

Cape Town 2010 Articles

The High Cost of Religious Persecution – Cape Town 2010 Congress

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, 20 October 2010 – After Gyeong Ju Son, a young woman from North Korea, gave her moving testimony at The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Cape Town this week, the 4200 participants from over 190 countries, came away stunned – many moved to tears. They had just witnessed – in their midst – the tragic face of suffering.

Born in Pyeong Yang, North Korea's capital, this petite 18-year-old is the daughter of a former high-ranking government leader – an assistant of the North Korean leader, Kim Jeong Il.

In 1998, when Gyeong Jun was at the tender age of six, her father suffered severe political persecution and the family was forced to flee to China. It was there that her parents came to know the amazing grace and love of God. After only a few months, her mother, pregnant with their second child, died of leukaemia.

'It was in the midst of this family tragedy that my father joined a Bible study led by missionaries from South Korea and America, and after a time his strong desire was to become a missionary to North Korea,' she says.

In 2001 her father was reported and arrested by the Chinese police, to be sent back to North Korea, where he was sentenced to prison. Desperately crying out to God during this time, his three-year incarceration only served to strengthen his faith. After his release he returned to China and Gyeong Ju Son was reunited briefly with her father.

'Not long after he chose to return to North Korea – instead of enjoying a life of religious freedom in South Korea – to share Christ's message of life and hope among the hopeless people of his homeland.'

In 2006 her father's work was discovered by the North Korean government and once again he was imprisoned. According to Gyeong Ju Son, not having heard from him again, in all probability he has been publicly executed on charges of treason and espionage. This is often the fate of confessing Christians in North Korea.

Left in China, Gyeong Jun was adopted for a while by the family of a young pastor, and it was their love, care, compassion and protection that made a deep impression on her. When they left for America she was given the opportunity to

go to South Korea.

While staying at the Korean Consulate in Beijing, waiting to go to South Korea, the young girl's life was dramatically and irrevocably changed when Jesus came to her in a dream.

'He had tears in His eyes. He walked towards me and asked "Gyeong Ju, how much longer are you going to keep me waiting? Walk with me. Yes, you have lost your earthly father, but I am your heavenly Father and whatever has happened to you, was because I love you."'

Praying to God for the very first time, she gave Him her heart, soul, mind and strength, asking that she would be used at His will. A deep love for the lost people of North Korea and the need to bring the love of Jesus to them, has subsequently become her life purpose.

'I look back over my short life and I see God's hand everywhere. Six years in North Korea, eleven in China and now in South Korea. Everything I suffered: all the sadness and grief, all that I have experienced and learned; I want to give it all to God and use my life for His Kingdom. In this way I also hope to bring honour to my father.'

Still a student, the intention of this young and vibrant follower of Christ is to get to university to study political science and diplomacy, and then work for the rights of the voiceless in North Korea.

'Brothers and sisters here in this place, I humbly ask you to pray that the same light of God's grace and mercy that reached my father and my mother and now me, will one day soon dawn upon the people of North Korea. My people.'

As one body, the huge throng of participants rose in silence, after which a burst of applause to God's glory reverberated from the walls of the vast auditorium of the Cape Town International Convention Centre.

ENDS (Val Pauquet 08278476930)

For more information, or for media access to photographs, news releases and audio/video clips, email media@capetown2010.com, or go to www.lausanne.org/news-releases

Cape Town 2010 being held 16-25 October is the latest global congress sponsored by The Lausanne Movement, begun by Billy Graham in 1974. The Congress is possibly the most representative gathering of the Christian church in history. Apart from the 198 countries meeting in South Africa, it extends to another anticipated 100,000 individuals at nearly 700 Globalink sites in more than 95 countries around the world.