre, and I wonder if that's still viable.

I also ask the question in regard to South Korea, not the domestic situation, but how to encourage South Korea to resume the leadership role it did play at the United Nations on the human rights situation. Thirdly, with regard to China, at a time when, as you've said, China's role in relation to North Korea is so important and at the same time when the tensions between China and the free world, not least in your own country, are escalating. How do we meaningfully engage with China on North Korea, whilst maintaining our other concerns with China? If I can inject into that a new dimension which is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. What does the pandemic mean for this combination of engagement and pressure? Does it open up possibilities of new engagement because of global interest and concern re pandemic or does it further seal off North Korea and make it even more difficult to engage?

Michael Kirby:

As usual Ben you have come up with a number of important issues. If I look back on the conduct of the Commission of Inquiry there are very many things of which I am proud, and in particular the public hearings, the involvement and use of the detainees and escapees and I think that was a very good strategy and should be used more often by the United Nations. Napoleon had a great number of benefits in his law-making and codification and so on. But open, transparent administration was not one of the strong suits of the late emperor. Our system is much more open, it goes back to Medieval times in England of being more transparent and insisting that the courts were more transparent. I thought our doing it that way was very good but one area of failure, looking back on it, I would say, was our failure to engage with the then opposition in South Korea, it wasn't through lack of effort, invitations or trying, it was difficult to get them to come to our events. I think there was an ideological division. I have met President Kim Dae-jung, a very great man and a great fighter for liberty and human rights. He was on the opposition side and worked for the opening up of the so-called sunshine policy and so on. But we tried to reach out and to get them on board and participate, but North Korea, like Australia, plays its politics very hard. I'm sure in the UK everyone is much more cosy and friendly. In North Korea it is very hard ball, so we didn't really succeed. The price of it now is that a lot of the issues that we were pursuing are currently, for a time, out of favour in South Korea. But it may be with the new administration in the US, with the historic long-term

association with South Korea and the US that might be going to break and change in South Korea – I am hoping that will happen and that will open possibilities.

Politicians everywhere are realists, and they will face the reality of the major superpower taking a new direction and I would hope that will lead to a greater engagement of South Korea on human rights. After all President Moon Jae-in was a considerable human rights lawyer, he had a record of fighting for workers' rights and other rights, so I hope that will happen and lead to a revival. They will be working in a new paradigm where the script of the drama is being significantly presented by the United States, and I believe they will adjust to the new situation and that will provide opportunities respectful of humanitarian assistance, respectful of economic, social and cultural rights not just civil and political rights, but nonetheless, if countries like the United Kingdom, France and Germany, are nuanced in dealing with the concerns of South Korea ... When I would go there even in the period of the Park administration, they would all say to me you must understand that our relatives are on the other side of the border, our families are there, we have not been able to see our grandparents or uncles, that in itself is a shameful and shocking breach of human rights. So, I can understand the anxiety to try a new gesture, but it didn't make any progress and the plain fact needs to be stated that the only progress that has ever been made when dealing with North Korea is made by the imposition of pressure by United Nations sanctions. Sanctions imposed with the support of all of the Permanent Five because of the deep concern about the security issues and the possibility of large numbers fleeing from North Korea to escape.

You raise a very important issue with regards to COVID-19 because there are many reports about the so-called policies with North Korea dealing COVID-19. One of the reports was that they were going to be at the forefront of providing the vaccine to their citizens. I saw a report yesterday that the diplomats from the Russian mission in North Korea said that they thought that was 'very doubtful' because they didn't think the North Koreans are giving priority to that issue. As you will know they blamed North Korea for the murder of an official from South Korea who strayed into their waters, who was simply killed allegedly because of the risk of COVID-19 escaping, which is a very unconvincing reason. My hope is that Mr Biden, who has had a lot of experience dealing with international law will understand and be briefed that the only language which North Korea believes, and pays attention to, and is worried and fearful of, is the language of the United Nations Security Council requirements. Those resolutions have to be defended and kept in place and hopefully enhanced with proper humanitarian exceptions in order to impose pressure on North Korea, they do not pay attention to language, reason, the United Declaration of Human Rights. They go along and pretend to be human rights observant, but they are not observant because observing those human rights would possibly endanger their political existence. These are the realities of North Korea. I hope the United Kingdom, which is a member of the Permanent Five, will responsibly use its power in the United Nations Security Council which it tends to deploy very sensibly and rationally, and it will do so in a way that supports freedom and human rights in North Korea by imposing pressure on the administration in North Korea, which is unpopular with the people of North Korea because they can't enjoy the products they see in the smuggled programmes coming from South Korea.

Fiona Bruce MP:

Thank you Michael. Very grateful to you again for addressing so many complex questions. We are very conscious of your time and we have just under 5 minutes to go before we conclude. We have two short questions to close.

