



The Korean War Refugee Crisis

Picture:
AFP/Getty.

INST 182 w/ Professor Maria Hoehn.

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NEW VERDICT ON AN OLD WAR
**RECKONING
WITH THE
KOREAN WAR**
BRUCE CUMINGS

Eugene Hasenfus, shot down delivering weapons to the *contras* in Nicaragua, is an unlikely carrier of historical truth. His capture embarrassed the Reagan Administration, but how can we grasp his symbolism in the broadest sense? He was on a rollback mission, just as he had been when he worked for Air America during the Vietnam War. He is an asterisk in a forty-year history of sometimes open, sometimes clandestine attempts to depose Communist regimes.

The matrix of thought and decision on all such interventions was formed in the 1950s by the Korean War and the options it raised: accommodation, containment or rollback. Then as now, shadowy and allegedly private actors interfered with the foreign policy process in an explosive mix. Are there lessons to be learned from this past?

Heidegger asserts that there is an intimate connection among historical memory, the naming of things and that process we call thinking. Bad memories give you bad thinking. By naming, we locate or "call" something for the memory to rescue it from oblivion and keep it for thought.

It doesn't seem to be history that we remember, but particular verdicts. Ask yourself the following question: What kind of war was the Korean War? The Truman liberal will respond, It was a limited war, a success that brought containment to East Asia, invoked collective security arrangements and taught the Communists a lesson—this far, and no farther. The MacArthur conservative will assert, It was the first defeat in our history, and it showed that there is no substitute for victory.

South Korea Faces Food Shortage

Rice Crops Ruined
in Fighting, Nation
Seeks Grain Imports

PUSAN, Korea, June 28
(Reuters) — There will be
many empty rice bowls in Ko-
rea this year.

Slogging infantry and
churning tanks destroyed an
estimated 240,000 tons of rice
in the paddies north of Seoul
and another 160,000 tons was
lost due to drought in the
southern provinces.

To ward off starvation and
meet the needs of her own peo-
ple as well as 170,000 refugees
fleeing the Communists in North
Korea, the country will have to
depend on an expected bumper
crop of wheat later this year
and on imported grain.

Rice Price Inflated

Petitions from hungry prov-
inces reach this temporary capi-
tal almost every day and thou-
sands of South Koreans find that
they cannot afford rice at the
present inflated prices.

South Korea was once the rice
bowl of this corner of Asia, but
now she has had to negotiate a
contract with Thailand for 21,000
tons of rice and the government
has allocated \$7,000,000 to buy
51,000 tons of barley in America.

Cold War Conflict or Humanitarian Crisis?

American historical discourse has declared Korean War the “forgotten war.” Forgotten by whom? To understand war as a humanitarian crisis is to reframe the way media has overwritten history. The goal is to hold on, simultaneously, the many interpretations of the (ongoing) Korean conflict. As proxy war, as domestic geographic upheaval, as a forced global diaspora.



TELLS OF SNUB BY G. I.'S:
Lieut. Gen. K. S. Thinsayya,
India's neutral chief in Korea,
who told U. N. Command that
twenty-two pro-Red U. S. sol-
diers had gone back on word.

PRO-RED G. I.'S BALK AT HEARING PLEAS BY U. N. IN KOREA

22 Americans Insist Koreans
Who Chose Communism Go
to Interviews First

DEAN LEAVING TOMORROW

Offers to Resume Conference
on Peace Parley if Foe Will
Withdraw Accusations

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

INDIAN VILLAGE, Korea, Mon-
day, Dec. 14.—The United Nations
Command was informed officially
last night that the United States
soldiers who refused to remain
prisoners of the Communist com-
mand in Korea had preferred to ap-
pear today before their fellow
countrymen for ex-... a of
why th...

40 KILLED AS FIRE HITS KOREAN SLUM


PUSAN, Korea, April 4 (Sun-
day) (AP) — A leaky gas main
ignited a slum, into a
and packing crate slum, into a
roaring fire trap yesterday in
which many of the estimated 40
killed were piled on top of one
another in their terrorized
search for escape.

The victims, all South Kore-
ans, included one nine-member
family. A high wind kept the
leaping flames out of control
for three hours.

