

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5959

To reauthorize the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, and for
other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 7, 2025

Mrs. KIM (for herself and Mr. BERA) introduced the following bill; which was
referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To reauthorize the North Korean Human Rights Act of
2004, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “North Korean Human
5 Rights Reauthorization Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) The North Korean Human Rights Act of
9 2004 (Public Law 108–333; 22 U.S.C. 7801 et seq.)
10 and subsequent reauthorizations of such Act aimed

1 to promote the protection of human rights, docu-
2 mentation of human rights violations, transparency
3 in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the
4 importance of refugee protection.

5 (2) According to the State Department’s 2023
6 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, there
7 are “widespread reports of political prisoners and
8 detainees . . . most external estimates were between
9 80,000 and 120,000; some NGOs placed the figure
10 as high as 200,000.”.

11 (3) North Korea continues to hold a number of
12 South Koreans and Japanese abducted after the
13 signing of the Agreement Concerning a Military Ar-
14 mistice in Korea, signed at Panmunjom July 27,
15 1953 (commonly referred to as the “Korean War
16 Armistice Agreement”), and refuses to acknowledge
17 the abduction of more than 100,000 South Koreans
18 during the Korean War in violation of the Geneva
19 Convention.

20 (4) According to the State Department’s 2023
21 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, there
22 are significant human rights violations in North
23 Korea, which include “arbitrary or unlawful killings,
24 including extrajudicial killings; enforced disappear-

1 ance; torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treat-
2 ment; . . . and extensive gender based-violence.”.

3 (5) The effects of the COVID–19 pandemic and
4 North Korea’s strict lockdown of its borders and
5 crackdowns on informal market activities and small
6 entrepreneurship have drastically increased food in-
7 security for its people and given rise to famine con-
8 ditions in parts of the country.

9 (6) North Korea’s COVID–19 border lockdown
10 measures also include shoot-to-kill orders that have
11 resulted in the killing of—

12 (A) North Koreans attempting to cross the
13 border; and

14 (B) at least 1 South Korean official in
15 September 2020.

16 (7) The Government of the People’s Republic of
17 China is aiding and abetting North Korea’s human
18 rights violations by forcibly repatriating North Ko-
19 rean refugees to North Korea where they are sent to
20 prison camps, harshly interrogated, and tortured or
21 executed.

22 (8) The forcible repatriation of North Korean
23 refugees violates the People’s Republic of China’s
24 freely undertaken obligation to uphold the principle
25 of non-refoulement, as a state party to the Conven-

1 tion Relating to the Status of Refugees, done at Ge-
2 neva July 28, 1951 (and made applicable by the
3 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, done at
4 New York January 31, 1967 (19 UST 6223)).

5 (9) North Korea continues to deny freedom of
6 religion and persecute religious minorities, especially
7 Christians and followers of Shaminism. Eyewitnesses
8 report that Christians in North Korea have been tor-
9 tured, forcibly detained, and even executed for pos-
10 sessed a Bible or professing Christianity.

11 (10) The position of Special Envoy on North
12 Korean Human Rights Issues was vacant from Jan-
13 uary 2017 to December 2022, even though the
14 President is required to appoint a Senate-confirmed
15 Special Envoy to fill this position in accordance with
16 section 107 of the North Korean Human Rights Act
17 of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 7817). In January 2023, Presi-
18 dent Biden nominated Julie Turner as Special
19 Envoy on North Korean Human Rights and Issues.
20 She was confirmed in July 2023.

21 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

22 It is the sense of Congress that—

23 (1) the human rights and humanitarian condi-
24 tions within North Korea remain deplorable and
25 have been intentionally perpetuated against the peo-

1 ple of North Korea through policies endorsed and
2 implemented by Kim Jong-Un and the Government
3 of North Korea;

4 (2) promoting information access in North
5 Korea continues to be a successful method of coun-
6 tering DPRK propaganda and the United States
7 Government should continue to support nongovern-
8 mental radio broadcasting to North Korea and pro-
9 mote other emerging methods in this space;

10 (3) because refugees among North Koreans
11 fleeing into the People’s Republic of China face se-
12 vere punishments upon their forcible return, the
13 United States should urge the Government of the
14 People’s Republic of China—

15 (A) to immediately halt its forcible repatri-
16 ation of North Koreans;

17 (B) to allow the United Nations High
18 Commissioner for Refugees (referred to in this
19 section as “UNHCR”) unimpeded access to
20 North Koreans within China to determine
21 whether they are refugees and require assist-
22 ance;

23 (C) to fulfill its obligations as a state party
24 to the Convention Relating to the Status of
25 Refugees, done at Geneva July 28, 1951 (and

1 made applicable by the Protocol Relating to the
2 Status of Refugees, done at New York January
3 31, 1967 (19 UST 6223)), and the Agreement
4 on the upgrading of the UNHCR Mission in the
5 People's Republic of China to UNHCR branch
6 office in the People's Republic of China, done
7 at Geneva December 1, 1995;

8 (D) to address the concerns of the United
9 Nations Committee Against Torture by incor-
10 porating into domestic legislation the principle
11 of non-refoulement; and

12 (E) to recognize the legal status of North
13 Korean women who marry or have children with
14 Chinese citizens and ensure that all such moth-
15 ers and children are granted resident status
16 and access to education and other public serv-
17 ices in accordance with Chinese law and inter-
18 national standards;

