

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON PEACE IN KOREA

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WHAT CAN MEMBERS OF CONGRESS DO TO SUPPORT THE PEACE PROCESS?

- Members of Congress can co-sponsor H.R.1369, the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act, which calls for serious, urgent diplomacy in pursuit of a binding peace agreement to formally end the Korean War. It also requires a report from the Secretary of State describing a clear roadmap for achieving a permanent peace agreement on the Korean Peninsula; expresses the sense of Congress that the Secretary of State should seek to enter negotiations with North Korea to establish liaison offices in each country's capital; and requires the Secretary of State to conduct a full review of the travel restrictions to North Korea and submit a report to Congress outlining qualifying criteria for exemptions to the restrictions — specifically for those wishing to return to North Korea for family-related events.

WHY DO WOMEN NEED TO BE INVOLVED IN THE KOREA PEACE PROCESS?

- From Liberia to Northern Ireland, women have been instrumental in making peace agreements.
- Studies show that when women and civil society participate in the peace process, an agreement is more likely to be reached and to last. Women's participation also helps to legitimize the formal peace process among the public.
- Including women's equal participation and full involvement in peace agreements is a commitment of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the US's Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017, which recognize the crucial role that women play in conflict prevention, management, and resolution.
- Feminist peacebuilders believe that dialogue and cooperation, not weapons and sanctions, are the most effective routes toward creating genuine, long-lasting peace and security for all people.

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KOREA PEACE NOW

WHY DO WE NEED A KOREA PEACE AGREEMENT?

- The Korean War (1950-'53) never technically ended but was only halted by an armistice between North Korea (representing the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers) and the United States (representing the multinational United Nations Command).
- The unresolved state of the war is the root cause of tensions and hostilities between the two parties, resulting in the extreme militarization of the Korean Peninsula.
- Without a peace agreement, renewed conflict could break out at any time. Such a war would be catastrophic, especially if nuclear weapons were used.
- For decades, successive US administrations have tried to force North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons through a combination of pressure, isolation, and sanctions. These tactics have not only failed but, in fact, have exacerbated the situation.

“Ending the Korean War is “the only way to ensure true security for both Korean and American people.”
— President Jimmy Carter

- A peace agreement that officially ends the Korean War is the most realistic and effective method for resolving the security crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Such an agreement would reduce tensions and build confidence, providing the foundation upon which to more effectively engage on issues such as denuclearization and improved human rights. And it would be a step toward shifting resources away from endless wars and toward more basic human needs.

WHY DOES THE US HAVE TO SIGN A KOREA PEACE AGREEMENT? ISN'T THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TWO KOREAS?

- The main parties to the Korean War were North and South Korea, China, and the US (as head of the UN Command). Except for the US, all parties have since declared peace or normalized relations.
- The US is a key party to the ongoing war as it has war-time operational control in Korea. If war resumes, the US will command the US-ROK combined forces and execute the Pentagon's operational plans.

IS NORTH KOREA SERIOUS ABOUT DENUCLEARIZATION?

- US officials who have succeeded in freezing North Korea's nuclear weapons program argue that Pyongyang will give up its nukes only when it no longer feels threatened by the US. The best way to remove the threat on both sides is to establish peaceful and normal relations.
- In his 2019 New Year's address, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country will “neither make and test nuclear weapons any longer nor use and proliferate them.”
- At the 2019 US-DPRK summit in Vietnam, North Korea offered to end all nuclear and missile tests and dismantle the entire Yongbyon nuclear complex under US supervision in exchange for a partial lifting of sanctions. According to leading nuclear scientist Siegfried Hecker, who has visited the nuclear site four times, Yongbyon is “the heart of their nuclear program.”

AREN'T PEACE NEGOTIATIONS A REWARD FOR BAD BEHAVIOR?

