**Speakers:**

*Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk (Political prison camps and related violations)*

*Ms. JEE Heon A (Freedom of movement, arbitrary detention, torture and SGBV)*

*Korean War Abducted Family Union (KWAFU)*

***Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk***

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am Michael Kirby. I am the chair of the Commission of Inquiry created by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations to investigate alleged human rights abuses in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. I convene this second public hearing, first having been heard in Geneva. The second public hearing, this time in Seoul, Republic of Korea. At the end of great and terrible war, from 1939 to 1945, the international community came together and adopted the Charter of the United Nations.[0:01:00] The Charter of the United Nations establishes as one of the pillars of the new organization, the principle of universal human rights. Subsequently, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the great body of treaty law including ultimately this condition of inquiry to uphold a principle that universal human rights are just that, they are human rights that belong to people everywhere on our planet. The United Nations created a Human Rights Commission, and subsequently a Human Rights Council and that Human Rights Council in February of this year received a report from the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, [0:02:00] given by the Special Rapporteur Marzuki Darusman who is here with me on the podium. The report contained the recommendation for the creation of Commission of Enquiry, in part because of the non-cooperation that had been received by the office of Special Rapporteur both by Mr. Darusman and by his predecessor Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn of Thailand. The resolution that was then adopted in pursuance of that recommendation was a resolution number 22 of 2013 which created the special Commission of Inquiry which is convened here today in Seoul, Korea. [0:03:00] That Commission of Inquiry starts in its first preamble, “as guided by the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international covenants on human rights, and other human rights instruments. And, pursuant to that resolution, steps were taken by the President of the Human Rights Council to appoint the three members of the Commission of Inquiry. The Special Rapporteur was by the resolution of the Human Rights Council, to be by reason of his office, a member of the Commission of Inquiry, and the other two members were appointed by the President of Human Rights Council. And, they are Ms. Sonja Biserko who is on my left from Servia and myself as Chair. [0:04:00]

I table and incorporate in our record the recommendation and report of the Special Rapporteur which will be Seoul exhibit one, so it’s S1. The Resolution of Human Rights Council will be S2, and the letter of appointment and notification to the members of Human Rights Council of the appointment of ourselves as commissioners is S3.

Immediately upon our appointment and indeed before the Commission of Inquiry began its work, a letter was sent to old permanent missions in Geneva by the President of Human Rights Council notifying of the creation of commission, and thereafter letters were sent, some of them under my hand, which notified the government of Democratic People’s Republic of Korea of our creation. [0:05:00] Those letters include letter which was sent to the representative of the People’s Republic of Korea in Geneva on 18th of June, 2013. Also, a letter which was received in answer to that letter in which the counselor for the permanent mission of the Democratic People’s Republic indicated that the Democratic People’s Republic was not going to take part in the proceedings. Subsequently, a further letter was sent by me to Representative of the Democratic People’s Republic, [0:06:00] asking that the government should take part in these proceedings and notifying them of the fact that the proceedings would occur and that we asked that they would take part in the proceedings here in the Republic of Korea on the dates on which we will be here. Later, a letter was received in reply to that invitation stating that the principled position adopted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea remains invariable and they would not be present. Subsequently, the letter was written by me, Kim Yong-eun, Supreme Leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the First Secretary of the Worker’s Party of Korea. Inviting him takes steps to ensure that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea [0:07:00] would take part, in accordance with the statements made to the Human Rights Council, by representatives of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in 2009, affirming that country’s respect for the Charter of the United Nations, which declares universal human rights and the recent steps taken to ratify universal human rights treaties. That letter has remained unanswered. Later, still in July a letter was sent to Permanent Representative in Geneva, indicating that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was invited to send observers to this public hearing, to take part in the proceedings, to deliver a presentation on behalf of the government [0:08:00] and that we would intervene with the government of Republic of Korea to ensure appropriate privileges and immunities would be afforded to them to do so. That letter has remained unanswered. I include in the exhibits of inquiry as S3, the series of letters which have been exchanged with the representatives of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, inviting them to take part in these proceedings. Notwithstanding their absence, it is the duty for Commission of Inquiry to ensure due process to all persons who come before us, but also due process to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and that we will do. [0:09:00]

We are obliged by our mandate to answer a series of questions addressed to particular suggested violations of human rights that were established to the satisfaction of the Human Rights Council in creating the Commission of Inquiry. And, we were asked to report on whether evidence supports the alleged violations. We are committed by our obligations and by a declaration which we have given to the President of the Human Rights Council to do so with independence, impartiality, integrity, neutrality, transparency and professionalism in accordance with high ideals of the United Nations, all that we will do.

I thank the university and others who have made this facility [0:10:00] available for the Seoul public hearings. Those hearings will continue over the next days and they will be ultimately analysed in our report. And, our report must be delivered to the Human Rights Council by March 2014. Because it must be delivered by March 2014, it needs to be concluded for the purposes of translations effectively by the end of 2013. So, we are working to a the very tight timetable, but we will discharge our mandate and we will not be seeking extensions of time. We will have our report ready as we are obliged and it will be delivered to the Human Rights Council and to the General Assembly of the United Nations as required by the Resolution [0:11:00] of Human Rights Council in March 2014. Meantime, two updates are to be given by Commission of Inquiry. The first to the Human Rights Council on the 16th of September and the second to the General Assembly on the 28th of October of this year. They will outline in brought terms to progress that has been made in our process of consultation and investigation. So, I convene this first meeting of the Commission of Inquiry and I would ask that the first person to give testimony should now be brought into the Commission. [0:12:00]

Thank you very much for [0:13:00] coming to assist the Commission of Inquiry into human rights violations in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. I think that before you give your testimony you have spoken with officers of Secretariat of the Commission of Inquiry, and they have informed you of the steps that would be taken to protect your name and identity if that was your wish or if that was, in our judgment, needed in our judgment needed in your case. I understand that you do not require your identity be hidden and you are content that your name should be used in these proceedings and we are authorised to use your name. Is that correct? [0:14:00]

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, that’s true. Since 2007, I have started my activities and in by 2008 for the first time in New York I have visited permanent delegation of North Korea in New York. And, that’s when I have conveyed my letters as well as a book about me, so I have come face-to-face with North Koreans since 2008. And, I have also heard about my father as well as my relatives from the people who would be visiting North Korea, so North Korea does know about me. And, last fall at the UN, [0:15:00] I have learned that my father is held at a camp against his will, and I understand that the United Nations has come to decision that my father as well as my family should be released from the camp. And so, many countries as well as North Korea know about me, so there is no reason for me to hide my identity.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Your story has in fact been told in a book which was written by Mr. Blaine Harden and you took part in writing of that book. Is that correct? The book is called the *Escape from Camp 14*. [0:16:00]

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, that’s true.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And, this is the book that you and Mr. Harden have written that I am showing you now.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, that’s the book.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And, are the statements attributed to you in this book true and accurate?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I have conveyed with 100% accuracy what has happened in the book that is, because of my story I believe that many countries became interested in human rights in North Korea. And, what’s written in the book actually pales to what’s actually happening in other camps in North Korea, but it seems that international community horrified by what’s written in the book.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Yes, but we can take it. We can use the book in elaborating [0:17:00] the statements that you make before us today. Is that right? If you then get the time to cover a particular point, the points are covered in the book and you are happy with ways they are covered. Is that right?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I would prefer to answer any questions; that would be my preference.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What is your understanding of your birth? When do you understand you were born?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

It is 19th of November, 1981.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Where do you understand that you were born? [0:18:00]

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I was born in the camp of 14 Bowiso Pyong-an Nam-do prison camp which is the Southern Pyong-an province.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

You are going to show us images about that camp. Is that correct?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Why were you in the camp as a child, as an infant?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I was born there.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was your mother in the camp?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well in fact, I don’t know exact details as to why my Mom came to be in the camp, but it may not be 100% accurate, [0:19:00] but from what I understand my father’s relatives / my father’s families during the war … I think the older brother (father’s brother) went to South Korea, so that’s what I understand / that’s what I heard when I was younger. And, that’s not 100% accurate but that’s what I know.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Did you get released from the camp at any time before your subsequent escape from the camp? Were you set to freedom?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Not once.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What do you remember about early days when you were young boy in this camp?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

With my memories, I think I [0:20:00] remember since I was five years old, not really clear, but I think I was about five and that’s my first memory. And, my Mom and I were at this place. There were many people in that place, and military brought one person and tied the person to wooden column. I at that time know no idea that was. I was just watching, and then I heard the gun shot that’s the first time I heard the gun shot. I remember being so surprised. I actually fell back and I remember being truly scared. And, I think that was when I was five. And then, when I was six there were babies that were born in the camps. They made a school because of the children. Anyway, I was six when I [0:21:00] first start going to school. I was taught the rules that I need to follow in the camp and they also taught us the kind of work that we needed to do in the camp. They also taught us how to write.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

To the incident that you say what happened when you were five, and in the light of later experience what do you say was actually happening at that time when you saw a person who was taken to a wooden column and heard gunshots? What happened?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

In the camp, twice a year, there was a public execution. I don’t know exact meaning of that, but I think that in order to keep the prisoners on their toes and to scare them. I think that’s why they held this public execution [0:22:00] twice a year. In front of many inmates, the prisoners, they would tie this one person against the wooden column they would shoot or they would strangle them, so I understand that there was at least twice a year. The first time I witnessed such an execution was when I was five.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[unclear] as a child and as a teenager.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Were you the only child, or who were in the audience for the purpose of witnessing the execution?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I have no idea, but I was taken there with my Mom. I was there with my Mom and I learned [0:23:00] that there was no reason to take children to the sight but I went there with my Mom. That’s it.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Were there other children there at the time that you witnessed this event?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

At that time, I don’t remember.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And, tell us about your schooling in the camp. What sort of schooling did you have? Were there schools for young people in the camp?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

From what I understand, at six I started to go to school and the first thing that we learned was that 10 rules that we had to abide by in the camp and we also learned [0:24:00] how to write, how to count that was what we learned at the camp school and most of the time we spend farming and digging up coal, we had lot of chores to do. And, from early age, I did lot of works in the camp. And, I believe that at the camp that I was born, there are still babies being born. I was one of them, and I think it is still going on.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was there any limitation in the mathematics that you learned in the camp? For example, did you learn multiplication and division?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[0:25:00] Multiplication and division, I have not been educated very well in them. We learned about subtraction and addition. So I can count, but I am still having trouble dividing and multiplying.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And, in terms of Korean language, how were you taught the Korean language. Did you have books that you could read?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

We didn’t have any books. The supervisor in the prison brought the books, because he was the teacher. And, he wrote letters on the black board and we just followed what he wrote on the black board. The only books that we were allowed to have were the ones that were published inside the camps. [0:26:00] We had access to them and each got pencil that we used to do writing.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And, what was the position about food for children?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

From six to eleven, I stayed in the prison camp with my Mum. My Mum got early in the morning. She went out and returned to the cell at night. She brought food with her when she returned. If she missed a day in work or if she didn’t performed very well, she was the one who brought the food for us, so if she did not performed very well that day, the amount of the food that we had was reduced to half. And, if I [0:27:00] did not follow the rules that had to be obeyed in the camp, they also reduced the food that was to be given to us. So after 12 I had to be separated from my mother. And, I lived in the school. The school gave us food, and foods that we were given were the ones that were prepared and decided by the camp. For students, they gave 400 grams which is four spoons of corn based food and we also had grass to eat or food crumbs that were on the ground, on the floor. [0:28:00] We had to make sure that the guards were not looking at us when we did that. And, sometimes we had to ask the guards if we are allowed to eat the crumbs that had fallen on the floor. And, when there were mice we had to ask for the permission of the guard if we could eat the mouse that was running in the cell, so for the entire year we had cabbage-based food or corn-based food.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

You told us what happened after you reached 12 or16, but what happened before than to your food before you were 12?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