Lack of escape facilities were
blamed by U.S. Army officials
for the deaths and for the 100
for the deaths and for the 100
injured. The 3700 homeless
huddled in two theaters and a
school building.

This third devastating fire in
recent months in the refugee-
jammed port destroyed 460
slum dwellings, then spread to
Korean factories and ware-
houses loaded with tons of

Brief Context of the Situation in Korea

The Korean War took place from June 25, 1950 to July 27, 1953. An armistice was signed to end the fighting, but no peace treaty was ever created, so the two countries are still technically at war. The war was sparked because there were two governments existing within one country separated by the 38th parallel. Both governments wanted to unify the country under their own control and the war started when the northern forces invaded the south on June 25, 1950. The result of this war was not only the separation of a country into two, but the separation of families because some were left behind in the North and could not travel to the South. 

U.S. Involvement in the Korean War/With the Refugees

- Although the U.S. had sided with the southern forces of Korea and fought beside them, the U.S. forces had an informal understanding that they could use force to control the movement of the refugees.
- No Gun Ri Massacre: U.S. forces shot at Korean refugees because they were worried that Korean forces from the north had infiltrated. An unidentified number of refugees were killed.
- Heungnam Evacuation: “From Dec. 19-24, 1950, approximately 105,000 troops and 98,000 civilians” were evacuated from Heungnam, North Korea as northern troops were beginning to surround the southern and United Nations troops and the refugees. This “christmas miracle” was accomplished with the help of the troops and Hyun Bong-hak, a medical doctor.

U.S. Involvement in the Korean War/With the Refugees Cont.

Due to the air attacks of both the UN forces and the Chinese and northern Korean forces, many bridges leading to the southern part of the country had been destroyed as a precaution to keep northern forces out of the south. However, refugees were still trying desperately to cross into the southern part of the country by those damaged bridges. On December 4, 1950, photographer Max Desfor captured this image of refugees crawling on the broken bridge over the Taedong River in what is now North Korea to try to reach the south.



Journey of the Refugees Within Korea



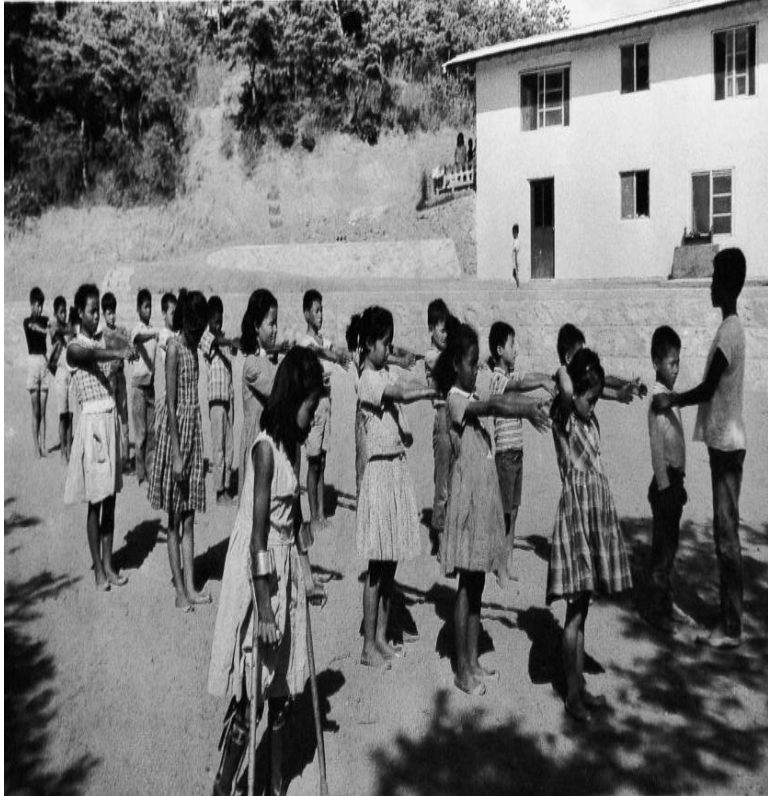
A majority of the refugees moved to the southern end of Korea in the hope of outrunning the North Korean army

