



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy  
Remarks As Prepared for Delivery  
National Endowment for Democracy  
2018 Democracy Award Ceremony  
Presentation of Award to the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR)  
Washington, DC  
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Thank you.

Good evening. I'm Stephanie Murphy, and I represent Florida's 7<sup>th</sup> congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives.

I am honored to be here this evening as the National Endowment for Democracy presents awards to four organizations whose difficult and often dangerous mission is to promote human rights and human dignity inside North Korea and among North Korean refugees who have fled the country.

Being here is personally important to me because I'm also a refugee.

In the late 1970s, my parents faced persecution by the communist government that had come to power in Vietnam. My brother was eight years old at the time, and I was a baby. My parents worried about our futures. They didn't want their children to grow up under an oppressive government that did not respect human rights. They wanted us to live in a place where we would be safe, where we would have freedom and dignity, and where we would have the opportunity for a better life—and they didn't think any of that was possible in Vietnam.

And so my parents made the difficult decision to flee Vietnam by boat. By attempting to escape, my parents took a tremendous risk. But they had decided that it was better for our family to die together in search of light than to live in darkness in Vietnam.

My family was fortunate. We survived the journey with the help of the U.S. Navy, reached the safety of a Malaysian refugee camp, and ultimately made the passage to the United States where we became proud citizens.

I cherish the freedoms I have as an American. And yet I'm saddened that we are in the midst of a political moment in this country where too many public officials use language that dehumanizes immigrants, that casts suspicion on refugees, and that suggests we are stepping back from our proud tradition of defending democratic values and human rights around the globe.

That's why I'm grateful to the organizations we recognize tonight, whose mission is to fight for human dignity and human freedom for the North Korean people.

The members of these organizations have devoted their lives to serving others.

They bestow generosity and grace upon desperate people.

They shine a light on the darkest part of our world.

They fight for justice for millions of North Korean citizens who have known only oppression and deprivation.

They refuse to let the world forget that these men, women and children exist, that they have names, that they have hopes and dreams—and, above all, that they *matter*.

These organizations make a simple appeal to American officials like me. They ask us to remain faithful to our nation's founding creed, which is that every human being, wherever they live, is endowed with certain fundamental freedoms that no government has the right to deny.

Tonight I have the honor of awarding the 2018 Democracy Award to one of these remarkable organizations, the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights. Founded in Seoul in 1996, it is the world's oldest NGO devoted entirely to the advancement of North Korean human rights. Through its work organizing educational conferences and advocacy campaigns, the Citizens' Alliance has exposed human rights violations in North Korea, amplified the voices of victims, and garnered international support for U.N. efforts to hold the North Korean government accountable for its actions. The organization also runs programs to educate and empower North Korean refugees who have resettled in South Korea.

So, please join me in congratulating the Citizens' Alliance, and its chairman Bum-Jin Park, for receiving this well-deserved award, and for everything it does on behalf of the North Korean people.