The same kind of food. Before 12 or after 12, I ate the same thing. Of course within the camps, we raised a lot of animals that we could eat. [0:29:00] We also planted rice. We farmed little bit, but the inmates were not allowed to have access to every food we were producing. We were only given permission to a specific type of foods.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Did this quantity of food satisfy you? Or were you left hungry?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I was always hungry. I always felt that there was not enough food. I remember being always so hungry. And, I always thought about how I could work more and how I could more reports so that guards would allow me to take food from another person that’s what I thought about all the time. I was always felt that I was hungry that there is just not enough food.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

I think on one occasion [0:30:00] some grains of rice were found in the pocket of young girl in the camp in your vicinity. Is that correct?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I think that was when I was seven and that girl when she was coming to school. I think she was going through grain, a wheat field and then she actually collected five of crops and then about twice a week they would choose one kid and do the inspection to see if this person is stealing something or hiding something, but she was so unlucky that she was chosen as the kid to be inspected. And, in her pocket there were some grains and then the guard asked where she got it. Then, she told the guard that she picked them up on the street. [0:31:00] And there was a wooden stick that they (the guards) used. And, the guard says that’s not the way I taught you, so you went against my teaching. So, she was beaten so badly that she fainted, and we had to take her to her Mother. And then, she didn’t come to school next day that we learned that she died.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

How old was this girl?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I think she was seven.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

So she was the same age as you were at that time?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes. Yes, we were of the same age.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

I’m just not sure about whether you were separated from your mother or brought together with your mother at the age of sixteen. What was the sequence [0:32:00] of events, as far as your living with your mother in the camp was concerned.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well, there is no documented rule for how long kid could live with his Mum. I think up until eleven I lived with my Mum. And, since I was 12 I think I had to be separated from my Mum, so I came to school and I lived in school. I couldn’t go home, but if I worked well or if I did well they would send me home once in a while as a reward. I never thought that was strange because that’s just the way it was. That’s way it’s been since I was born, so I just followed whatever they said.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[0:33:00] Did you meet your father during this time? Was he to your knowledge in the prison? Did you ever see him?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Up until I was 12, my father lived separately. Sometimes, I would see him once a month or once every two months, so I didn’t get to see him often, about once a month or once every two months. And then after 12, since I was separated from my Mom I got to see less of my Dad, but if I did well… Because I was not a really good worker, I did not get many rewards, so I didn’t get to go home that often.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

By home, do you mean to the part of the camp where one of your parents was, or where your mother was? What did you envisage as your home?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[0:34:00] Well, the place where I used to sleep with my Mum and there was a space where we could make food. And, that’s the place that I called home.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Can you describe this place?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I think it was a concrete building and it had one room. We did have a small space in outside where we could cook food, and floor was concrete. I think it was the wall was concrete. Everything was concrete. There was one window and we could warm the room with coal, but in winter I remember it being really cold. And, there was a lot of wind, gusting in, and I remember being really cold in the winter times.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What clothing were you given?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[0:35:00] Twice a year, they had this clothing they gave to prisoners. In the summertime, they gave something that is thin, that is light. Actually, they gave two sets of clothing so that we could change, but after one month the cloth would tear. You know they would… and then winter we would have another set of clothing for the winter, but after one week… one week the cotton would be pushed to just one side and the colors were all the same. I think it was actually grey. That’s what I remember about the clothing.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Did you have a good relationship with your father?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[0:36:00] Well, I never thought about whether the relationship was good or bad until I asked it. I never thought about what I should do to my father as a son. I never really thought about this relationship in a father son relationship, so I don’t know how to answer that question at this moment, but all I can say is that the day before I escaped I went and saw my Dad. And, I told… I didn’t say one word to my father about my plan to escape. And the next day, I escaped from the camp.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was this to see him before you made the journey that led to your escape?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[0:37:00] Yes, before I escaped I went and saw my Dad.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

How old were you when you escaped?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I think that was in 2005 in January, so Korean age I think I was 25. I guess in American age, 24.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

At that stage, was your mother still alive?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

No, my older brother and my Mom died in 1996 in the camp. And, my father and his relatives were in the camp.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What do you remember of your mother’s and brother’s [0:38:00] death?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

In 1996, April 6th… actually on the fifth of April I got permission to visit my house and my older brother was also there. He was given the permission to visit the house, so in the room my Mum and my brother were talking in the corner where we were preparing meal. And, I overheard their conversation. I think they were planning to climb over the mountain and escape. At that time, that thought that passed in my mind was that I thought I was very certain they were planning to escape from the camp. And, I went to the [0:39:00] school and I reported to my teacher about their conversation. I reported about their conversation and in the morning of April 6th at 8 o’clock I spent a night at school and next morning I was ordered to get prepared to work. And, guards came to get me in the morning. And, because of the plans of my mother and brother, I learned, I was questioned about any further planning that might be happening in my family. And, in front of all the inmates, political prisoners, and in front of my father and myself, my mother and older brother publicly executed. My older brother was publicly executed. My mother was hanged in front of me and my father.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[0:40:00] Just describe that event. Describe with more details if you can.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

When I first reported about their plan, I was obliged to report every detail to the guard that was the law. That was the rule of the prison’s camp, so that’s why obviously I thought it was my job to report about their plan to the guard at that time. At my age, I was really proud of that. [0:41:00] Rather, I was not the only one who would feel that way. Regardless of whether the person was close to me or not, in that situation we would feel proud about our reporting such an incidence and before I went to the supervisor who was in charge of me I asked the supervisor to reward me, to give full portion of cooked, dried rice so fill my stomach. And, I was promised that reward and that’s why I reported about their plan. I did not go back home that night. I spent the night at school and next morning the guards took me away. [0:42:00] Before that, I had no idea that there were other prisoners inside the camp, but even at that age I was very certain that I was going to go in a prison. I was put in a prison and for two days I was chained and hanged upside down. And, they lit a little bit of fire from coal. They tortured me. They burned my back with that, lit coal, and I was tortured for two to three days like that. I couldn’t move afterwards. And then, I was taken to another cell afterwards. I do not remember the time, but it was about six months.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What was purpose [0:43:00] of the torture in your understanding? Did it have a purpose?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I don’t think there was a specific person. I don’t think they had any specific purpose. All I could think of was that I committed a crime, I was a criminal and I deserved it that’s all I could think of, and I think like that still now.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

You think like that still now?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I was born a criminal and I will die criminal. That was my fate. And for an inmate, when you are in prison you do what you are ordered to do. You eat what you are given. There was nowhere we could go. All we could do was to do what we are ordered to do. If they beat us, we take the beating. [0:44:00] If they don’t give us food, we starve that’s all we could do.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

But you were a boy, you had not committed any offence for which you were sentenced to be retained in the camp, so why did you feel guilty?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well, now I can think in other ways and I tried to not think about what happened in the prison camp, but at that time even if I did not commit a specific crime… Where I lived only two kinds of people existed: the guards who had the guns and the people who are inmates [0:45:00] wearing uniforms. Inmates were born inmates, so we lived like inmates. That was our fate, that was all I could think about. Nobody told us that we had to think that way. Nobody taught us that way but that was all that we could see. That was the situation that we could see, so that’s how I lived.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Many young people would not be proud of telling authorities on their mother, but would feel an obligation to keep the secrets of their mother, out of love for their mother. Why had you not done that?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well in fact, [0:46:00] I’m not sure whether other children share the same feeling or share the same idea but there was no concept of family in the cell where we lived. We called our parents Mom and Dad, but that was just the way we addressed them. My Mom was an inmate and my Dad was an inmate. We were all inmates and there was nothing that I could do to them, for her as a son. And, they had nothing they can do as parents, so I guess I did not feel any attachment or feeling for my parents. I try even now, but I have a hard time doing that.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And, did you ever, when you reached, say [0:47:00] 14 or 15, think that it was unjust that you were in the camp not yourself having done anything wrong to others or to society? Did you ever conceive that way you were being kept wrong and unjust?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well, I never thought about that. Not once, not while I was living in the camp. Now that I have grown up, I’m trying to understand why people had to live way I lived in the camp, so I’m trying to learn and study about that.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Were there any other children of your age, or younger, or older who were in the same position, being children of inmates who were just [0:48:00] kept in the camp?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

There were many children that were much younger and there were also children that were older, because we could go to school until we were 17. And, there were also some kids that would be given work. I’m sure that same thing is happening even now.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[unclear] because of camp 14, it is I think a… it’s a political camp, political prisoner’s camp. Is that correct?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well, we heard from the guards that the official name is the 관리소 (*kwan-li-so*) 14 in 평안 (*Pyeong-an*) province, so instead of word 수용소 (*su-yong-so*) [0:49:00] we used word 관리소 (*kwan-li-so*) so that’s the word that I heard since I was very little. And, I understand that this was a political prisoner’s camp.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Are you aware of the exact political offense that your mother and or father committed that warranted them being in that camp for such a long time as you were growing up?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I’m not so sure. I think that my Mom and Dad were brought into camp when they were little. I think it was around 1965 that they were brought into the camp. My Mom and my Dad would be in their teens.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And, did they ever say anything to the [0:50:00] effect that they wish they could be free from the camp, to you or not?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I never heard of them saying that. Not once.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Tell us about the rules of the camp. You told us that you were instructed at school from very early age about the rules of the camp. Do you remember those rules?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I don’t remember them exactly but what I remember is that there were like 10 rules or 10 principles, and I think there were 10 rules and regulations that must be abided by in the camp. The first sentence is that you cannot escape from the camp, and then under that there would be more detail like 3 or 4 bullet points. And, [0:51:00] one of them was that you will be shot to death if you escape. If you attempt to leave or let somebody leave that you will be shot to death. And, you should report anybody trying to escape immediately, that’s what I remember.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Were there guards or other impediments to stop people escaping? You said your mother had indicated that she was going to escape over a mountain. How if one were trying to escape, would one go about escaping from the camp 14. Was it a difficult task?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well at that time, I think I was 14. When I was listening to my Mom and my older brother, I thought I heard them talking about going to the mountain and [0:52:00] escaping. Now that I think back, I don’t know whether they were actually planning to escape. I think it was maybe my mistake that they died. Maybe they weren’t talking about plans to escape. While we were living in the camp, the space we were living in… there were no barbed wires, nothing that would really stop us from escape. There were, I think electrical wire and we heard that there were mines and there were some traps that’s what we heard, but we never actually saw them. So because we heard these stories and also that was the first law, the rule that you would not escape and if you try to escape you will be killed, so that’s what we’ve been taught, so we never really, actually thought about escaping. I have not really thought about [0:53:00] escaping when I was 24 myself. We always thought that escaping is very difficult and we had guards that will be guarding the posts. I think it was military guys that would be surveying us and would control us. And, we would have guards that would instruct us when we worked. That’s what I remember.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Prior to your escape, you were assigned to work in a sewing machine repair shop and something happened that led to your being disciplined?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I think it may have been in 2003. I was going on the second floor and the machine dropped and it [0:54:00] got damaged. I lost my finger in the incident and according to the law and the rule of the camp if we do any damage to the instruments or machines in the camp we were immediately shot to death, so because of the damage done to the property of the camp I came close to be publicly executed. But, that was dependent on the decision of the guard. They decided not to publicly execute me or cut my leg or arm off, but I was just graceful that I got off the case with my missing finger.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

How did your finger go missing. Was it crushed by the sewing machine or what happened to it?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[0:55:00] Because I damaged the sewing table, the guard called me to his room. He questioned me and I tried to explain the situation that I lost control because I was weak trying to get on the second floor. And, he told one of the supervisors in the workplace. He called him. I at that time, I heard him ordering him to cut my finger off that’s what I remember, but in that situation he could have decided to shoot me death or beat me. But at that time, he told the supervisor in the workplace, ordered to use a knife to cut my finger off and that’s how I lost the finger.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[unclear] … lost a finger. Show us your severed finger.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[0:56:00] Yeah.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Your right hand shows the top of your middle finger missing. Is that correct?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, that’s correct.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Severed by one of the guards, on the order of the guard in charge.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, that is correct.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was it your intention to damage the sewing machine or not?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

