



Jeehyun Kwon

#WomenPeaceKorea: A New Era All-Woman Delegation to South Korea

May 22 to May 28, 2018

The drive for peace, by the people of both North Korea and South Korea, is unstoppable. The tremendous hope and optimism inspired by recent diplomatic breakthroughs has ushered in a new era for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

From May 22 to May 28, led by Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Maguire and Women Cross DMZ founder Christine Ahn, an all-women delegation of peace activists and security experts was in South Korea to support the historic peace process between the two Koreas.

Lasting peace requires the involvement of all members of society, including women. Women peacemakers in South Korea and North Korea have been the frontrunners in the search for a peaceful resolution to the Korean war. Women must be included in the peace process and have a seat at the negotiating table.

It was an incredible delegation and an exciting time to be in South Korea. While the 30-woman delegation was in South Korea, President Trump unilaterally cancelled the June 12 Singapore Summit. And on the same day that President Moon and Chairman Kim were at Panmunjom in an attempt to bring inter-Korean relations back on track, the international

women's delegation and over 1000 Korean women were just a few miles away crossing the Tongil Bridge in the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ).

The DMZ, established by the Korean Armistice Agreement of 1953, is a 2.5 mile/4 km militarized buffer zone between North and South Korea. The DMZ, along with the Civilian Control Zone just to the south, is one of the most heavily-mined areas in the world. We were the first civilians ever to walk across the bridge, which was built in 1998 to usher in the sunshine policy years. That day, women were literally paving the path to peace as we joined Korean women to call for an end to the Korean war while chanting "No War! Yes Peace!"

With a constantly changing political landscape, this delegation had to be nimble and able to react quickly, whether organizing an impromptu press conference following Trump's sudden announcement or managing discussions with various Embassy officials. The one constant, however, was the determination by Koreans to keep up the momentum towards peace. "Peace isn't just up to two men," Christine Ahn reminded the world. "It's up to the people and the leaders of North and South Korea, and that peace train has long left the station."

Highlights of the #WomenPeaceKorea delegation to South Korea:

1. Embassy Visits

In the aftermath of Trump's cancellation of his Summit with Kim, American members of the delegation met with diplomats at the US Embassy to discuss how women can play a constructive role in establishing a diplomatic peace process between the United States and North Korea. Embassy officials assured the members of the delegation that the cancellation of the talks was just a bump in the road and that the US was committed to having the meeting.

The delegation also met with other government officials and foreign ministries in Seoul including at the UK, Japanese, Swedish and Canadian Embassies. That same night, the entire delegation was hosted by the Canadian and Norwegian Embassies with a record turnout of Ambassadors in attendance, including the acting US Ambassador Chargé d'Affaires since Admiral Harry Harris had not yet been confirmed as US Ambassador to South Korea.



Jim Choi

2. Media

Immediately after the meetings at the US Embassy, our delegation organized a press conference with our South Korean partners across the street from the US Embassy. [Here](#) are some amazing photos of the press event.

While in South Korea, members of the delegation were quoted in a number of international media stories.

Time magazine

<http://time.com/5291120/trump-north-south-korea-summit-reactions/>
<http://time.com/5289702/korea-moon-kim-trump-talks-max-thunder/>

BBC TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDI1bQ5gEEA&feature=youtu.be>

Truth Out

<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/44590-seventy-years-after-korea-s-division-women-lead-push-for-peace>

MSNBC AM Joy

<https://www.msnbc.com/am-joy/watch/north-korea-and-south-korea-leaders-meet-despite-trump-1242553923608>

Common Dreams

<https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/05/25/warning-against-return-rhetoric-nuclear-annihilation-koreans-and-anti-war-voices>

Democracy Now:

https://www.democracynow.org/2018/5/25/as_trump_pulls_out_of_n

Post-delegation, media interest continued.

The Times

<http://www.timesonline.com/news/20180530/podcast-loud-amp-clear-hosts-take-on-koreas-wall-street-deportation-prisoner-ankle-bracelets-and-puerto-rico>

PRI

<https://www.pri.org/programs/pris-world/again-again-again-summit-frances-spider-man-and-why-spas-spa>

The Washington Post

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/some-korean-americans-have-a-personal-stake-in-next-weeks-summit-finding-family/2018/06/07/720f6e1a-64bb-11e8-b166-fea8410bcded_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.5b7dd26df3de

Common Dreams

https://www.commondreams.org/views/2018/06/06/toward-truly-indigenous-peace-korean-peninsula?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=socialnetwork

The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/04/north-korea-us-summit-nuclear-goodwill>

Al Jazeera The Stream

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrDv_L6wpqg

The Singapore Summit was an historic event and opportunity for comment.

Democracy Now

https://www.democracynow.org/2018/6/12/a_new_day_for_the_korean

Al Jazeera

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c97xqG6FIHk&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop>

MSNBC

<http://www.msnbc.com/am-joy/watch/trump-arrives-for-north-korea-summit-with-kim-jong-un-in-singapore-1252393027572>

3. Seoul International Women's Peace Symposium

A full-day International Women's Peace Symposium was held in the National Assembly Library. We heard from the Minister of Gender Equality and Family, Dr. Hyun-Baek Chung, and Chairperson of the National Assembly Committee on Gender, In-Soon Nam.

