



ROK RELIGIOUS GROUPS PUSH FOR GOVERNMENT FOOD AID TO THE NORTH

An organization representing several major South Korean religious organizations crossed the DMZ on August 27 to deliver over 300 tons (thirteen 25-ton trucks) of flour to the city of Kaesong, with plans to distribute the aid to North Korea's children and poverty-stricken. This is the first overland delivery of aid since Seoul's May 24 measures restricting exchanges in response to the Cheonan incident.

Nine members of the organization, representing Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism, travelled to the North. The group intends to visit one or two nurseries, and distribute flour to Kaesong City as well as Jangpung, Keumchon, Daechon, Chongdan and Yondan districts. The delegation is also delivering six boxes of nutrition supplements for children in Kaesong's nurseries. Before crossing over into North Korea, the group held a press conference in Paju City's Imjin Park. At the conference, a representative stated that while the aid shipment was later than desired, the organization thanked the South Korean government for making the decision to allow the delivery while facing a difficult situation in the aftermath of the Cheonan incident.

The organization also stated, "Peninsular denuclearization is also important for bringing peace and security to the Korean Peninsula," but it is necessary to make ensuring the lives of those in both North and South Korea a top priority, and the group "earnestly hopes that the [South Korean] governments' active support of humanitarian assistance can save the lives of North Korean residents and help to realize inter-Korean reconciliation and peace."

The organization also stressed that religious teachings emphasized the need to exert all efforts for the desolate and the starving. The group is devoted to helping resolve the North



Korean plight caused by starvation and malnutrition, and through these efforts, bringing about peace on the Korean peninsula. The organization, representing those of Jewish, Catholic, Buddhist, Protestant, Korean Buddhist, and Chongdo religions, as well as the United Religions Initiative of Korea, continues to pursue renewed government assistance to North Korea.

The Korean Conference of Religion and Peace (KCRP) issued a statement on August 27 declaring that the South Korean government needed to send aid to the North not only in response to the critical situation caused by recent flooding, but in order to help resolve the chronic food shortages causing ongoing hardship for the people of North Korea. In highlighting the plight of North Koreans, the group emphasizes familial and national ties, stressing Korean unity in calling for government assistance for ‘brethren’ in the North. The group also calls for both Seoul and Pyongyang to “open [their] hearts and hold talks on peninsular peace and unification” rather than continue with the current confrontational policies.