No, not at all, but the sewing table was very very heavy. The sewing table is a very heavy machine and I tried to carry it on my bag and go on to the second floor. I’m not [0:57:00] physically fit. I’m weak and my fingers were also very weak, so I lost control. I lost… the machine slipped from my hand.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was there any authority in the prison that you were aware of or told you could make an appeal against discipline of that kind? Could you appeal to the officer in charge of the prison or some higher authority or to a visiting court or some other body?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I didn’t know any of that. The guard told the floor manager to cut off my finger, so I got on my knees and I begged not to do so but that [0:58:00] didn’t work obviously. And, I thought my wrist was going to be cut off, but it was just a finger. So, at that time I was really grateful, really grateful to the guard because I was only losing a finger instead of a hand. I think that’s how I felt.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Tell us about the position of young women in the prison, in camp 14. Was sexual activity allowed between prisoners or not?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Within the camp, we were not to come into physically contact with the opposite sex, and we were not allowed to have private conversations with the opposite sex. And, we were not able to go into rooms where the women lived, so [0:59:00] not just me, we never really had the opportunity to come into physical contact with women. We really had no opportunity to talk face-to-face. But of course, men and women because they were both inmates, but I think the situation was much worse for women because women, they worked just as much as men. They did the same kind of work as men. When they are not able to fulfill their workload, they would be punished even more than men. And, hygiene-wise it was not really good. Well in fact, here in the Korean society if I go to a convenience store, or if I go to the supermarket you can find the sanitary pads quite easily. But, in the camp from what I remember, [1:00:00] when they had their periods I could see them bleeding below their pants, and there was nothing to help them with. When they were in a place where the women were sitting, they would get up and we would see blood. Women inmates would get hit or beaten by men inmates, so I saw a lot of horrific situations of women inmates.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What would happen if the women inmates became pregnant?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I never really saw with my own eyes, but if we really worked well, then in the camp we get rewards and that reward is to be married. And then, if we … you don’t have marriage, like wedding ceremony, nothing like that, but the guard [1:01:00] would just say as a reward that you would get married, and then you work better in the future. So, with that one word a guy will be matched with a girl… that does not mean that they would live together, but if they worked well they would get to meet each other once in a while.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Would they get other special privileges as a married couple? More food or not?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I don’t know whether this is a privilege or not. So, they work in a factory. Or, let’s say the woman, if she would be sent to a farm. I don’t know if it’s a privilege, but she would be relocated from a plant, or a factory, to a farm. My Mom, Dad… [1:02:00] I think they were given this reward to be married, but I don’t think they had any sort of benefits, privileges. I never really saw any of that.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was pregnancy encouraged or allowed, or discouraged?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I have no idea about that, but as for my older brother he was born in 1974. I was born in 1982. We did not live together and therefore I don’t know how we became brothers and I don’t know what happened to other people. Not a lot of people were rewarded, and permitted to get married, so there were not a lot of children being born in the camp.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Your brother, your understanding is, was born in the camp as you were.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[1:03:00] What I saw, the only people I saw were the guards and the inmates. And, the guards told us always that we were inmates and that we had to work very hard in the camp, so we thought that that was the rule.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What about relationship between guards and women prisoners, did that ever go on or not?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

In fact, we did not witness anything going on, but we heard rumors. There were rumors going around saying that a certain woman inmate went inside a room of [1:04:00] a guard and she got pregnant and she suddenly disappeared. We heard rumors like that.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

I think one case happened of a young woman who had been in the same class as you who became a cleaning woman, and she became pregnant. She disappeared and did not return. Is that the person you are referring to now?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, it is that woman that I’m talking about. She tried to hide the fact that she was pregnant. And, I heard that she was wrapping her abdomen with a thick cloth to hide her pregnancy.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

You, yourself didn’t witness any case of sexual abuse of prisoners by guards?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[1:05:00] I don’t remember at what age, but maybe around when I was 9 or 10 my mother worked in the farm. She didn’t usually come home late at night, but I looked through the window of the guard and I saw that he was touching my mother. That was all I saw. I have no idea what happened later.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And, tell us about the food that you were given at this time. Had it increased in quantity because of your greater age and work you doing in factory?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

No, not really. Even if I do more work or even if [1:06:00] I work in the factory, there was no particular change in the food. I heard that for those who worked in the mine they got as many as… as much as 900 and some received 700, but just the… if you take the portion we never felt that we were being given the adequate portion. Everything was digested with an hour, so we were constantly starving. We were hungry all the time. And, among inmates we tell each other that whenever we go around we look at the ground to find anything we could find that is edible, so our eyes were always on the ground. So, not once were we given [1:07:00] nutritious food.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And, how often in the time you were in prison would you have eaten mice or rats?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

There were lots of mice, lots and lots of them. By instinct, the inmates would rush towards them to catch them, but we take a glimpse of the guards, and the best performer among us would ask the guard if we could catch and eat one of the mice. And, sometimes if the guard is in a good mood, he would give permission, but sometimes he would not give us permission to catch the mice. Once this happened, the guard ordered the person who caught the mouse to eat [1:08:00] alive in front of him just for the sake of it. And, the person who caught the mouse did not feel anything eating a mouse that was alive.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Did you yourself do that or not?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, lots of times. Of course.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

If you didn’t eat it alive, was there a facility for cooking the mouse in order to eat it as protein or not?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

No. No facilities at all. Sometimes, when we caught mice without the knowledge of the guard we would hide it in our pants. We would use a fire that was in the cell to cook the mice, [1:09:00] but that opportunity came very rarely. Sometimes, we would just get rid of the skin and hair and eat it right away.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

You mentioned other animals that you were eating whilst you were in the prison, in the detention camp. What other animals did you eat? Do you remember?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

We had no access to any of them, but we had ducks, rabbits and chickens. We had lots of animals but those were only for the guards. We never thought that we had access to any of them. Sometimes we would come by a bird that was dead on ground and that was opportunity for us to report that to the guard and get permission to eat it. Or we may also eat it without the knowledge of the guard. So that was the opportunity when we had some meat.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[1:10:00] When did you formulate the intention to try to escape and why? Given that this was against the rules.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well, I didn’t really formulate an escape plan. In 2004, at the plant where I was working, there was a new inmate. For the first time I learned about the world outside. And before that, I thought everything was the same, you know whether the inside or the outside I only thought about there were two kinds of people, inmates and guards, because nobody told me about what was going on outside. But through this new inmate, I have heard about the outside world and I was especially interested [1:11:00] in the food that people ate. And I heard from this new inmate that the people outside could eat the same food as the guards, freely. So, just that alone (the food) was the incentive for me to escape.

I didn’t really forge a plan. All I thought about is how I would jump over the barbed wire. But, after I met with the new inmate, and then starting to think about the escape, it took me about 6 months. And I didn’t really have any specific idea of what I was going to do once I escaped. I mean I would be electrocuted, I would be shot but, I just wanted to have one day for which I could eat all the food that the people outside ate. With just one thought, [1:12:00] another person and I escaped, and unfortunately I was the only one who succeeded escaping. I think it was in 2005, second of January, the inmates in our team were going to the mountain to get wood. That’s quite close to the wire fences. So we went to that place to collect the woods. And when the guards told us to carry the wood, I thought that this was my last chance. So, I just ran to the wire fence and it was getting dark.[1:13:00] So I just ran and I jumped the fence. This inmate who told me about the outside world was ahead of me. So I was climbing on his back to climb over the fence.So my legs hurt and I think my legs were electrocuted. I think I lost consciousness for a while. I was thinking that this person who was running with me was also crawling out, but I just ran down the mountain. I ran down the hill, but thinking back now, I think that the person who was running with me died at that point.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

At what [1:14:00] point?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I don’t know if he actually died or not. But I think that the day when we were jumping the fence, I don’t know whether he electrocuted or whether he was caught by the guards. But, I’m not so sure.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And how did you escape from there on? Because it would not be easy to escape.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

For about a month, I would be wondering around the North Korean society. There was no real destination in mind, any goal in mind. I was just trying to get as far away as possible from the camp. I would move along with a crowd of people. Unintentionally, I was moving northward. [1:15:00] I don’t know whether that was luck or not. If I moved southward I would not be sitting here today. I think it was pure luck that I moved northward. I think that was quite a lucky choice for me. As I was moving north, I started hearing from people about China.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

How did you get to China?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

It was 2005, I don’t know the exact date. I think it was the 2nd of February, that’s when I first crossed the border to China. Since my escape I went hungry, I was starving, I would steal food as well as clothing to dress myself. [1:16:00] I think I arrived at the border on the 2nd of February. Before that I would go where a lot of people are, and people would just naturally talk about China. So they would be exchanging information, they were talking what kind of food they would eat in China, how much money they could make in China. So I could just hear them talking about those things quite naturally. I just listened very attentively. For me not to get caught, and not to die, I felt that I had to cross the border to China. So, once I arrived at the border, I think for a day, I was just walking northward to the border. And I think this was February 2005.

As I was walking in the border, I was caught by the military 7 times, but curiously, all the people from the military, all 7 times, they would ask me about food, they would ask me about cigarettes. They didn’t ask me about [1:17:00] identification, they didn’t ask me where I was going. They were just asking for food. If I had a cookie in my pocket, because I stole some food, I would give them to the military.

And then when I arrived, a place called Sang-jeong Ri, I think I met a young soldier, I think he was about 17. And I asked him, and China was really close. And I asked this soldier whether I could cross the border to China and come back. And the soldier asked me to buy him a cigarette, branded in China, and he told me not to tell anybody. The soldier asked me whether I would come back, after I had crossed over to China. And I promised that I would. But of course I did not return to North Korea. As the 17 year old soldier watched me, I just crossed the border to China. [1:18:00] I was hiding in the forest for one year in China. I helped a Chinese person raising cows. Through the radio, I heard about North Korean defectors getting arrested. And how they are trying to flee to the South so that is how I got the idea to come up with the plan to go to the South.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What was your plan and what did you to do to fulfill it?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well, it was not a [1:19:00] plan, all I had in my hand was a map of China and for one year salary, I received 600 yuan from my employer. My plan was to go to Guangzhou, in Guangdong province, it is the southern part. I heard that a lot of North Korean defectors went to the South and then they got a job there so my plan as far as I concerned was to just go south. But by the time when I was at Nam Kyung, I ran out of money. So I had to spend every single penny to get to Shanghai, and I arrived to Shanghai on February 27th 2006. I went to a Korean restaurant to try and get a job [1:20:00] and there was a Korean who heard that I was a North Korean defector. And that’s how I got a job at the South Korean consulate in Shanghai. Once I got in to a consulate, I was investigated by the Public Security Agency of China. Two months after that, the South Korean government accepted me and then the Chinese government gave me an approval, so in total of 6 months after I got into consulate, I was able to fly into the South Korea.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

In the consulate during that time, you actually lived in the consulate building?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, I did. There was a basement, that’s where I lived.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[1:21:00] Have you been back to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea since then?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

No, not even once.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Would you ever go back there?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well, even now, I would like to go back to North Korea because that’s where I was born. Oh, well I can’t go there because of the political prison camp but if the political prison camp is open to the outside, then I would love to visit.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

I think you may have some images which you can show us, satellite images of camp 14. Is that correct?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

If you go to Google Earth, you can find [1:22:00] the political prison camp. I don’t know if this is going to be useful, but I brought these images anyway.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Can you identify from the images any of buildings you knew when you were in camp 14 and North Korea? Is it clear enough so that you can identify some of the places that you are familiar with growing up in the camp?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes. Yes. I was looking at the satellite pictures. I would try to find the place where I used to live. In English, I tried to mark where those places are. In this image, in the camp, [1:23:00] I think there are three entrances. There is one in the south, that’s one exit, and there is another to the mountain, you see an electrical wire fence. You see there is a square, here, right here, that’s the guard post, the military posts.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Can you identify the place marked by two orange arrows in the bottom left hand corner of the images?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes. Yes. You see these arrows here, this is where we would raise pigs, chicken, or animals. Of course inmates could not eat them, but thoseanimals were broughtup here for the guards.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[1:24:00] You are pointing to a factory like building which is on the right hand side of the image? Is that the place where you are referring to as the place pigs and chickens are raised?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes. This is where we raised the animals. These are the animals that the guards ate.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