Delegates strategized on a number of issues, including women's resistance to ongoing militarism in Asia and

the Pacific and feminist peace-building in Northeast Asia.

The keynote speaker and Chairperson of Women Making Peace Sung-Eun Kim shared powerful words: "We need social justice. We believe women can bring healing and peace to the world. It is the only way to bring sustainable peace."



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4. Working with Korean Women's Groups & Growing a Feminist Peace Movement

The delegation was fortunate to be working with Women Peace Walk, a coalition of over thirty South Korean women's organizations, coordinated by our partners on the ground, Women Making Peace, YWCA and Korean Women's Association United.

On the first day of the delegation, they organized a [press conference](#). The message delivered: Women need to be part of the peace process. Given the critical window for peace or a return to brinkmanship and war, international solidarity with the peace and feminist movements in Korea is urgently needed. "I am deeply moved to be here in Seoul to stand in solidarity with my Korean sisters to proclaim that the war in the Korean Peninsula must be over," said Mairead Maguire.

We also spent the day in what we called "Korea School" where the international delegation heard a historical view

of Korean women's exchanges across the DMZ from Hyun-Sook Lee-Kim, a longtime feminist peace activist who helped organize the first meetings of North and South Korean women in the 1990s. We also sat in circles with the South Korean women leaders to exchange ideas, strategies, and visions for what a women-centered Korea peace process would look like.

International solidarity with the peace and feminist movements in Korea is urgently needed to ensure that peace comes to the Korean peninsula. The delegation and Korean women's groups called for women to be central to the peace process. Having an international delegation working together with a coalition of Korean women's organizations with a Symposium, workshops, press conferences, informal events and a DMZ walk all helped to cement a growing feminist peace movement.



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5. The Delegates

The delegation had experts on peace and security issues and was an incredible mix of women from the United States, Russia, China, Japan, Canada, Colombia, Kenya, Sweden, Guam, Iraq and Mongolia.

Organizations represented included: CODEPINK, Dialogue of Culture/Far Eastern Federal University of Vladivostok, Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, Grassroots Global Justice, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Korea Peace Network, Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq, Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, The United Church of Canada, Veterans for

Peace, Win Without War, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF), among others.

Some outstanding young Korean-Americans were also part of the delegation. They supported the delegation, shot video, helped with logistics and shared their personal stories of adoption and the separation of families. One, Shawn Kim, was interviewed by reporters for the first time, saying how she wished for reunification so that her 93-year-old grandmother could find out the fate of the family she left behind in North Korea.

6. Women Peace Walk in the DMZ

The historic peace walk in the DMZ was the culmination of the entire delegation with the international women's delegation joining with over 1000 Korean women calling for peace on the peninsula.

“When I was walking in the DMZ, I heard a father say to his son, ‘We are the same people but we can't see each other,’” Christine Ahn told MSNBC. “This is a conflict that has lasted seven decades. This is a strip of land that is the most symbolic manifestation of a long-term division. Let the Korean people see peace on the Korean peninsula. That's what they want. And the international community should support it.”

At the Peace Walk, both Korean women and members of the international delegation read out, in English and Korean, the 2018 International Women Peace Walk Declaration.

It read: “We who gathered here today will continue our movement for peace until the threat of war disappears from the earth. We hope that all citizens of both South and North Korea, as well as all the peace-loving citizens around the world, will join us on the path to create a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War.”

Be sure to read the full [declaration](#) and take a look at the fabulous Peace Walk [photos](#).



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7. Statement on June 12 Singapore Summit

Women Cross DMZ and the Nobel Women's Initiative issued a [statement](#) congratulating US President Donald Trump and North Korean Chairman Kim Jong Un for their historic June 12, 2018 Summit in Singapore.

“We applaud President Donald Trump, Chairman Kim Jong Un and President Moon for giving hope to people on the Korean Peninsula and around the world that peace is possible through diplomacy and political will. They demonstrated that meeting adversaries was not a concession but meeting face-to-face can yield an enduring peace in a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.”

The statement also called for women to be included in the peace process. “Reaching a peace agreement, implementing it, and ensuring that it lasts, however, necessitates women's inclusion at all stages of the peace process, from sitting at the

negotiating table to helping to draft the agreement, to making it real in their homes and communities.”

The June 12 Summit offered renewed hope for peace through continued dialogue. “Peace can only come if the people build it,” said Mairead Maguire. “But peace also needs political leaders. We call on Kim, Moon and Trump to sign a peace treaty for the people of Korea and for the world.”

Peace in the Korean peninsula is unstoppable and we will continue to make sure that the voices of the Korean women calling for peace are heard.

KoEun KwangSoon of Peace Mothers of Korea said,

“It is time to shout: The era of peace is coming. And it needs to be carried out by women.”