Many thought of the move as temporary, and left precious belongings at their homes to retrieve later

The refugees were pushed into the southwestern end of Korea where the rice fields were located and so that they would not interfere with the military

Some of the main cities that housed the refugees were Pusan, Taegu, Taejon, Ponang, Kojo Island, Kusan, and Cheju

Journey of the Refugees Abroad



Many of the refugees that went abroad went to the U.S. and were orphans up for adoption or new wives of the army men

During this time period, Korean culture placed a heavy emphasis on bloodlines, so many of the biracial children fathered by the army men were the first up for adoption

Many of the other children were orphans whose parents died in the war

From 1950-1960 approximately 500 Korean woman went to the U.S. a year as wives of American soldiers

KOREA MOTHER HAS 120 IN HER FLOCK

Playing Foster Parent to Teen-age Girls Can Be Trying—When Boys Prowl About

BY DAN L. THRAPP, Times Religion Editor

Foster mothering 120 Korean teen-age girls can be a headache, as for instance, when amorous-minded youths prowls around in the dead of night whistling for them, but more often it is a rewarding experience.

At any rate this is the conclusion of Mrs. Hanna Yang Kim, 62, who in the bitter reconstruction years since the Korean hostilities ceased has cared for more than 500 girls. Many of them were mere children, aged 5 or so, when they arrived.

Others have since married and left the informal home Mrs. Yang maintains for them at Pusan. She described her work in an interview here.

Never Disappointed

Since most of the girls are refugees from North Korea, and cannot go back, they are often homesick, sometimes ill, and, despite their numbers, occasionally lonesome. In any event, they turn to Mrs. Yang for solace and they are never disappointed.

With that many girls, birthdays are a common occurrence, but parties are costly and Mrs. Yang couldn't swing an individual party for each girl.

So she has a birthday party once each month for all the girls who have birthdays during that month. The only cakes are pancakes and the rest of the party meal usually is rice and soup, but it is always a treat and for the girls each party is a fabulous success.

Started in Tent

Raised a Presbyterian, Mrs. Yang, from a well-known and prosperous Korean family,

and with human labor, even to plowing.

"It would cost \$100 to buy a cow to pull the plow," explained Mrs. Yang, "and it would cost twice that to feed the cow during the winter. So the girls pull the plow."

Thieves made off with anything not nailed down, even with squealing pigs, and Mrs. Yang had constantly to keep a weather eye out.

"Men are terrible," she confided, but she didn't mean it the way it sounded.

U.N. Helps Out

Finally, with help from U.N. armed forces personnel and from other sources, she managed to fence her farm and thus control the depredations. This, of course, did nothing to lessen the attraction of her girls' home for young Korean men.

"Sometimes they wake me up in the middle of the night, with their whistling for the girls," she said. "But watchfulness thwarts them."

Church World Service and other relief agencies help support her girls until they can make their own living and are grown. Some have been "adopted" by U.S. foster parents who support them at the rate of \$10 monthly.

Ardent Admirer

At Mrs. Yang's they are taught to sew and do other useful things.

"I don't let them just play and loaf, but teach them to become good citizens and



VISITOR FROM KOREA — Mrs. Hanna Yang Kim, right, who runs a foster home for 120 teen-age girls in South Korea, chats with Mrs. Janet Whang at Korea Gospel Mission, Inglewood, as Mrs. Yang visited.

Times photo

- Religious charity organizations and UN Relief funds made up the bulk of refugee relief efforts.
- Relief efforts also took form of clothing drives and canned food drives.
- Sensationalized terms like "waifs" were used to describe South Korean children refugees.
- Assimilation into 1950s America often looked as a pledging to anti-communism, Christianity, and domestic social norms.