So were the pigs for the sole purpose of feeding the guards? Were they raised for sale to the general community? Do you know?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I don’t know about that. Because all we could think of was that these animals were for the guards to eat. I don’t know whether they sold these animals to the outside or not. I never really heard that.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Did you ever eat any of the pigs or chickens that were raised in that factory?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

No, never.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[1:25:00] Were there any changes in your diet for national holidays or anything of that kind?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

No, not really. I think it was 2001, I think there was one special occasion. I think this was in May, and all the guards went into the mountains and they had goat meat. I think they had goat barbecue. And they had on the stream… and there were nails of the goat and we brought those nails back because there was some flesh on it. So we brought them back and we ate them. That’s about it.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Is there anything else in the image that you are showing us, the Google Earth, which you say is camp 14 which reminds you of the camp that you can identify from the image?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[1:26:00] Let me show you. You see here? This is the village where guards lived. Even the village where the guards lived was also fenced with the wires. And the inmates were also not allowed inside this village.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Around the village, what you say is the fence?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

The red lines are the ones I drew. If you look at the red lines, that’s where the fences would be. But if you see white here, I think this is the exactly where the fences [1:27:00] would be. And this would be the entrances where the guards would stand guards. And this road is the road that the guards would use. And then there is a stream and a small road that the inmates could use, but sometimes inmates were allowed in the guard’s village. When the toilets were frozen in the guard’s village, we would go in there to fix the toilet.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

The image you showed us second, is that a continuation of the image with the factory? I want to understand how the two images fit together.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I’m showing you the whole of 관리소 *Kwa-li-so* camp 14. [1:28:00] The small area with the thin line, that’s the old camp. And the camp within the thick line is the new camp. I think that’s been expanded. We think this is the expanded or re-organized camp. We suspect.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

The red line, which is drawn more lightly, is showing where the old camp terminated originally.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes. This is where they would have electrical fences.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Using the instrument you have there, where is it that you say you escaped from the camp? Put the cursor on that place.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[1:29:00] I don’t exactly know that where that location would be. But, thinking back, I think there was a cement factory. And behind the cement factory, is where we would got the wood for fire. So I think I would have escaped through this location right here.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Is there anything else that you want to tell us that we should know for the purpose of considering the experiences you’ve gone through that you don’t think we have covered by the questions I asked you?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I would like to say a few words about this image. This building is in the camp. In addition to the [1:30:00] soldiers we have two more posts like this. They monitor the inmates. They control us and they also harass us. This is where the soldiers are. And next to that is the cell that I was tortured when I was 14. And my father was also tortured in a cell in that location. There was a concrete wall there, and you can see the fences where the guards were standing. Where the cursor is, you can see tunnel that went through the mountain, there was a prison that was built inside that mountain to manage the inmates.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What was the purpose of the tunnel?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[1:31:00] I have no idea. But I lived inside the camp, and I went to the prison, because of my brother but political prisoners are considered as heinous criminals in North Korea. They are treated that way in North Korea. So the purpose of having a prison like that within a political camp, I have no idea what the exact purpose was. The person who built that camp would know of this purpose, he would be the only person. What I could tell, however, is that it was a horrible, horrible place. That’s all I can say about it.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Why was it a horrible, horrible place?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[1:32:00] When I was living inside the camp, I had no idea. We were always beaten, that can happen anyway. Our nose could bleed at any time. And our fingers can always get cut off, or like they did to me, we could always get hanged upside down. Or were publicly executed. Anything could happen, so for us, if anybody was going to be publicly executed, we were relieved that we were not the person being executed, that’s what we thought. And I wasn’t the only one who thought this way. We didn’t think at that time that we lived like animals. We were hungry and it was a painful life, but it was fate. And *c’est la vie*, that was for us. We [1:33:00] didn’t think, we just lived like animals. We could not put up a fight, there was no chance, we would not have thought of it, but in retrospect, after I escaped, if I take a look back, I question why did I have to live like that? Why was there dictatorship in North Korea? And we have no answers to that, but I would never, never go back to that past. I do not want the same thing to happen to me again. I don’t want to be hanged upside down, be chained, I don’t want to have a finger cut off. I don’t want the scars. That’s why it’s a horrible place.

All I can say is this; I have learned so many things once I came to South Korea. [1:34:00] For the seven years I saw a lot of things and I learned a lot of things, and one of the things that I’ve learned is that all Koreans respect their dignity. And they fight to ensure that their rights are protected. That’s not the case for North Koreans. Personally, all the things that I’ve went through in North Korea, all of the pain that I received in North Korea, I would like to be compensated for that by North Korea. But, at this moment, well I don’t really expect an apology from the North Korean government. All of the pain and these things that I’ve received are all in the past, I don’t want to think about that now. But, the children who are living in the camp, the children that are being born in the camp, and people who would die without knowing human rights [1:35:00] in the camps in North Korea, they would not be able to enjoy the kind of things that I enjoy right now. At least I hope that they would feel that they are human beings. That they would have the right to say that they are hungry, I just hope that they would be able to say that they are in pain if they are ill, that’s the kind of environment that I want. They don’t have to make a compensation to me, they don’t have to apologise to me as long as those people are given at least those rights.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Do you believe that you have fundamental rights, human rights because you are a human being?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, of course. Because I’ve seen so many things, I’ve learned so many things. I know that I have rights. That people are entitled to food, that people have a right to move, and that people have the right to [1:36:00] express their opinions. I think that is the basic human rights. That is so simple, they are minimum rights, but they don’t exist for the people in the camps. That is why I’m saying that the camps are horrible. And the people in North Korean political prison camps, I think they should know about these rights that they have.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

How many people were in camp 14 when you were there? Would you have any idea? Is it hundreds or thousands that there in your time?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I don’t know exactly how many people were there, but I think that approximately about 20 000 to 30 000 people were in the camp.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

The fact as you put it that North Korea is a dictatorship, what was your knowledge about the political or [1:37:00] governmental system of North Korea? When you were in the camp, were you given any instruction of the nature of the government of the country?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well, the guards, when they taught us, they talked about things that are political because we were political prisoners. But, I don’t really understand about the political system. Because they don’t teach us, they do not teach us about Kim Il Sung, or Kim Jong Il, the pictures or the portraits, or the badges of Kim Il Sung, or Kim Jong Il, we didn’t see any of that when we were in the camp.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Were you given any particular instruction in the party philosophy or the Juche philosophy of the [1:38:00] Worker’s Party of North Korea? You didn’t receive that in your schooling?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

No, they didn’t teach any of that to us. Nothing! Well, in fact on TV, there were a lot of signs that would praise Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il, they would have statues. But in the camp, there was this slogan and that slogan said we have to abide by the rules and regulations, and besides that we didn’t see any pictures of Kim Jong Il, or Kim Il Sung, we didn’t see any slogans, you know, praising Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il, not in the camp. I thought about why. I think, we in the camp, I don’t know [1:39:00] if it’s the law in North Korea or not, but I think the dictators in North Korea thought that we should die, we were not worth living, they were just extending our lives, and they were just letting us live so that we would produce for them and we could die in the process of working, we could die in a old age, they were just thinking about us in the same way as they would think about cows or animals that would plough the fields. They were thinking that we were same as these animals and that’s why they felt that they didn’t need to teach us anything.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Yes. I don’t know if my colleagues have any questions for Mr. Shin? Commissioner Biserko.

**Ms. Sonja Biserko**

[1:40:00] You mentioned, dignity and not having dignity. And also in your book you say “I am evolving from being an animal, I escaped physically, but I haven’t escaped psychologically”. When did you start feeling, getting your dignity? And what really moved you? What moved your emotions? When did you start to feel like a human being? After how much time since you escaped?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I don’t know yet. I’m trying to learn. Physically I feel more at ease, I am more comfortable, I’m wearing a suit in this hearing. But even seven years ago I was in an inmate uniform. Seven years ago, I was akin to animals like pigs, and I had no ideas I could eat pigs or chicken. [1:41:00] Today I am more comfortable physically, but psychologically I am not comfortable because I still dream about the days I spent in the camp, the experiences that I had to suffer… I still have dreams about them. My father, my friends are still living in the North. I hope to help them in any way by sharing my testimonies in meetings like this. Because it was a traumatic memory, I’m still dreaming about them. That’s why I’m psychologically still in pain.

**Ms. Sonja Biserko**

Did you receive any professional help in overcoming these tough memories? During this seven years?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[1:42:00] Not recently, but after I came to South Korea, I was in a mental hospital for two months and half. The first time, I was in a very severe condition. For about four days, I was in an independent cell in hospital, and then I got treatment, drugs for two and a half months in the hospital. In 2007, I collapsed and I was rushed to the ER three times, but as time passes, I feel that I am recovering, stabilizing a little bit. I am doing my best to recover from the psychological trauma. I am trying, but it’s hard.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[1:43:00] We have heard suggestions that sometimes people from the North do not get a warm or generous welcome in South. Has that been your experience? Or has it not been your experience?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I have heard those stories too, that they are not very welcomed. Some people feel that they are not welcomed in Korea. But I had many opportunities to travel to many countries and I have met with many people. And I think that Korea is the country that has the best supporting system for the defectors. Defectors in Canada, North Korean defectors in the United Kingdom, I mean, they do not get as much as support as those defectors here in Korea. We get support to go to colleges; there is just so much support from the government. [1:44:00] I think that Korea is very advanced in terms of support that is provided by the government, but when it comes to the public perception, well, it’s not exactly discrimination. I don’t know what the most appropriate word is. But it seems that there is less awareness about the defectors here in Korea as compared to United States and other countries.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Who was the person in charge of camp 14 at the time that you were there or do you know any of the persons who were in charge of the camp?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I don’t remember because I never really saw them. I don’t really remember because I never got the opportunity to meet with the [1:45:00] people who are in charge.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

You mention guards and soldiers. Are they two different categories or is it both guards and soldiers in the one service?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I don’t know how they distinguish the two, but the way I did was that the soldiers didn’t really get involved in the way we worked. But the guards would actually guard us 24 hours and they would punish us and they would give us work instructions. So that would be how I distinguish the two. And the soldiers would just make sure that we do not escape, they would be sort of guarding us. That’s what they did to see whether we were trying to escape or not. But there was a difference and [1:46:00] I think I remember that the military, the soldiers were quite young compared to the guards.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was there any kindness that you can remember from the guards or soldiers during the time you were in camp 14 except the guard who only took the top of your finger off instead of your hand?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes there was. I think I was 14, after my mom and brother were publicly executed and after I got out the prison and went back to school, I was really in a bad situation. I was really feeling bad and the teacher was being really mean and teacher was not giving me food, I was really frail. I mean, I almost died, but luckily my teacher changed and the guards changed. And the guard made sure that the kids would not beat me and would take me to [1:47:00] the cafeteria and would give me rice, burnt rice. And the kids stopped bullying me, so to that guard I feel really grateful, even now.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What was available to you in the cafeteria that was better than the grass and the mice? And why did you have the access to the cafeteria as distinct to having to pick up the very small quantities of corn that you told us of?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

No, not really. We would just walk around outside, maybe there was a plant that we could eat, we could eat the edible plant. We could pick up the grains and the crops from the floor, and even for that we needed approval from the guards. So there was not really no food that we could [1:48:00] eat, you know, of our own volition.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was that the cafeteria where you were served the daily food allowance or was it the cafeteria for the guards?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

That was a cafeteria for the inmates, so the inmates would do the cooking and guards would watch us as we would get the food and we sit around the table and eat the food. But sometimes if the guards don’t feel well, even if it’s just one spoonful, they would tell us to get up and leave. So that was what’s happening in that cafeteria.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Do you have any questions?