- Being in a state of peace with another country is not a reward or stamp of approval. It is meant to be the norm to keep the risk of catastrophic violence off the table.
- Approximately 28,500 US troops are stationed in South Korea, and soldiers on both sides are poised to engage in battle at any time. Every day there is a risk that renewed conflict could break out. Continuing that risk is dangerous. Everyone will benefit from a state of peace.

HOW CAN WE MAKE PEACE WITH A REGIME THAT VIOLATES HUMAN RIGHTS?

- The United States has diplomatic relations with many countries that have poor human rights records, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Burma. The best way to assess the human rights situation is to send fact-finding missions to investigate. But to do so, we need to first end the state of war and normalize relations.

- The perpetual state of war has been used by governments on both sides of the DMZ to justify curtailing liberties, overspending on the military at the expense of their people, and otherwise failing to respect or protect human rights.
- There is no evidence that the decades-long US-led campaign of military threats, crippling sanctions, and diplomatic isolation against North Korea has resulted in improved human rights protections. In fact, the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in North Korea, Tomás Ojea Quintana, said sanctions are having a dire impact on the economic and social conditions of the North Korean people.
- If Americans are concerned about the human rights of North Koreans, the US should end the policy of sanctions and pursue an end to the Korean War with a peace agreement.

WON'T LIFTING SANCTIONS MEAN GIVING UP OUR ONLY LEVERAGE FOR DENUCLEARIZING NORTH KOREA?

- Decades of sanctions and isolation have not had the intended effect on North Korea. To the contrary, pressure and isolation through sanctions have only strengthened North Korea's resolve to become a nuclear power.
- North Korea says it will give up its nuclear weapons only when it feels the United States no longer poses an existential threat to its country. The only way to remove the threat on both sides and break this dangerous deadlock is for the United States, North Korea, and South Korea to sign a peace agreement that officially ends the war and opens the door for a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear standoff.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT KIM JONG UN WILL BE A RELIABLE PARTNER IN NEGOTIATIONS?

- From 1994 — when the Clinton administration and North Korea negotiated the Agreed Framework — until 2002 — when then-President George W. Bush reneged on U.S. commitments and declared North Korea part of the “axis of evil,” North Korea's nuclear program remained frozen.
- As long as the United States and North Korea were engaged in dialogue, North Korea honored its end of the bargain. In fact, it was during the Obama administration when the US shut down dialogue that North Korea sped up its nuclear weapons program.
- The only way to know if we can trust North Korea as a

negotiating partner is by negotiating and holding them to their word.

- With a peace agreement, all sides would agree once and for all that wartime rights to use force have ended.

WOULDN'T A PEACE AGREEMENT UNDERMINE THE US-SOUTH KOREAN ALLIANCE?

- A peace agreement would not necessarily impact the US-South Korea alliance or the presence of US troops in South Korea. But it would provide a good opportunity to examine and recalibrate their relationship, especially because current aspects of the alliance are actively perpetuating tensions with North Korea, such as the joint military exercises.
- A peace agreement would also help pave the way for more inter-Korean projects. South Korea is actively pursuing peace with North Korea. To be a good ally, the US should support inter-Korean cooperation.
- Allies should help each other resolve conflicts, not perpetuate them.

WHY DOESN'T THE UNITED STATES JUST OVERTHROW KIM JONG UN AND LIBERATE THE NORTH KOREAN PEOPLE?

- History has repeatedly shown us that efforts to overthrow another country's government often end disastrously. Forcible regime change efforts not only fail to achieve a country's goals, they result in negative long-term consequences (such as civil war and increased repression) for the people of the country whose government is being overthrown.
- Far from being cheap and easy, regime change efforts result in more costly, deadly, endless US wars.

WHAT IS THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S APPROACH TO NORTH KOREA?

- Although specifics aren't clear, the Biden administration's strategy reportedly aims to strike a balance between Trump's all-or-nothing approach and Obama's arm's-length strategy by pursuing a phased agreement that leads to full denuclearization. However, achieving the end goal of denuclearization requires addressing mutual security concerns through a peace-first approach.