19 (4) the United States should continue to pro-
20 mote the effective and transparent delivery and dis-
21 tribution of any humanitarian aid provided in North
22 Korea to ensure that such aid reaches its intended
23 recipients to the point of consumption or utilization
24 by cooperating closely with the Government of the

1 Republic of Korea and international and nongovern-
2 mental organizations;

3 (5) the United States currently blocks United
4 States passports from being used to travel to North
5 Korea without a special validation from the Depart-
6 ment of State, and the Department of State should
7 continue to take steps to increase public awareness
8 about the risks and dangers of travel by United
9 States citizens to North Korea;

10 (6) the United Nations has a significant role to
11 play in promoting and improving human rights in
12 North Korea and should press for access for the
13 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights
14 in North Korea, as well as for the United Nations
15 High Commissioner for Human Rights;

16 (7) North Korea should repeal the Reactionary
17 Thought and Culture Denunciation Law and other
18 draconian laws, regulations, and decrees that mani-
19 festly violate the freedom of opinion and expression
20 and the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion;

21 (8) the United States should expand the Re-
22 wards for Justice program to be open to North Ko-
23 rean officials who can provide evidence of crimes
24 against humanity being committed by North Korean
25 officials;

1 (9) the United States should continue to seek
2 cooperation from all foreign governments—

3 (A) to allow the UNHCR access to process
4 North Korean refugees overseas for resettlement;
5 and

6 (B) to allow United States officials access
7 to process refugees for possible resettlement in
8 the United States; and

9 (10) the Secretary of State, through diplomacy
10 by senior officials, including United States ambassadors
11 to Asia-Pacific countries, and in close cooperation
12 with South Korea, should make every effort
13 to promote the protection of North Korean refugees,
14 escapees, and defectors.

15 **SEC. 4. REAUTHORIZATIONS.**

16 (a) SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY
17 PROGRAMS.—Section 102 of the North Korean Human
18 Rights Act of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 7812) is amended—

19 (1) in subsection (b)(1), by striking “2022”
20 and inserting “2030”; and

21 (2) by adding at the end the following:

22 “(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the
23 date of the enactment of this subsection, and annually for
24 the subsequent 5-year period, the Assistant Secretary for
25 the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs shall submit

1 to the appropriate congressional committees a report on
2 the activities undertaken in the preceding 12 months to
3 coordinate and promote efforts to improve respect for the
4 fundamental human rights of the people of North Korea,
5 including—

6 “(1) any engagements in discussions with
7 North Korean officials regarding human rights;

8 “(2) any support for international efforts to
9 promote human rights and political freedoms in
10 North Korea, including coordination and dialogue
11 between the United States and the United Nations,
12 the European Union, North Korea, and the other
13 countries in Northeast Asia;

14 “(3) any consultation with nongovernmental or-
15 ganizations that have attempted to address human
16 rights in North Korea;

17 “(4) detailed descriptions of the programs and
18 activities supported through the funding authorized
19 in subsection (b);

20 “(5) detailed descriptions of any strategies de-
21 veloped to improve human rights conditions in North
22 Korea, including technical training and exchange
23 programs; and

1 (1) by amending section 103 to read as follows:

2 **“SEC. 103. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

3 “It is the sense of Congress that—

4 “(1) the United States should facilitate the
5 unhindered dissemination of information in North
6 Korea by increasing its support for communications
7 platforms that effectively reach the people of North
8 Korea; and

9 “(2) all United States Government mediums in-
10 tended to communicate directly with relevant inter-
11 national audiences should increase content dissemi-
12 nation above current levels to North Korea.”; and

13 (2) in section 104(a), by striking “Broadcasting
14 Board of Governors” each place such term appears
15 and inserting “United States Government mediums
16 intended to communicate directly with relevant inter-
17 national audiences”.

18 **SEC. 6. SPECIAL ENVOY FOR NORTH KOREAN HUMAN**
19 **RIGHTS ISSUES.**

20 Section 107 of the North Korean Human Rights Act
21 of 2004 (22 U.S.C. 7817) is amended by striking sub-
22 section (d) and inserting the following:

23 “(d) REPORT ON APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL
24 ENVOY.—If the position of Special Envoy will remain va-
25 cant for 1 year or longer without any presidential nomina-

1 tion to appoint a new Special Envoy, not later than 90
2 days before the date on which such position becomes va-
3 cant for 1 year, the Secretary of State shall submit to
4 the appropriate congressional committees a report that de-
5 scribes the efforts being taken to appoint a new Special
6 Envoy.”.

7 **SEC. 7. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING KOREAN AMER-**
8 **ICAN DIVIDED FAMILIES.**

9 It is the sense of Congress—

10 (1) the United States and North Korea should
11 begin the process of reuniting Korean-American di-
12 vided family members with their immediate relatives
13 through ways such as—

14 (A) identifying divided families in the
15 United States and North Korea who are willing
16 and able to participate in a pilot program for
17 family reunions;

18 (B) finding matches for members of such
19 families through organizations such as the Red
20 Cross; and

21 (C) working with the Government of South
22 Korea to include American citizens in inter-Ko-
23 rean video reunions;

24 (2) the institution of family is inalienable and
25 the restoration of contact between divided families

1 whether physically, literarily, or virtually is an ur-
2 gent need; and

3 (3) the United States and North Korea should
4 pursue reunions as a humanitarian priority of imme-
5 diate concern.

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