**Mr. Marzuki Darusman**

Thank you, Mr. Shin. [1:49:00] I thank you and I think my colleagues would express similar sentiments. Thank you for giving us your testimony,you are now the single strongest voice that speaks to the atrocities that have taken place. As you described, the unthinkable cruelty that is inflicted on persons for whatever reasons. As I listened to your testimony and the questions that were posed and responded to by you, questions that were asked by the chairman, and my colleague Ms. Biserko, it occurs to me that [1:50:00] – and this is something that would have to be ask to you as a Commission of Inquiry – we are undertaking public hearings but also hearing submissions in camera. And we note, of course, that you were prepared to come out and go public and attend hearings and speak today.

If I could just [1:51:00] come to the point here, and that is that… I think it starts from the point where the chairman made it clear to you that anything that you might not have been able to say today could be covered in the book you wrote. Now, during these times when you were asked to give a personal testimony to the public, not only here but also in Geneva, and elsewhere, has there been any [1:52:00] question that would ask you to corroborate what you have been saying today and in the past in terms of additional testimonials from others? That would in fact reinforce the statements that you have made, this is as I indicated, it is something we do need to ask as a method of record, because our heart goes out to you. There is no doubt that [1:53:00] what you have told us had been your personal experience, that you have been able to say this with a steady state of mind is amazing. With amazing psychological control on yourself which comes out of course of your personal experience… but to put it bluntly, is there any reason that we should doubt the testimony? [1:54:00] I’m sorry to ask you this, but this is what needs to be asked because this is something that needs to be put on the record, and that the report of the Commission will have to be able to determine. Thank you.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

I have received such questions several times before. In lectures or in some places, I have received criticisms openly criticizing that I was telling a lie. There were some people like that overseas and in Korea. And sometimes what I said was broadcasted in the news. I saw the postings that say that I was a mother eater and I betrayed my family. I understand your position and I can [1:55:00] totally understand why you are asking this question.

I cannot show you evidence right now, by all I can tell you is the story of my life. Being chained at 14, the scars in my body are the only evidence that I have, and the lacerations that I got from going over the barbed wires, that’s all I can show you. It’s important is what’s not visible to the eyes. The horrific, horrific situations take place at places where we cannot see, and by the time we get there, it’s all in the past. Whether I can help, or I cannot help, I have to tell you that something is happening there. Whether people believe it or not, we need to tell about this, and if they don’t buy it then, there is nothing [1:56:00] we can do. And if they buy it, then we are grateful. Massacres will be carried out, they have been carried out, we have to talk about this so that we can stop it in the future, and that’s why I’m here.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

You have been giving your witness for two hours to us without a break, so I’m intending now to take a five minute break. And then I’ll come back and ask you if there is anything additional that you want to say that hasn’t been said. And if not, then you will be excused. I think it would be good idea if you had a break, and we have a break, and even the media could have a break. So we will adjourn this hearing now for ten minutes.

[1:57:00] I reconvene the meeting of the Commission of Inquiry and Commissioner Darusman has a further question for Mr. Shin.

**Mr. Marzuki Darusman**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Shin, it is something that has been sticking in my mind, and perhaps also many of us. I will ask this questions and perhaps you could [1:58:00] answer by sharing your reflections that goes beyond a narrative, a testimonial. And this, this concerns the understanding that you may have come across of the purpose of these prison camps being in existence and being operated. The appalling conditions and the methods that are [1:59:00] applied there would have effect if this is known to be North Korean public, as a warning, as a tool to control and to repress. To what extent would you know that the existence of these camps is known to a wider section of the North Korean public and what would be the purpose of these camps if no one is able to escape, no one is able to leave the camp, they are just there to remain for the rest of their lives?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

So, once I came to [2:00:00] Korea, I have learned many things about camp. I was born in the camp if I did not escape; I would have lived in the camp until I died. So once I came to Korea, I’ve thought a lot about the camp, I’ve done my studying. Although I keep thinking and thinking, but I think only one person’s words, only one person’s thoughts matter in North Korean society, that is Kim Jung Un of North Korea. I think he is a dictator; he is the leader of the country. Only his thoughts and only his words should be followed. He wants everyone in North Korea to follow in his thoughts and his words, and if people do not follow them, and as was in the past, as is done now and as will be done in the future, people would be [2:01:00] put in to these camps.

I don’t know what it was like during the Kim Il Sung regime, Kim Jung Un was not born during the Kim Il Sung regime, now we have Kim Jung Un in North Korea. We have a succession of power, in 3 generations. This is unheard of, I don’t know whether I should call this a country or an organization of thugs. But I think that people with right mind and right thoughts would not do what they are doing in North Korea. If I may express, I think this person is using this camp to put the people in the camp so that [2:02:00] they could make people listen to him and terrorize people. So that he can enjoy the luxuries, that he can enjoy all these comforts he is enjoying, so personally I think that’s the reason that they keep these camps there. If I were speaking freely, I would not use gentle words or good words to describe what’s happening in North Korea. And I think the camps are there in order to repress, to oppress North Korea and so based on the sacrifices of the North Koreans, they are sacrificing these North Koreans in the camps so that they can enjoy all the luxuries. I mean people are dying, but they are launching missiles that are worth billions of dollars. And people are going hungry, but they are buying these luxurious yachts. So I don’t know how to describe these [2:03:00] people, these people doing all these horrific things, I don’t know any other words to describe leaders of North Korea.

**Mr. Marzuki Darusman**

Do you have a sense that many people of North Korea know about these camps?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Yes, a lot of North Korean defectors have said that even students are aware of political camps. If they say the wrong thing, they behaved in a wrong way, they are aware of the fact that they would be sent immediately to the political camp. Everybody knows, and I feel that way. However, they are not aware of the real situations, what really happens in political camp, they know that these camps exist but what horrific egregious [2:04:00] experiences are happening inside, not even the North Korean publics are aware of that.

**Mr. Marzuki Darusman**

Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Can you tell us how one gets access to the Google images of the camp. You were describing it earlier and I cut you off. What is the way which anybody with access to the internet can find the images that you just have shown us, except for the red lines which you have drawn on the images. Is it a matter of going on Google Earth, is that correct?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

We downloaded the images from the Google, the internet is free, we get the pictures from Google. For people who don’t know about the camp [2:05:00] would not be able to get the pictures but it was very easy for somebody like me who is aware of this existence of the camp. I went to the Google and downloaded the satellite images of the camp. Anybody could do that.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What are the coordinates that allow for Google to identify this camp? How do you find it? Because on one view, if anybody says that your testimony is false, the easiest way for that falsehood to be demonstrated would be to throw open the camp and to demonstrate that it is not the camp that you are describing. So how did you find the camp, is it close to a town that should be identified, or city?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[2:06:00] In 2007, I was writing a book, and it was entitled *Coming Out to the World.* While I was working on my book, I searched for the location of the political camp that I was imprisoned in. There is an NGO that helped me, we worked together, we went to Google, so I didn’t do it alone. I worked with the researchers to find the location, to find the buildings and that’s how it began.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Is the camp close to a known town or city in North Korea?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

[2:07:00] To the North, there is a thermal fire plant called Bukchang, which is quite large. To the south of the camp I think there is a large mine, and also across the river, and there is another camp, I think it is Kwan-li-so number 18. From what I heard, that’s the things around the camp where I used to be in.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

One can see in the image, do you know the name of the river?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

It’s called Dae Dong River, it is a really large river.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Is there anything else that you want to tell us? That you’ve [2:08:00] thought of since we’ve have the break that was not covered adequately in the questions that you were asked in the first session?

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Well, first of all, I would like to thank the three members of the COI for giving me this opportunity to talk about my experience. And I want to thank you for the good questions, because of your good questions I was able to give you the answers. I think your questions covered most of the things that I wanted to say. And the COI… this is the first and the last hope [2:09:00] for us the North Korean defectors. North Koreans, unless there is a riot, as we’ve seen in Egypt, or Libya or Syria, unless North Koreans rise up as the Arabs, I think the only hope that North Koreans have is the COI. Of course the North Korean government does not acknowledge the COI, but I think they are not acknowledging the COI because they have so many things that they need to hide.

Personally, I think that North Korea is most scared of having the political prison camp system exposed. They know how they oppressed and repressed people, how much pain that would be put a lot of people through, and they know what they will get for oppressing so many people and that is why they would not [2:10:00] stop the camps. They will continue to hide the camps. So that is why the United Nations and international community will need to help those people in North Korea, especially the inmates. Of course my father could die, my relatives could die, my colleagues could die because of the activities of the COI, and my activities. But I want to do my very best, I want to be able to say that I’ve done all I can. I have done these things for those people; I think that would make me less sad. Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Thank you very much Mr. SHIN for coming along and giving your testimony today. And it will be recorded in our record and transcript of the COI. [2:11:00] And it will be available in the future as part of the history of this country as well as part of record of the United Nations which by the decision of the Human Rights Council has set up the COI to investigate the sorts of matters that you have raised. Thank you very much. You can go now, thank you.

**Mr. SHIN Dong Hyuk**

Thank you very much.

***Ms. JEE Heon A***

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Is there a cup of water for the witness? Would you pour out the [2:12:00] water for the witness? I think in our records you are identified as witness TSH 0015. I think you do not want to use your name or identifiers, and that has been discussed with the Secretariat who agree with your assessment that your name should not be used.

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[2:13:00] It’s okay to use my name.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

For the time being we won’t to use your name just in case, but later on if you wish it, your name will be attached to your testimony when the record is available. And I think you should perhaps have some advice from the Secretariat before that is done, but if that is your wish, then that is what will be done with our record. In the meantime, we don’t have to use your name [2:14:00] and we will proceed without doing so. Would you tell us where you were born? And where you grew up?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

I was born in Chongjin City of North Hamgyeong Province. I was born in that city. Until second grade of elementary school, I lived in that city, then I relocated to another place called, Yun Sun area, this is the area on the border between China and North Korea. It was near the Tumen River, I cannot give you the name of the neighborhood that I moved to.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[2:15:00] Did you have a normal upbringing in your early life? Was it normal for the children of your town and district?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

Yes I did, I was an ordinary kid in North Korea.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Did you go to the local school and were you taught reading, writing and mathematics?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

Yes, I learned reading and counting.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Did you learn multiplication? How to multiply one number by one number?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

Yes I learned that.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What about division, how to divide one number into another?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[2:16:00] Yes I learned division as well.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was it the case, for most of the children in this district that they received a basic education in the local school, in reading, writing, and mathematics?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

Well, they could learn. Economically, if their home is not well off, or the family had a food shortage, they could not go to school. They had to go to the mountains; instead of school back packs, they would have to take baskets to go to the mountains to collect grass and plants, they had to work.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was your [2:17:00] upbringing coinciding with the Great Famine that struck North Korea in 1990s?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

I think it was 1993 and 1994, and that was right after the death of Kim Il Sung. I think around that time, the death of Kim Il Sung, that’s when there was the Great Famine. Well, I graduated middle school in 1996. So when I was going to the middle school, or the junior high, I suffered because there was a lack of food.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Would you tell us the amount of food that you would have in your home at that time?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[2:18:00] That is kind of difficult. In North Korea, in September and October, that’s when we harvest potatoes. But even if we harvest the potatoes, there’s still some remnants of plants. During the winter time, those plants would grow into potatoes. So we would harvest them in winter time, we would take these potatoes to make into soup. And also the cob of corn, we would grind them into flour and [2:19:00] peas or beans’ pockets, we wouldn’t grind them and also tree bark, we would dry tree bark and grind it to make it into powder and eat it. That’s how we had our meals.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

You went to bed hungry at that time? Or did your family make by, basically?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

At that time, even if we ate a lot, even if we could eat as much as we wanted… at that time we were very hungry, so when we went to bed, we went to bed hungry.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[2:20:00] I think you were brought up in sense of loyalty to the Kim family, is that correct?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

Yes that’s true. They would brainwash us. They would brainwash us so that we would not think about something else. So we would learn about all the revolutionary activity, we have the books that recorded the revolutionary activities of Kim Jong Un, we read about that. We would not know our parent’s birthday, but we would know the birthdays of the Kim family members. And if you don’t know these birthdays, you will be [2:21:00] put to death. I mean you were executed. So when you were young, you would not pay attention to your parents, but you were made, you were trained, to pay attention to what was happening to the Kim family.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Did you ever imagine that you would end up in this public hearing today talking about disadvantages that you suffered?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

I never knew about such a hearing. This is the first time. The first time I felt that I needed to [2:22:00] come forward and talk about what really happened in North Korea was first time when I was in prison. If I have done that earlier, my identity would have been exposed earlier.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Yes, we will come back to that in a moment. I want to take you to the steps that led to your decision to leave the North and seek to come to South Korea. Just describe how those steps came about.