Timothy Cho:

Thank you Fiona. Thank you, Mr Kirby. It is a privilege to be with you online although I greeted you over e-mail. I can't wait to meet you someday physically in London or Australia. I have lots of questions but only one question I can ask you at this opportunity. I escaped from North Korea 16 years ago and I escaped for survival. Over the past 16 years North Korean people are still escaping even today for the same reasons as me. At the same time, I am so grateful to all international committees, governments, activists and politicians, the language of the human rights in North Korea that has now been broadly recognised, especially your Commission of Inquiry.

Two weeks ago, North Korea passed another legislation called the reactionary thought, which they tried to block every information entering North Korea from outside and simultaneously, South Korea's legislation which criminalises anyone sending information from outside. We have narrow platforms. By 'we' I particularly mean North Korean escapees, there are only around 40,000 North Korean escapees across the world including myself settled in the UK. With this narrow platform we are very hopeful because we have people like you, and I am very grateful to the APPG's work on this Inquiry which will make a way to break through this dark time on the Korean peninsula. My question is quite simple: what are your thoughts on 40,000 escapees in democratic countries, how can we work on this issue? I am also asking for your prediction of the next 10-15 years. I am standing against the regime where awful personal things happened, including being imprisoned four times. I am looking forward to going back to this country the moment I can.

Michael Kirby:

I look forward to going to North Korea and when the Korean people are reunited. Every country has human rights problems, my own country has human rights problems often when dealing with refugees and with other similar issues, but crimes against humanity are human rights issues of a serious and dramatic kind. They demand action. I spoke earlier about the problems that are being presented by initiatives taken by President Moon Jae-in and his administration. My own belief is that it is likely that those actions may come into conflict with the policies of the new US administration. If there's one thing the US like to talk endlessly about it's the first amendment, which is the right to express their point of view even if you disagree with it. Therefore, I think it is very likely that the new administration of the US is going to probably express much more strongly than I could probably do, it's concern about preventing escapees from North Korea telling their fellow citizens, including those in North Korea how exceptional, horrible and shocking the government in that country is. A crime against humanity is defined as a crime of violence by the state that shocks the conscience of humankind. That is a very stiff test that we found in the Commission of Inquiry that it is constantly established in North Korea.

What I suggest you do is to try and turn your intelligence and experience into ways that it would be possible, hopefully within the law in South Korea as it is finally understood by the Constitutional Court, that you can bring to the notice of your fellow Koreans what human rights requires in that country. A good place to start is the report of the Commission of Inquiry because that sets out all the steps we thought needed to be done to bring the DPRK into conformity with the United Nations human rights requirements. North Koreans are very talented with digital technology and people of your age must find ways to get the knowledge about the United Nations and it's work into North Korea because North Korea won't let the United Nations, or the Commission of Inquiry get in. They have a right to know what the Commission of Inquiry says, and the people of your age have an obligation to try, including through the BBC, to get knowledge about the Commission of Inquiry into the minds of the

people of North Korea, because knowledge is power, and knowledge will lead to changes in North Korea that will be in the direction of universal human rights.

Fiona Bruce MP:

Michael, thank you so much you have been so generous with your time.

Ewelina U. Ochab:

Of course, there are challenges at the United Nations Security Council with possible vetoes from China and Russia, for example if there was a resolution to make a referral to the ICC or form an ad hoc tribunal. From your engagements with the United Nations General Assembly and the 20 states hostile to the report, do you think there would be appetite for a mechanism similar to the IIIM [International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism] established for Syria?

Michael Kirby:

One of the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry was that there should be a field office in Seoul that would continue the work of the Commission of Inquiry and continue to gather the testimony of witnesses so there would be a record for future and present generations. That has been done in Cambodia. We made the recommendation, and it was adopted by the United Nations. The Field Office has been established in Seoul and has continued faithfully receiving the testimony of escapees from North Korea into South Korea. It is constantly collecting that information and it will be part of the history of the Korean people when eventually, not too long to go, human rights return to the whole of the Korean peninsula. So, something has been done. I'm not sure if the Syrian model, which I don't know about, would be a better model. In the meantime, the Field Office has been established, has very talented and hard-working, although few, United Nations employees and is collecting testimony which will be part of the history of North Korea when North Korea ceases to exist. It will cease to exist; Korea will be reunited under the principles of the United Nations, including universal human rights, peace and security and economic equity and humanitarian assistance for one another.

Fiona Bruce MP:

That is a wonderful note to end our meeting on. Can I, on behalf of everyone, extend our huge thanks to you for giving us your time today. You have been a friend to the APPG for some considerable time and you have demonstrated that again today and a friend whose contribution and input we value so greatly, the breadth and depth of the responses you've given us will inform our inquiry moving forward. You have made many suggestions that will help us as we move forward. This first session to launch the Inquiry, we are indebted to you, thank you so much.