

**27 South Korean Women's Organizations' Statement on North Korea's Artillery Barrage on
Yeongpyeong Island**
November 23, 2010

Under no circumstances can war be tolerated.
Armed conflict must be stopped and dialogue started!

On November 23rd, we received shocking news on the outbreak of a localized skirmish after North Korean forces launched an artillery barrage against the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong from a coastal artillery base in the Yellow Sea followed by a round of return fire from the South. During this exchange, two South Korean marines were killed and approximately 10 or more were injured including the residents of Yeonpyeong.

Even though this conflict region of the five islands near the Northern Limit Line has seen inter-Korean military clashes since the end of the Korean War, there is no precedent of a direct bombardment from North Korea on South Korean territory. Considering the civilian injuries and the damage done to homes, this is the most serious armed conflict since the Korean War.

We women are gravely concerned with today's incident which has ignited the 'war of words' into a reality of 'localized warfare.' This incident is an extreme demonstration of what tragic results the deterioration of inter-Korean relations and a rupture of dialogue can bring about. We cannot refrain from fearing that the slightest provocation could escalate this situation into the reality of war. Expressing our deepest condolences and sympathies to the innocent victims of Yeongpyeong and the Korean marines, we genuinely hope that the inter-Korean confrontation will not generate anymore victims.

The attack on Yeongpyeong, an area with civilian residents, by North Korea in response to South Korea's military exercise is rightfully deserving of censure. Violating security rules of civilians that are followed even in times of war is by no means tolerable. Meanwhile, our government's negligence of the deteriorating inter-Korean relations cannot help but be noticed. Inter-Korean relations must be fully re-examined and improved.

We are currently standing at a critical crossroads of either a repetition/expansion of this 'local war' on the Korean peninsula or finding a fundamental resolution to this conflict. In these extraordinary circumstances, we yearn deeply for a solution to the military tension between the two Koreas and strongly press the government of both Koreas with the following demands.

First, we insist on the halt of all armed clashes lest the situation becomes further aggravated, and we demand that the two Koreas immediately enter into dialogue with each other. This year commemorates the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. We have already experienced the tragic lose-lose history of one people induced by military confrontation and war. Military tension between North and South Korea will not help anyone. We must manage this crisis peacefully through various channels and demand the immediate resumption of dialogue to find a solution to the fundamental cause of such conflicts.

Second, we must find solutions to the issues of contention surrounding the Northern Limit Line. Repetition of outbreaks of armed conflict in the Yellow Sea between the two Koreas can be likened to that of a warehouse of explosives. In the October 4th Declaration (2007), North and South Korea previously agreed to designate the Yellow Sea region as a 'special peace and cooperation zone' for the pursuit of mutual benefits. Upholding the draft of the North-South agreement, we demand for a fundamental resolution to the Yellow Sea dispute.

Third, we strongly desire inter-Korean relations that will plant hope in the citizens. The Yeongpyeong incident has aggravated the anxiety of citizens and is also inflicting great damage on the economy. We hope that inter-Korean relations do not deteriorate further and that the localized skirmish does not reoccur. In order to prevent another dispute from reoccurring, we demand the establishment of a ground-breaking and active measure to address the fundamental cause of this conflict to transfer the armistice of the Korean peninsula to a peace agreement.

This year marks 60 years since the outbreak of the Korean War. We women anticipate that the governments of both Koreas will seek to give hope to the citizens of the Korean peninsula as well as the people of the world through reconciliation, cooperation and reunification rather than military confrontation and calumny. Today, we are observing, with a fearful heart, a miserable reality where civilians are being victimized through reciprocated attacks by North and South Korea. Again, we strongly urge the authorities of North and South Korea to, without delay, enter into dialogue; and we press for the attainment of peace on the Korean peninsula through peaceful methods, bestowing hope in the hearts of citizens.

Women Making Peace

Kyunggi Women's Association United,
Gwangju-Jonnam Women's Association United,
Daegu-Kyungbuk Women's Association United,
Busan Women's Association United,
Kyungnam Women's Association
Korean Association of Christian Women for Women Minjung
Daegu Women's Association
Daejun Women's Association
Busan Counseling Center Against Sexual Violence
The Korean Catholic Women's Community for a New World
Suwon Women's Association
Ulsan Women's Association
Jeju Women's Association
Jeju Women's Human Rights Solidarity
Chungbuk Women's Association
Pohang Women's Association
Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center
Korea Women Workers Association
Korea Women's Associations United
Korean Womenlink
Korea Women's Studies Institute
Korea Women's Hotline
Korea Women Migrants' Human Rights Center
National Solidarity for the Solution for Sexual Trafficking
The National Association of Parents for Charm/education
Women' Social Education Center