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# United States Senate

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Ambassador Kelly Craft  
Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations  
United States Mission to the United States  
799 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Ambassador Craft,

As the United States prepares to serve as the President of the United Nations (UN) Security Council this December, I urge you to work with your colleagues to ensure that a meeting on North Korean human rights abuses is placed on the Security Council's agenda.

From 2014 to 2017, the Security Council held an annual meeting to discuss the North Korean regime's systematic violations of human rights. The United States worked closely with both permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, playing a pivotal role to ensure that the issue was consistently on the agenda.<sup>1</sup>

In 2018, the annual meeting was not convened for the first time in five years. The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations reportedly was unable to place the topic on the Security Council's agenda due to the inability of the U.S. Mission to gather enough support from other Security Council members.<sup>2</sup> I believe this outcome to be unacceptable.

Stripped of civil and political liberties, including freedoms of speech, press, and religion, North Koreans lack basic human rights. The government, headed by Kim Jong Un, maintains maximum control, relying on heinous tactics to instill fear in the North Korean people. An estimated 80,000 to 120,000 North Koreans are currently detained in political prison camps.<sup>3</sup> Testimonies from defectors detail horrifying conditions of deliberate starvation, enslavement, rape, and other acts of sexual violence.<sup>4</sup> Alongside the Kim regime's illicit nuclear weapons

<sup>1</sup> David Wainer, *North Korea Human Rights Debate Sought by U.S., Allies at UN*, Bloomberg (Nov. 13, 2019), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-11-13/north-korean-human-rights-debate-sought-by-u-s-allies-at-un>.

<sup>2</sup> Michelle Nichols, *U.S. drops bid for December U.N. meeting on North Korea abuses: diplomats*, Reuters (Dec. 7, 2018), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-rights-un/us-drops-bid-for-december-un-meeting-on-north-korea-abuses-diplomats-idUSKBN1O6281>.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, United Nations (Feb. 7, 2014), pg.12, [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/25/63](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/25/63).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

program, violations of this scale must be brought to the Security Council, the organ of the United Nations most responsible for the maintenance of global peace, security, and promotion of respect for human rights.

Public scrutiny—at the top of the United Nations system—sends a powerful message to North Korea and other nations. The North Korean Permanent Representative to the UN and other members of the delegation have repeatedly denied allegations of human rights violations.<sup>5</sup> China and Russia, permanent members of the Security Council, have also opposed annual discussion of North Korean abuses.<sup>6</sup>

During its upcoming Security Council presidency, the United States has a moral responsibility to elevate the rights and dignities of the millions of North Koreans who live every day under the threat of persecution.

Sincerely,

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

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<sup>5</sup> Ja Song Nam, Ambassador Permanent Representative, *Letter dated 15 December 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council*, United Nations (Dec. 15, 2014), [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2014\\_896.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_896.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> U.N. SCOR, 69th Sess., 7353d mtg., U.N. Doc. S/PV.7353 (Dec. 22, 2014), <https://undocs.org/S/PV.7353>.