Korean Refugees Reception and the World

Due to American racial quotas on immigration, the North American continent did not receive a large influx of immigrants from the Korean Peninsula until they were abolished in the 1960s. On the Asian continent, the Chinese Civil War ended shortly after the beginning of the Korean War and established China as a communist power. China did not see the Korean citizens as refugees, and to this day maintains a policy of returning North Korean citizens to the DPRK. Russia also supported North Korea, and boycotted the United Nations for a significant portion of the beginning of the war. The United Nations High Committee on Refugees released very few documents concerning the Korean War, as the mandate of the UNHRC at the time did not cover internally displaced persons, and also a Euro-centric view on what constitutes a refugee. There were however several United Nations plans to deal with the displacement of civilians during the war, but Cold War politics and a wide ideological divide on the progression of the war made it difficult for both sides to reach a compromise.

REDS REJECT ALLIED PLAN FOR DISPLACED PERSONS

MUNSAN, Korean, Feb. 1 (Friday)- The allies today offered—and the Reds rejected—a proposal that teams from neutral nations be named to interview displaced persons in Korea to determine where they want to live after a Korean armistice.

The proposal was made at Panmunjom by Rear Adm. R. E. Libby after the Reds turned down the allied plan to give the same job to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Communists said the ICRC was not neutral.

In yesterday's meeting the U.N. command gave the Reds a chance to bring up their pet project—demand for the withdrawal of foreign troops in Korea.

Vice-Adm. C. Turner Joy, chief allied negotiator, attempting to speed the talks, invited the Reds to open immediate negotiations on the final agenda item, although agreement has not yet been reached on other major issues.

Refugee Plans in Korea Spurred; Masses Kept Out of Pusan Area Barriers Set Up Around a Wide Perimeter in Southeast Sector While Exodus to Near-By Islands Is Speeded

By GEORGE BARRETT

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

PUSAN, Korea, Friday, Jan. 19 —A chain of roadblocks and rail and river barriers has been sprung announcement, so even to guess at the death rate is impossible. But civil assistance administrators say that the rugged living in Korea

Trimmed-Down Refugee Bill Passed by House

WASHINGTON, July 28 (AP) The House tonight approved a trimmed-down version of President Eisenhower's request for authority to admit 240,000 "special quota" refugees from Communism and other immigrants into the United States.

The House set the limit at 217,000, while the Senate worked into the night on its own version of the legislation.

Final Senate action on the bill was put over until tomorrow, however, when debate will be limited to 10 minutes on each amendment.

The Senate approved an amendment by Sen. McCarran (D) Nev., providing for the admission of 2000 Chinese refugees and reducing from 12,000 to 10,000 the number of escapees residing in allied Western European countries who could enter the United States under the bill.

The House vote was 221-185. The aliens would be admitted within the next three years and would be in addition to the regular quotas of newcomers from foreign lands.

As passed by the House, the special quota group would take

in 4000 orphans under 10 years of age, including 1000 Korean war waifs to be raised at Boys Town in Nebraska.

Secretary of State Dulles sent the Senate a last-minute plea for passage of the measure, declaring that unrest in Soviet-occupied East Germany and elsewhere behind the Iron Curtain "increases the urgency" for such a bill.

For U.S. policymakers during the Cold War, giving asylum to refugees was not simply an act of conscience: it was also a strategy of promoting American liberal and capitalist viewpoints through assimilation.

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' writing, from political speeches to columns in *Vanity Fair* and *Time*, showcase how rhetoric had shaped the war.

August 18, 1950 Video

An update on the Korean War and its refugees:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/video/nbc-learn/52589331#52589331>