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

I decided to leave North Korea, because my father’s hometown was in China. He was born in China. Because of the food shortage, my father frequently visited China [2:23:00] and when he was in China in January 1981, my father listened to the KBS radio of South Korea. After that he returned and told us one night… it was not in the middle of the day, it was one night, he said that South Korea is a completely different country, not anything we have learned about, and the world is completely different, it’s going in a completely different direction than what we are instructed. That’s what my father told me. And I thought that my father was becoming a capitalist so I told him we could not leave, betray our dear general.

My father was very serious about leaving. He persuaded me [2:24:00] and he left to the upper part of the Tumen River, whereas we crossed the southern part, and we were supposed to meet at this Chinese house, the house of a Chinese family. We were supposed to meet after two days, but when we got there, we learned that our father was already arrested by the Chinese public police. And he had already left because he was afraid of being caught by the Chinese police. We only saw his shoes in the Chinese house and we never saw him ever since.

My mother, myself and I had a younger sister and younger brother, my younger brother was 9 years old, we went to Yanji and we were arrested by [2:25:00] the Chinese police and we were close being repatriated back to North Korea. We attempted to leave North Korea again, but because my mother and sister were starving, the excuse was to go to China for food. In China if you say you want to practice Christianity, that you believe in God, they gave us food, so my mother and my sister went to this church in China to get food. My sister returned from this church after 1 month, but my mother did not. We went back to get our mother, but she was nowhere to be found. In North Korea, there is a place called Dae Hong Dan, I heard [2:26:00] that if we got grass, Gosari, we could trade that for 10,000 Chinese yuan. When I went there, I realized that it was China, and I learned that he was human trafficker, a North Korean human trafficker. I went there with a girl who lived with our neighborhood, so we were sold. In China there is a place called Yun Hong Sung, that’s where we were sold to. We were repatriated back from China.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Who were you sold to and by whom? Who had the right to sell you?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[2:27:00] The person who helped my father cross the Tumen River was a man who lived in our neighborhood. He told us, and the girl who lived in my neighbourhood… he proposed that we go to get Gosari for money, and we accepted what he proposed. I left my 9 year old brother behind and I left. But when we arrived we found out that we were in China. At that time there was a place called Ul Gi Gang in China, there was a green house next to Ul Gi Gang and there were five human traffickers. They were all men inside a green house, we spend about a week there. [2:28:00] And we later found out that, the wife of the broker and son of the broker was also living in the green house. The son of this broker was not even a year old. I was surprised; I did not understand why he had brought me all the way to China. He said that my parents had been there and he said that he wanted to help me make money and find my parents.

Well, if that’s what’s going to happen maybe I thought I could find my mother and the brokers promised me that I would find my mother in China. So I trusted what they said. We had no idea that the brokers were [2:29:00] going to sell us to old Chinese men who were not able to get married. And in the course of that time, we got arrested by the Chinese public police, we were arrested and the Chinese police told us that the brokers intended to sell us over to the Chinese men. There were four of us, four North Korean women, who have left North Korea and who were arrested by the Chinese police. The director of Chinese police asked us questions about the situation in North Korea, and he was very in pain. He was ethnic Korean, the director of the Chinese police was ethnic Korean. He was trying to relate to us, we were surprised by his attitude. And while we were having this conversation, [2:30:00] one of his men said that he was going to take us to the border guard. I thought that was going to happen but he told us to wait in the front gate, and he asked us to wait for a second because he forgot to bring something. He went back inside but he never came back, even for half an hour. So, maybe we thought that he was trying to let us go, and we ran and ran. We turned back and saw him, waving to us by the window. And that’s how we were able to escape. But more dangerous men were waiting for us.

Every place we went, we met brokers. If… we noticed that even if they looked like North Korean men, they were brokers. [2:31:00] They asked us where we were from in Chinese, but we could not answer them back because were speaking to us in Chinese. Then they would switch back to North Korean, and if we ask that if we were from North Korea, he brought us and bought us clothes. And we got arrested again, we met brokers again. And by the brokers we were sold to Yun Yun Sung. At Yun Yun Sung, I was sold for 20 000 or 30 000 Chinese yuan.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Was it a person’s name? Yun Yun Sung? [2:32:00] Is that a person? Or is that a place?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

It’s name of a place.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

A place. How were you sold to place? Who were you sold to? Who is the person who sought to take control of you?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

An old lady bought me from the brokers. She lived alone. She had a son who had gone to Japan to make money. And she said that he was coming back in a few months, and she purchased [2:33:00] me in advance of his return. I lived with this old lady for several months.

But the head of the Chinese police asked us if life was okay for me, and I said, yes better than in North Korea. He asked about information about our identity to register our information. So we gave out everything, and accepted his intention to register us, but within less than a month, they came back and arrested every single one of us. At that time there were a total of [2:34:00] 60 North Korean women who were arrested in that way. So in the prison of Yun Yun Sung, there were 60 North Korean women in prison. We stayed there for about month and a half, almost two months, and from there we were close to being repatriated back to North Korea by the Dandong boarder guard.

We went to the Dandong border by bus, for about 9 hours. There was a lady, who was 9 months pregnant, but we did not take any break when we were traveling. So the pregnant lady, when she was in the restroom, labour started, [2:35:00] the arm of the baby started coming out first, and it was a sign that something was not going well. The baby did not make it, but she survived however. And she went back to North Korea. We gave the pregnant lady milk powder, eggs and nutritious food that the Chinese hospital gave us, but they were taken away by the North Korean security agency and we were punished by being forced to squat and stand up repeatedly. Even the women who had just given birth were forced to do the same and it made us feel degraded as women. [2:36:00] We were stripped naked when we were arrested, they searched our bodies, even our vaginas. They made us squat and stand, repeat this. And we had to spread our arms sideways, stand up and they searched.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Who performed the search?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

The North Korean security agency did.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Are they male or female officers of the agency?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

They were men.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Men or some women?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

There were no women.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What was the reason to getting you to do squats?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[2:37:00] The security.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

For hidden positions? For pregnancy or what? Or just to humiliate, in your view?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

They wanted to find if we had hidden money.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Did you have any hidden money or not?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

Yes, I had some hidden money in my clothing. It was spring, so I was wearing thick clothing. You know there is the outer and inner lining, so in between I sewed in the money. But it was not discovered. I was able to take that money out securely. So, the Bowibu, [2:38:00] the security agency, investigated me for about 20 days, and at that time, well that was the first time that I encountered the Bowibu. I didn’t know how evil these people could be. They asked me this question. So we asked people who received investigation before us and we asked what questions did they ask, and this person told me that they would ask us about our sexual experiences in China.

It just didn’t make sense, so we laughed. We were laughing and then these Bowibu people came into our room and shouted, ‘Who laughed?’. We laughed really quietly, but they heard us [2:39:00] laughing. It is because they had a security camera, they had CCTV in the room, that’s why they knew we were laughing in the room. One woman, she kept making this laughing sound so we told her to stop, we said, ‘You see this Bowibu, these people were angry, stop laughing’, but this lady kept laughing. So this man from the Bowibu brought a wooden stick, so he beat her but she kept laughing. He would kick her and she was bleeding in her nose, ears and in her mouth. But she kept laughing even though she was getting all these beatings. And this Bowibu, the agent, just got tired, and he left. We started crying and we were saying why do we have to live in a world like this. They took her away, and I don’t know what happened to her [2:40:00] afterwards.

There were some babies and they were hungry, but they were not feeding the babies, the children. They gave us two meals a day, one in the morning and one in the evening. I think there was about 30 corns. Most would be 100 at the most. They would have cabbage leaves, radish leaves, and they would just salt it and then… we were at the labor camp at Sinuiju. We were moved to the labor camp in Sinuiju, we stayed there for a while and then we were sent back to the detention center in Hamgyeong [2:41:00] Province, North Hamgyeong province. And I was there for about a month. And I was hit really badly on my head. I was beaten in the head. It was not the guards; it was the inmates who gave us the worst beating. There was a leader of a group, and these leaders would give us the really bad beatings. If they thought that we could pay, say if we had some money, then they would beat us to get the money. So I would swallow the money. I did that too. All these leaders of the group, they would wait by the toilet to make sure, so whenever we went to the toilet there were feces and they would use the sticks to make sure if the money was inside the feces. [2:42:00] And also, the women who got pregnant in China, we called this a pumping torture, they would make them do the pumping torture, and they would have us carry bricks and then run all day and that way the babies would be aborted.

Even today this is quite sickening; there was this pregnant woman who was about 9 months pregnant. She worked all day. The babies who were born were usually dead, but in this case the baby was born alive. The baby was crying as it was born; we were so curious, this was the first time we saw a baby being born. So we were watching this baby and we were so happy. But [2:43:00] suddenly we heard the footsteps. The security agent came in and this agent of the Bowibu said that… usually when a baby is born we would wash it in a bowl of water, but this agent told us to put the baby in the water upside down. So the mother was begging. “I was told that I would not be able to have the baby, but I actually got lucky and got pregnant so let me keep the baby, please forgive me”, but this agent kept beating this woman, the mother who just gave birth. And the baby, since it was just born, it was just crying. And the mother, with her shaking hands [2:44:00] she picked up the baby and she put the baby face down in the water. The baby stopped crying and we saw this water bubble coming out of the mouth of the baby. And there was an old lady who helped with the labor, she picked up the baby from the bowl of water and left the room quietly. So those kind of things repeatedly happened. That was in the detention center in the city of Chongjin of Hamgyeong Province.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

The mother put the baby face down, why didn’t she continue to resist? You said originally that she begged to be allowed to go, and not [2:45:00] to be punished in this way. Why did she give in so quickly?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

She could not resist anymore. It just was not possible. Nobody could have resisted at that point in time. I don’ know how I could describe this to you. This agent was the person in power. We had to listen to him, we had to be subservient to whatever order was given to us by this agent, we had no choice. [2:46:00] The mother, she was so scared. She was so frightened that she had no choice but to put the baby face down in the bowl of water.

We get up 4 in the morning and we come back at 10 at night. We were taught about the revolutionary history of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, and if we did not study well, we were not allowed to go to sleep. And that‘s the kind of one month that we spent. And I was sent to this security office by the military, when I got there I saw my Mom who left me about a year ago. I met my Mom for the first time in a year. So I met my [2:47:00] Mom at a detention house of the military. So my mom and I we hugged each other, we were holding each other and we were crying and I asked my mom where are my brother and sister. And my Mom told me that she was carrying a sack of rice and it was at night, and then out of nowhere, from the forest, the traffickers came out and kidnapped, abducted, my Mom and younger sister and sold them to some people. So my Mom was sold and my younger sister was sold. My younger sister, when she was sold, she was about 17 years old.

[2:48:00] So I was at that detention house for two and a half months. There were some defectors. Some defectors and my Mom and I, we were sent to 교화소 (*kyo-hwa-so*)number 11. There was no court, no trial, we only received ten stamps and sent to 교화소 (*Kyo-hwa-so*), it’s actually a prison. And once we arrived at this labor camp… my Mom had a disease, she had a bone related disease, so she was not allowed in the camp. I was the only one who was brought into the camp. I had to say good bye to my Mom, and since then I had to live in this Kyo-hwa-so.

