

## **ACHIEVING WORLD PEACE/CESSATION OF WAR**

World Alliance of Religions for Peace Summit (WARP)

Grand Intercontinental Hotel

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A Canadian who fought in the Korean War returned to Seoul not long ago for a major commemoration. He was hugged on a street by a number of residents, who explained, “If it weren’t for those who fought with us, we would not be here today”.

If peace at any cost had been the goal of South Koreans and their allies, there is little doubt that 50 million residents of the democratic Republic of Korea would now be living in a much-enlarged version of the Maoist/Stalinist monarchy, which is North Korea.

All of us at this peace summit, including about 700 visitors from more than 70 countries, going forward with its Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War (DPCW) ([www.peacelaw.org](http://www.peacelaw.org)), including its provision for the right of self defense, should keep the important issue of peace/security on the Korean peninsula firmly in mind.

### **Korean Peninsula Today**

At the fifth annual Canada-South Korea Dialogue held in our Canadian Parliament this past summer, it was noted that Seoul is at the intersection of two of the world’s major frictions. Unless managed well, North Korea’s nuclear brinkmanship and/or aggression by its only ally, the party-state in China, could easily spiral out of control. The North’s erratic behavior is made possible in part because Beijing wishes to keep a bargaining chip on unification in case of the demise of the Pyongyang regime.

Two points made by the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea reporting in February, 2014:

- It concluded that the human rights violations of North Korea “reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world”;
- Crimes including “extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions”, in addition to severe religious persecution, disappearances and starvation, led the inquiry to recommend a referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Approximately a month after its report was published, the UN Human Rights Council passed a robust resolution endorsing the recommendations. The UN Security Council held an informal briefing. The UN Special rapporteur on human rights in North Korea presented a strong report, calling for the international community to exercise its “responsibility to protect”. The UN General Assembly’s human rights committee passed a resolution recommending a referral to the ICC, which was endorsed by the General Assembly. The Security Council then had its first discussion of North Korea’s human rights record and placed the issue on its agenda for future deliberations.

\*I represented the International Law Association of Canada at the summit, but the views expressed here are my own

Many have noted that resolutions change little by themselves, including Justice Michael Kirby of Australia, who chaired the inquiry. “ He said,“(The world) will judge us by our response...It is now your duty to address the scourge of human rights violations and crimes against humanity in (North Korea)”.

Here are some related proposals made jointly by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jose Ramos-Horta of Timor-Leste, Mohamed Nasheed, former president of the Maldives, Benedict Rogers of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Sir Geoffrey Nice, former chief prosecutor of Slobodan Milosevic, and Lord Alton, co-chair of the all-party UK Parliamentary Group on North Korea:

- The UN should establish a dialogue group to engage with Kim Jong-Un’s regime. It should including peace, seeking an end to the armistice, as there is still a state of war between North and South Korea, and moves instead to a solid peace agreement. It should include open discussion of abductions...and disappearances as well as the horrific conditions in the prison camps.”
- Call for accountability and justice must never be dropped and the threat of activation of the recommendation of referral to the ICC should be palpable to North Korean leaders.
- ”A year on from the historic UN inquiry, we should study afresh their findings and recommendations-and ensure that it does sit as a historic text on academics’ shelves, but instead serves as a policy manual for imminent implementation.

### **Terrorism and Peace**

We have just marked the 15th anniversary of 9/11, when the world was horrified by the murders in lower Manhattan of approximately 3000 innocent people from 90 different nations and injuries to another 6000. Since then, terrorist and other violence in Barcelona, London, Bali, Oslo, Sousse, Paris, Brussels, Nice, Beirut, Istanbul, Florida, Nigeria, and Kenya have struck many innocent persons as well.

The ongoing inhuman brutality in Syria and Iraq also evoke much horror and alarm. The 100,000 of us present at the Olympic stadium on the weekend in Seoul observed placards bringing attention to the Syrian war. Russia has since bombed a U.N. aid convoy in the Syrian town of Urem al-Kubra. Korea’s U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described it as “savage and apparently deliberate.”, adding that the fate of Syria could not depend on the “future of one man,” namely Bashar al-Assad. At least 18 trucks carrying humanitarian aid were destroyed, along with a health clinic. Several hospitals in Aleppo have been destroyed by bombing.

### **WARP Summit**

I attended the legal session where we heard discussion about many issues, including the “politicization of religion” and its key role in the causation of so many wars, conflicts and other violence across the world today.

One of the best speeches in my view was given at the final plenary by a youthful Juan Pablo Celis Garcia of Columbia, who spoke of the 50-year conflict in his homeland,

which by the time of the recently-signed peace agreement, had killed 250, 000 and displaced an estimated five million.

### **Conclusion**

In my view, the main focus of the summit was how our alliance of faiths might use the 2015-drafted international legal document-the Declaration of Peace and Cessation of War- to prevent outbreaks of war and violence in future. There was general agreement that governments must be persuaded by their peoples to sign on to the principles of DPCW. As with last year's Agreement on Climate Change, the ultimate goal is to be a U.N. convention ratified by enough countries to become binding.