The Current State of North Korea

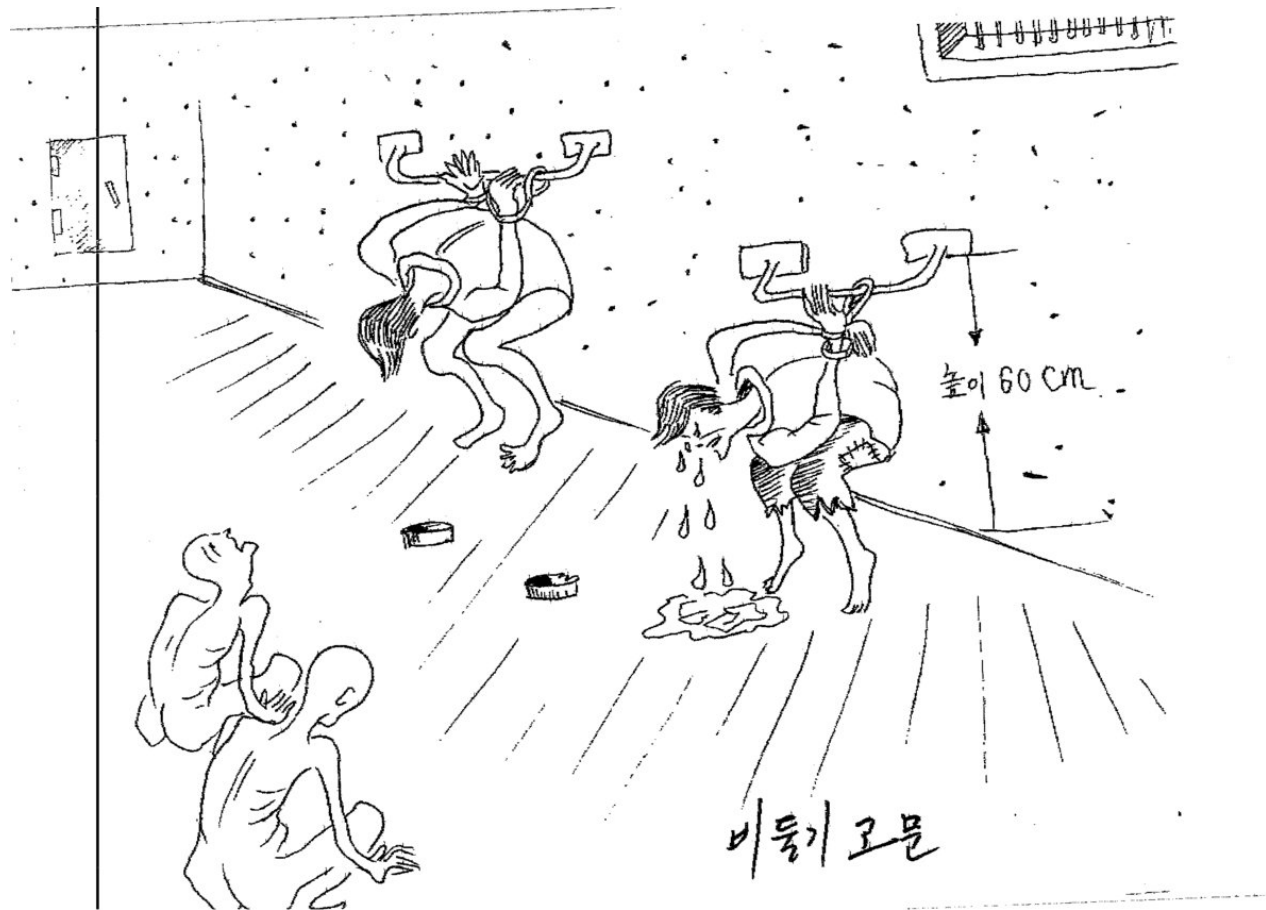


- Kim Jong-Un, following his deceased father's lead, has instituted totalitarian reign over his state
- Freedom of expression is repressed, political opposition is quashed, and anti-state offenses are punished in inhuman prison camps
- Between 80,000 and 120,000 people are currently being held in political prison camps

