

# **South Korean church council urges Bush to lift sanctions on North: Need to relieve suffering of the people**

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The head of South Korea's National Council of Churches has written to President Bush, urging that sanctions on North Korea be lifted and that a peace agreement be negotiated to replace an armistice signed on the Korean Peninsula in 1953.

Anglican bishop Park Kyung-Jo, president of the National Council of Churches in Korea, said he had sent his letter July 7 on behalf of churches. In it he said: "It is generally understood that the sanctions against North Korea since 1950 have been enforced by the U.S.A. in its own political interest. Experts indicate that the sanctions against North Korea have been one of the significant causes of the increasing suffering of the North Korean people."

Park noted in the letter that if the U.S. is really serious in its intent to relieve the suffering of the North Korean people, it should immediately lift the sanctions against the communist country.

The bishop said he wrote the letter after South Korean church leaders and representatives of the World Council of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia and member churches in Asia, Europe and North America met in Seoul in May for an International Ecumenical Consultation on Peace in East Asia.

At a conference in Kuala Lumpur July 28, North Korea turned down appeals to join talks on its nuclear and missile programs, saying the United States should drop financial sanctions before any talks could ensue. The six-party talks were aimed at getting North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program in exchange for energy aid, security guarantees and trade.

Park's letter also said this year's "missile testing by North Korea contributes to the deterioration of relations between North Korea and the U.S., and between North

Korea and Japan.” Therefore, it continued, “we strongly assert that true peace in Northeast Asia cannot be established without normalizing diplomatic relations between North Korea and the U.S., and between North Korea and Japan.”

On July 23, three Korean War veterans and a United Methodist bishop stationed in Korea in the 1950s worshiped together during a World Methodist Conference service at Imjingak, in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.

The United Methodist Church News Service reported that Seung Soon Yang, a retired Korean Methodist minister who served during the Korean War, was one of a few survivors of the Mt. Paikma battle, in which he was injured. “The cease-fire had been signed 53 years ago, yet the war never stopped in my heart,” Yang said. –

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