

BRIEF:

The Implications of a Peace Agreement for Human Rights

Peace and human rights are not in conflict with one another. In fact, they are mutually reinforcing.

1. Endless war threatens human rights.

- a. In 1984, the United Nations General Assembly declared a right to peace. Life without war, it said, is “the primary international prerequisite for the material well-being, development and progress of countries, and for the full implementation of the rights and freedoms of the United Nations.”
- b. The unresolved status of the Korean War enables governments to divert critical resources toward military spending instead of the well-being of their people.
- c. The unresolved status of the war gives governments a justification for curtailing rights and liberties in the name of national security.
- d. The unresolved status of the war places lives in danger, as the risk of renewed conflict and the potential for governments to claim expansive wartime rights to use force could place millions of lives in harm’s way.

2. Peace can succeed in strengthening human rights where pressure has failed.

- a. There is no evidence that the decades-long U.S.-led campaign of military threats, crippling sanctions, and diplomatic isolation against North Korea has resulted in improved human rights protections.
- b. In fact, North Korea has adapted to this isolation by becoming as autonomous as possible, prioritizing self-reliance and national unity above all else. A continued state of war will validate this mindset.
- c. Extreme isolation and tensions between North Korea and the United States have made it difficult or even impossible to corroborate information about the human rights situation, or to build the necessary trust between governments and people in order to pursue greater human rights protections.

3. No country can expect to dictate the internal workings of any other country, especially through coercion or force. But we can do everything possible to help and not harm.

- a. The United States is in a state of peace with many countries with poor human rights records. Being in a state of peace with another country is not a gift or stamp of approval. It is meant to be the norm and keep the risk of catastrophic violence off the table.
- b. The hard reality is that this conflict will remain endless so long as either party makes unilateral demands of the other. There should be a peace agreement as soon as possible, which can serve as a foundation upon which to engage more deeply and more effectively on human rights.

This brief was compiled from “Chapter III: The Implications of a Peace Agreement for Human Rights” in the report **Path to Peace: The Case for a Peace Agreement to End the Korean War**, published by the transnational feminist campaign Korea Peace Now! Women Mobilizing to End the War in February 2021. Read the full report at KoreaPeaceNow.org.



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