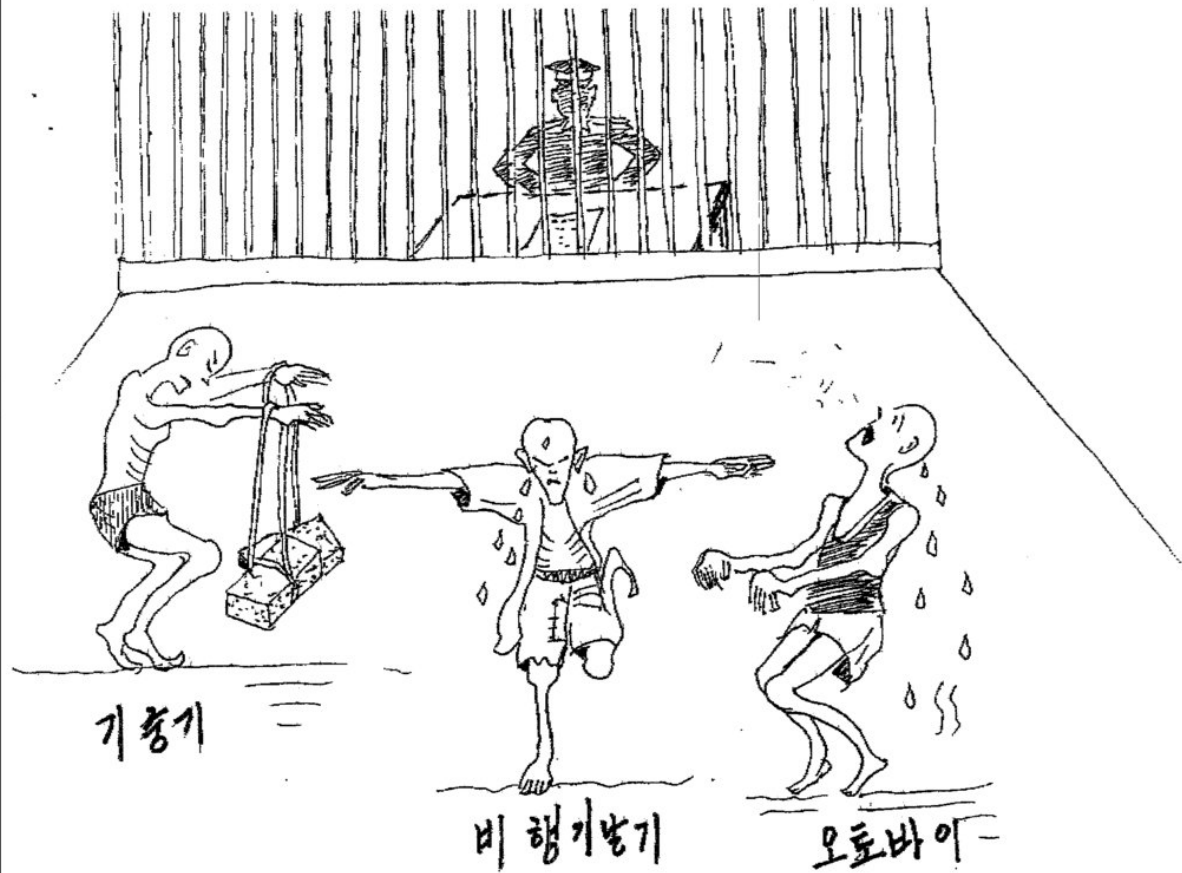
- The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which covers the border between North and South Korea, is patrolled by over 1 million soldiers
- This border is nearly impossible to bypass and most refugees escape through an underground railroad system that takes them across the River Tumen to China, continues to Laos and Thailand, before snaking back to South Korea
- These refugees, mostly women, are vulnerable to deceit, abuse, and sexual trafficking