And [2:49:00] once I joined the Kyo-hwa-so, I thought people were animals, because people were being treated like animals. Their eyes were sunken, and people were pale and they looked like animals. On the people there were frogs, these frogs were in a plastic bag, and they would skin and salt the frog and eat them. They would catch the grasshoppers and eat them; they were just picking up the grass and the plants from the ground and would eat them. So that’s what people were doing and that’s what I had to do.

I went into the camp in July of 1999; [2:50:00] at that time there was this girl, by the name Kim Young Hee, who was the same age as my younger sister. Because she was the same age as my younger sister, I treated her like a sister. And there were seven classes, classes one, two, three were the classes where people were put into the most difficult labor, and classes four to seven, they would just plant the corn and the beans so they had less intense work. And it was summer time, we went into the pear orchard to get rid of the weeds. So this girl, Young Hee, and I would always work side by-side.

[2:51:00] There was this special grass, this is a special grass that would usually be found in the spring time. But, we could find this grass planted in summer time, so we wanted to finish our work quickly so that we could, you know, find and we could eat the plant. We finished our work and we were about to pick up this grass or the plant that we knew we could eat. And then the guards saw us, and he came running and he stepped on our hands and then he brought us to this place and he told us to kneel. In the camp, you are only to do the work that you have been instructed to do. We had committed a crime because we [2:52:00] had reached out to pick up a plant. That is why he had us kneel. He told one of the heads of the class to pick up the plant, the roots included, the soil included. So the class leader unearthed these two plants, with soil and roots, and they put it in front of us, and then they told us to eat. I don’t know about you, but telling us to eat the soil was the same thing as telling us to die. We were begging, we were asking for forgiveness. But they kept beating us. So Young Hee and I had to eat this plant. If you have diarrhea in the camp, you die as [2:53:00] a result of diarrhea, that’s the dehydration. But Young Hee, after eating this plant, she had a serious case of diarrhea. When I was eating the plant, it was really difficult. The soil doesn’t go down your throat well. It was quite tough to keep it down. I was okay but Young Hee, she had a serious case of diarrhea.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

She was not a relative, she was a friend that you had with you on this journey.

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

Yes, she was not relative, but she was somebody that I was treating like a sister. So Young Hee, she had this serious case of diarrhea. In North Korea, when you have diarrhea, they would burn corn, and they would grind it into powder. They think it works, so that is all we could do. So I gave her this ground corn powder [2:54:00] but her diarrhea did not stop. From that time in our camp about 20 people died a day, and that was really scared that Young Hee would die. And Young Hee’s parents’ home town is Jeju Island of South Korea. So Young Hee’s parents in order to go to Jeju-do… Young Hee’s parents were trying to escape to Jeju-do, so Young Hee and Young Hee’s parents escaped, but they were caught in China. And then they were brought into the camp and parents were executed in front of Young Hee, so Young Hee was all alone. She was an orphan.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Executed in front of her, did you see that?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

No, Young Hee told me this, she told me about this. [2:55:00] So I always told Young Hee that she had to make it to Jeju-do and I promised that we would make it together. So suddenly, she began to collapse because of this serious case of diarrhea, and then she could not get up. She couldn’t even eat. And she began to lose a lot of weight, to the point that she could not get up, and eat with her own hand. She was lying down all the time, she could not even turn her body. She was close to dying. And that’s when Young Hee said, “Unni I don’t want to die, but I think I’m going to make it first to Jeju-do. Unni you have to make it to Jeju-doo, I will be meeting you in Jeju-do.” That’s what she [2:56:00] told me. I said no, but there was nothing I could do. I could not give her any medicine. And when she died, she couldn’t even close her eyes. She died with her eyes open. I cried my heart out.

And in a penicillin bottle, I wrote on a piece of paper the date of her birth, the day she died, her name. I hung that bottle around her neck. I tied her hair. We tied her legs, her arms, we wrapped her body in a plastic bag. This is what happens in a prison camp in North Korea, a kyo-hwa-so in North Korea, that’s how we wrapped dead bodies. In a warehouse when [2:57:00] we have 20 dead bodies, we take those bodies to a place called Kkot Dong San, literally it means a flower hill. We dig a hole that could fit 20 dead bodies, we bury the bodies there and after we cover the hole, we would step on it. And I left that place, we...

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Who was it that made her to eat plant with the earth? What is the name or identity of that officer?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

There is no way that we can know the [2:58:00] name of the person, I was in class room number 2 and the person was in charge of class room number 2. We called him Sun Sang Nim, which means security guard, now we called them Bo An Won. But in the past we called them An Jun Won. It was in the winter, so if you dig the ground, the earth is clumped together and so it was not easy, it was not a proper way of burying the body. We covered the hole with clumped and frozen earth, but after a week when we went to the tomb, it was gone, the bodies were not there. We felt strange when we were going up that flower [2:59:00] hill. We later found out that the old man who was guarding the place had his dogs eat the bodies. He raised five dogs and the dogs were eating the heads and the body parts of dead bodies. This is the reality of Jung San, kyo-hwa-so number 11.

After a few days, we had to celebrate the birthday of Kim Jong Il, and an order was given to the kyo-hwa-so. There was an amnesty, I was released. After 8 months in the kyo-hwa-so, and Young Hee didn’t make it. When the amnesty was granted, on the day [3:00:00] we were granted amnesty we were waiting for the train to Chongjin, but the train never came. So we had to stay there for 20 more days. We were waiting for that train, but even in 20 days that we waited to train to come, there were people who died who didn’t get on that the train. Some people were carrying each other because they could not walk on their feet, and that’s how some of us left the kyo-hwa-so.

What is more egregious is that people who were so excited that they were being released, they died one by one, on that train. The swore that they would never go back to prison, they were excited about it, so excited about it, but they had diarrhea. Even if they were granted amnesty they died [3:01:00] one after one because of diarrhea and we had to lay the bodies in the train station.

So I got out of the prison and I heard rumors that my sister had become a street child in the Chongjin market. It was very difficult to find my sister, but I asked other street children, I spent about 2 to 3 days looking for her. My sister was hospitalized in Chongjin city because she had a frozen foot. I went to see her and she was on the verge of death. I carried her on my back. [3:02:00] We left the hospital and I went to my workplace and got a place to live. We did not have any salt or rice. For a week we did not have any salt and that made us swollen. And because we had terrible food in the prison, as soon as I was out of prison, my face was swollen like this. It was very difficult to survive and there were a lot of worms in my body, I had to take medicine for it. And I saw a lot of worms come out of my body. And that’s when I realized that I was almost going to die, but I made it anyway.

[3:03:00] Somebody came to our house and said that my mom was waiting for us at the Tumen River. I told my sister to wait, I left the house with this person to cross the Tumen River. But my mother was not there and this person must have done some research, he heard that I was living alone and he tried to sell me. But, I was not sold. And I remembered the phone number of the place that I lived with my Mom in China. I called that number and I found my mother there. We got reconnected, we talked on the phone, and I was able to live with my mom in the same neighborhood. [3:04:00] While we were living together, we were exposed, we were reported to the Chinese police, and so I was repatriated back to North Korea for the fourth time.

I was sent to Onsong and I was delivered to the North Korean Security Agency. And the search, the torture was harsher than the one that I experienced at the Sinuiju border guard. In Onsong, if they thought that I was not giving in, [3:05:00] the beating was extremely harsh. Right after I was imprisoned, I was stripped naked and they searched for money. If I complained and said that I did not want to take my clothes off, they would beat me up with a wooden stick. So I was beaten up a lot, I complained but nobody could help me. And I thought that the Chinese were treating the North Koreans just like the North Koreans, there were a lot of North Korean women who were arrested when they tried to escape, and there were also men who tried to escape. [3:06:00] They were punished so much so that they were covered in blood. We had no idea when we were going to be repatriated back to North Korea but we were returned to North Korea with other people. We went to the Onsong Bowibu, the Onsong Security Agency. Unlike the Sinuiju Security Agency, they gave us corn soup for every meal.

The cells were so full of people that they had to put the people in the corridor, and at the end of the corridor was the toilet and a guard was in charge of the toilet. He was wearing a mask. He would always go through the feces to find if there was any money. [3:07:00] I attempted to lie for a couple of times and I got a beating for that. They asked me whether I went to the church. I did, but it was impossible to say that I did go to the church and I lied that I did not believe in God. That was my first lie. And another lie that I said was that, when questioned if I have any contacts with South Koreans… I had met a South Korean once, but at the time, I was not able to say that I did. So I lied, and they beat me up for lying. If I had said that I went to church, and if I had said that I [3:08:00] met a South Korean, then I would have been executed immediately, or sent to the kwan-li-so, a political camp. If you say ‘su-yong-so’, then North Koreans would not understand it, you would have to use the term ‘kwan-li-so’.

So I denied and survived. And I was sent to the Chongjin jip-kyul-so. I was sent to Chongjin jip-kyul-so in 1998 once, and in 2002 I once again arrested, but situation of the jip-kyul-so had become different. There were rumors saying that Kim Jun Eun heard that [3:09:00] the UN was taking an interest in the situation in the political camps and that UN was inquiring about the terrible conditions of these camps. So, the rumors said that Kim Jung Eun had ordered that the living conditions in the camps be improved. So, the situation had been alleviated a little bit. But the level of torture remained the same.

After a while I was sent back to the Military Security Agency, I was found to be pregnant, three months pregnant at that time. I was so surprised that I was pregnant. [3:10:00] And I remember in 1999 when the baby was born in the prison, I thought I was going to go through the same thing, but they said that they were going to make me get an abortion, and what they meant by abortion was instead of giving me a shot, they make me lie on a table, and get a surgery right away. There was a lot of bleeding, and right after I got the operation, I was sent to the Hamhung Kyo-hwa-so Number 55. There was no trial given. I was bleeding a lot, I could not stand straight, but the security agent that was in charge of me, [3:11:00] we called them, Bo An Won, the security agency. The Bo An Won talked to the head of security. He said that he would take accountability and he proposed that because I was bleeding a lot, they should let us go. And he said that I would not attempt to leave North Korea again, so thanks to this person, I was released.

I was able to live with my sister again. But, it struck me that we had to do something about the situation, [3:12:00] we did not have freedom, my sister had no freedom. North Koreans did not have any freedom. It was a shame that we were not given a single opportunity to enjoy our freedom. I told myself that we needed to leave North Korea to get the stories out. And I promised my sister that I would come back for her. I left again, to China, to find my mother, and to go to South Korea. In March 2007, I arrived in Korea. I came to South Korea via [3:13:00] Dandong. I had four counterfeit passports, I was initially trying to get through the Da Ryun port. But I was caught. The Chinese police questioned me for five years, asking me whether I was North Korean. I told them I was an ethnic Korean living in China and that I was married to a Korean man in South Korea and I told them…

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

How long did they question you?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

For five hours. They questioned me for 5 hours. And because I would not give in, they put me on the phone with a [3:14:00] person in the Chinese embassy in South Korea. The inquiry, the investigation, was carried out in Chinese. And the person in the consulate was also speaking in Chinese, they asked me about Korea, like how the rice was sold in Korea or how much an apple cost in Korea. They asked all sorts of questions. Fortunately when I was in China, I had access to the satellite news of South Korea, so I was able to give proper answers. In one month, I was able to renew my passport. And via Dandong, I safely arrived in South Korea.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

From where did you arrive in [3:15:00] the Republic of Korea?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

From Dandong to Korea, it took me 9 hours by ship.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Approximately how long ago was that?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

It was 2007, March of 2007.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

So you made four attempts to leave North Korea?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

Yes, I escaped four times. I was repatriated three times.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And have you been back to North Korea since you secured your passport in the Republic of Korea and came here in [3:16:00] 2007? Have you been back to the North?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

No, I haven’t. Well, I have 2 children, I have a husband. If I had no family… my younger sister, and my younger brother and my Mom have joined me in Korea. But, if I have no family here, maybe I could have gone back to North Korea. From China, I came to Korea. I was the first one in my family. Then I brought my [3:17:00] Mum and my daughter. I am not going to talk about my daughter. I don’t want to talk about my daughter, about how she came to be.