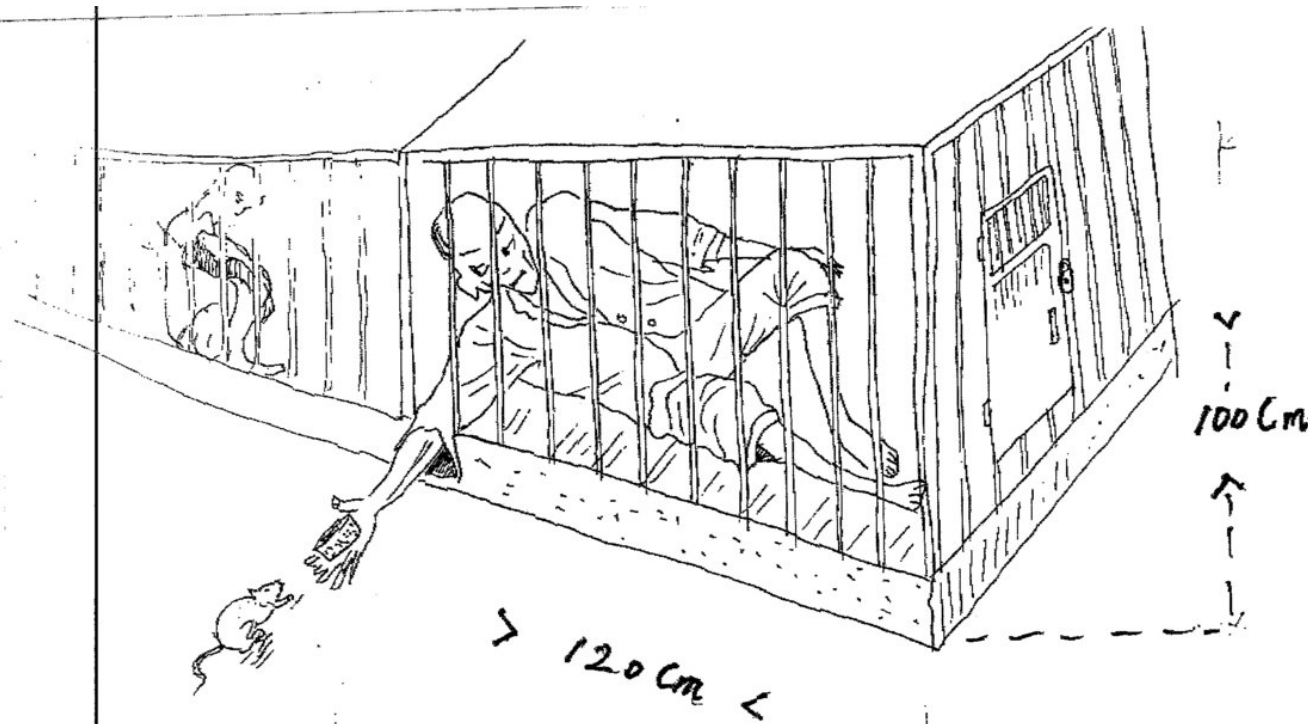
Sketches Released by a Former NK Prisoner



‘The “pigeon torture”: “[W]e are bound to stay in that position until the jailer feels that you have been tortured enough. So the torture goes on until the time has come to the satisfaction of the jailer. This is the pigeon torture. This is a very strange word in Korea and to you. Your hands are bound back and if they tie you like this, your chest comes out forward and in this position you are tortured.” (Image source: United Nations)’



‘In Kim’s own word to the U.N. panel: “We are supposed to think there’s an imaginary motorcycle and we are supposed to be in this position as if we are riding the motorcycle. And for this, we pose as if we are airplanes ourselves. We are flying. And if we stand like this there’s no way that you can hold that position for a long time. You are bound to fall forward. Everybody in the detention centre goes through this kind of this torture.” (Image source: United Nations)’



독방치벌 독감방에서 '쥐' 잡이

“The State has used food as a means of control over the population The State has also used deliberate starvation as a means of control and punishment in detention facilities. This has resulted in the deaths of many political and ordinary prisoners.” (Image source: United Nations)’

The Refugee Crisis Today

North Korean refugees are officially considered South Korean citizens according to constitutional law

Since the late 1990's, approximately 28,000 North Koreans have fled to South Korea



- Officially the South Korean government states that 13 defectors have returned to North Korea, however it is believed that many more have returned unofficially
- Adjustment is tough for defectors. They have an unemployment rate that is 3X higher than the national average. More than half of them experience depression and 25-30% of them have entertained thoughts about leaving South Korea because they didn't fit in

Moving Forward

If it's difficult to integrate 20,000 North Korean refugees, how can we possibly assimilate 20 million?

China has repeatedly propped up the North Korean state, partially because it provides a buffer state between China and South Korea, but also due to concerns over hundreds of thousands of refugees flooding into Beijing

When interviewed, North Korean defectors had many ideas on how we can help

Most believe a “carrot and stick” method is the best way to help North Korean citizens

The international community needs to start paying attention to North Korean human rights. Food aid to the country should be conditional on improved human rights and if that is not enacted, then heavy sanctions should take place

To do this, public awareness needs to be raised. People need to focus on human rights violations rather than nuclear weapons

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