Anyway, in 2010, I think it was spring of 2010, there was a call from China. And that was from my younger brother. I had given my contact information to somebody in China. And my brother has escaped to China with a friend and he wanted to come to South Korea, so I brought my younger brother to South Korea. So my brother and my Mum were able to reunite after 11 years. And in 2011, I think it was August of 2011, there was a call from the National Security Agency of the Republic of Korea and that was about my sister arriving in South Korea. I couldn’t believe it because [3:18:00] she was sold and I had no information about her. And then after 13 years she was able to make it to South Korea. So at the NSA, I met with my sister, for the first time in 13 years, now she is living with me. So she was sold when she was 17. And when she was 30, she was able to come to South Korea and be reunited with the family. And about my father, we have no information about him.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

If you have your mother, your brother and your child, why would you wish to go back to North Korea in light of all the experiences you’ve described?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[3:19:00] You mean me? Would I want to go back to North Korea? If I had a mission, then I would go to North Korea, but now I have family, I can’t go to North Korea. In 2008, I went to China in order to save North Korean defectors so I came back to Korea with a North Korean defector. This ethnic Korean who was living in China had been kidnapped by the security agency of China. [3:20:00] And this person sent me a message via the messenger on the computer warning me and this ethnic Korean in China wanted to have come to Korea, but right now I can’t even go to China. And I understand… but I am still sending things to North Korea and I’m doing things for North Koreans. I cannot tell you what I’m doing in public, but I am doing things for the people in North Korea.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[unclear] … what you call your mission?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

I will be going forward, [3:21:00] I will need to do more. There are a lot of mandates. I am embarrassed, I am ashamed to be here. There are people dying but because I was so desperate to make ends meet for myself, I was not able to help and I’m guilty of it. I live like a prisoner, the reason for my living, the reason that I had to come to South Korea, in addition for my own freedom, is to survive and live on behalf of those who didn’t [3:22:00] make it. People died for no reason. To help their souls rest in peace I have to be accountable for their lives. I don’t deserve to be in pain, I don’t deserve to die.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

And what is your dream for Korea for the future? What would you like to see?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

When I was a child, I wanted to be a journalist, a writer. Today, I am a writer for [3:23:00] a fan club for North Korean defectors. I have a book. I have my shortcomings as a writer, but I have achieved my dream as a writer. I am registered in Chollanam-do University in Political affairs studies. Politically, we have different ideologies, but my dream is to become a journalist or report writing about foreign affairs or politics. The reason for dreaming to be a journalist is to expose the stories of women who have been sold to China. These cases will not be recorded in the history books, everything is done in secrecy, [3:24:00] and after reunification, I want to be able to show and tell people in North Korea about freedom. I am very sorry for them, but I want to learn as much as I can so that when the day comes, I can be a good leader for them. I wish for the reunification of the two Koreas as soon as possible.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

I am told that amongst young people in the South, there is a declining interest in reunification. Do you agree with that? What would be your explanation?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[3:25:00] I give lectures on security these days. Students, college students, a lot of young people in South Korea have very little awareness about the security situation of the country. We don’t have enough instruction about politics. I think we need programs to teach young people about politics and security. The war is still going on, the war is not over. We need to emphasize that, and North Korea is responsible for taking provocative actions. [3:26:00] We need to raise awareness about national security and talk to them about the North Korean government and the regime.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Is there anything else you would like to tell us that you have not put before us today in your testimony?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

This is my first time, testifying at an event like this. I don’t know if I have said all the things that I wanted to say. I have a disability; actually I was given disability level 4. [3:27:00] Because I was beaten so much on my head, so I have disability related to my head, but I rather not say what sort of disability I have. But I have been taking medication for about 5 years. And if I don’t take this medication, I would die. And I wanted to give up, I wanted to give up everything. And I really didn’t see the reason for living. Kim Jong Il was torturing me, not just in North Korea but also in South Korea. That’s the kind of thought that kept coming back to me. But, I’m here representing those who have passed away in North Korea. So I cannot just give up my life. [3:28:00] But North Korean defectors have not given up on North Korea. It’s the Kim Jong Il regime that has given up on us, that has… we have not given up our home town, our home of North Korea. We have lost half of Korea to this Kim family, that is how I see it. I don’t know where there will be reunification, but I believe that reunification will occur in the near future.

When Kim Jong Il died, for the first time, I was happy to hear that a person died. I cried, I was happy but I cried. I did not cry because he was the leader of the country that I belong to. I cried because he died a [3:29:00] rather easy death, after all the things he did to people. I could talk for days, but I think that North Korea has been taken away from us. Half of the Korea has been taken away from us, and I would like to have it back. Thank you.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

When the terrible things happened to you in the course of the journey that you just described, did you know that you had universal human rights that belong to you that you were being deprived of both in North Korea and in China?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[3:30:00] Before I left China, I had no idea what freedom was, what human rights were. China was a heaven. What the ethnic Koreans living in China told us was that the Korean War was initiated by North Korea. That came as a shock. And the poverty-stricken South Korea became so successful and I saw that on television and that’s when I realized what freedom was, what true human rights were.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Is there anything you want to tell about that you haven’t covered in your testimony?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[3:31:00] Nothing is in my mind right now, it’s all blank. I thought there would be more that I wish to share, but they are very personal, so I would like to skip that part if I may. In the very inner part of North Korea, I just want to say that, people are fighting against the regime in North Korea. That’s all I have to say.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

What do you think is the main thing that the COI should take away from what you have said to us today in the long story of your four attempts to escape from the North Korean regime?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[3:32:00] The human rights of the general public in North Korea are very important, but the human right situation for the North Korean defectors needs to be taken care of. The situation is worse. The stories about the prison camps that I have shared today are real and North Korean defectors… forcible repatriation to North Korea must end. The world has been talking about this but China hasn’t even moved a little bit. Forced repatriation must be stopped. That’s the priority. It must stop. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that it must end [3:33:00] immediately. They cannot be returned to North Korea, and the human rights of the North Korean defectors must be protected.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

Thank you very much. I will ask my colleagues if they have any questions for you.

**Ms. Sonja Biserko**

I would like to ask you few questions. Three times that you went back to Korea, did you have a chance to communicate with people and tell them about your sufferings? And what were the reactions from your friends, neighbours and so on?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[3:34:00] When I was repatriated and imprisoned, after I was released, my friends threw stones at me. And when I was released from the prison camps, we had to swear that we would never talk about what happened in the prison camps. We could not talk about it, even if we did… people who had been to a kyo-hwa-so, we would talk about what we had experienced. But in North Korea, the fact that I was repatriated, I was treated like a traitor, people would not talk to me. So [3:35:00] after I was repatriated, I was very lonely. Not everyone was cold to me, but some people approached to me to give me salt because I was not in a good condition. But I don’t think I had the opportunity to share my experiences.

**Mr. Marzuki Darusman**

Ms. Jee, you said that you escaped four times. Normally, what we know is that when someone escapes from North Korea, and is repatriated or sent back, [3:36:00] they are put in a very restrictive prison camp. Now you escaped four times and were able to escape for four times, these were conditions that allowed you to do so. How was that possible, because escaping is a major violation of Korean law? And yet, you did not go through this very restrictive process of being put in a [3:37:00] political prison camp. Was that the case?

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

If I try to come to South Korea then I would have been sent to a political prison camp. And if I met with South Koreans, if I had met with the National Security Agency from South Korea, or if I went to church, or if I believed in God, then I would have been sent to a political prison in a prison camp. But, I told the North Koreans that I didn’t do any of those things. The first time I escaped, at that time there was a food shortage. And even [3:38:00] the soldiers were going hungry. I gave the soldiers, I mean… soldiers would allow us to cross the river for some bread and pig and alcohol, that is why my brother, my mom and I could escape. And the second time I had gone to China by traffickers, and third time I had gone to China through the traffickers, I was trafficked. And the fourth time, after the third repatriation to North Korea, remember the girl that would have been trafficked with me? The neighbor who had been sold to China? So with her, she and I said, “Let’s try this route [3:39:00] that the traffickers have used”. That’s why we were able to escape. You may ask how I was able to escape four times. Once you are brought in the camp, or back to North Korea, for several months, there are people that have surveillance on you. But after some months, the surveillance gets loosened and they think I had settled to back to North Korean society. So after some time, all the control is loosened, and since I had my younger brother in North Korea, the people were not watching me very closely. So I was able to say that I was going to the market to buy something and then I was able to make my escape.

**Mr. Marzuki Darusman**

On the fourth time you escaped, you did not confront the traffickers, you were also able to escape from the traffickers.

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

[3:40:00] The first time, I escaped without traffickers.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

In your knowledge, not just guessing, is the trafficking of women in North Korea and in China a big issue? How many women are in your knowledge involved in trafficking? Are they being trafficked against their will, or tricked, or are they engaging in sex work for survival and for the hope of a better life? Because there is a difference, doing involuntary trafficking, and voluntary engagement in [3:41:00] sex work for economic reward.

**Ms. JEE Heon A**

I think there are two types. Some women are trafficked against their will. In order to survive in China, some women believe that they have to be sold. Of course, I was not trafficked intentionally, so I do not understand how others would feel. But I think some women are intentionally trafficked. People want to work and make money but the Chinese would not want to pay them. [3:42:00] The Chinese would threaten and say, ‘Are you just going to work for free in exchange for food, or would you like to be repatriated back to North Korea?’ And North Korean defectors, they just say that, ‘I would work for the food, I will not get paid’. But the abuses are really severe. I don’t know if trafficking is the right word, smuggling is the right word. But if you do get married, the ‘would-be’ husbands would do something to ensure their safety. That is why some women rather be trafficked. It is not about freedom, it is not about human rights. [3:43:00] There are men, one man would come into the room, they would take a woman, one from a line of women. The ages of the women would be told, and the price will be settled at that place. They would even ask for price cuts. So it is somewhat like commodity. Being trafficked is being trafficked as products or commodities.

**Mr. Michael Kirby**

[3:44:00] Thank you for telling us your story. Thank you for coming along today to do that. And it is important we receive the life stories of people who have suffered deprivation of their human rights so that we can produce a report to the United Nations which will cover all the matters in our mandate. So I’m grateful to you to coming along. And thank you indeed for doing so.

Would you before you leave today, please talk with the members of the Secretariat, as to whether, on being given advice, you want your name to be associated with the transcript, or you prefer your name not to be associated with the transcript in order that there would not be any harm done to any members of your family who might be identified. I don’t know if that is possible, from the level of the evidence or the detail of the evidence but, please [3:45:00] talk with a member of Secretariat just to whether that would not be in your interest to do that, or not in their interest for you to do it. So, if you do that before you leave. Thank you very much. You are excused from further attendance at the Commission of Inquiry. Thank you.

That concludes the session of the hearing today. Tomorrow morning, on Wednesday the 21st of August, we will commence our public hearing at 9 o’clock. That will continue to 1 o’clock. And then it will be resumed at 2:30 in the afternoon until 6 o’clock at night. So it will be a long day and we have many witnesses who will be giving evidence, most of them rather shorter than the two witnesses today. [3:46:00] But the witnesses will come along and in the same forthright manner will give their testimony for the benefit of ourselves and everyone present and for the record. This session of the Commission of Inquiry on alleged violations of human rights in North Korea for today is concluded.

[ph]: indicates transcribed text that has been typed as it sounds (phonetic).

[unclear]**:** indicates parts that were inaudible.

[Multiple Speakers]: more than one speaker is speaking at once and no exact transcription is possible.