



TAIWAN FOUNDATION
for DEMOCRACY

財法 臺灣民主基金會
團人

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 6, 2009

**Kim Seong-Min, founder of Free North Korea Radio,
wins the 2009 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award**

TAIPEI (2009/11/6) – The Taiwan Foundation for Democracy announced today that the 2009 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award will be awarded to Mr. Kim Seong-Min, founder and director of Free North Korea Radio, to recognize his courageous defiance of the North Korean regime and to support his ongoing work in providing an independent source of news and information to the people of North Korea.

“Mr. Kim Seong-Min represents the hope and dedication that is needed in any effort to bring about change in an extremely closed state,” said Dr. Wen-cheng Lin, President of the TFD. “North Korea has a notorious human rights record and can be considered the least democratic country in the world. We have seen little progress, despite many efforts by concerned members of the international community. Having escaped from North Korea, Mr. Kim knows first-hand how important it is to offer hope to people living under a brutal regime. He is dedicating his life to that cause, and his work is beginning to bear fruit. This year the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy is very pleased to honor him with our annual award.”

Mr. Kim was born in North Korea and served in the North Korean army for 10 years, including as a propaganda officer. The first time he tried to leave the country, he was arrested, tortured in prison, and sentenced to death. On his way to his execution site, Kim jumped off a moving train, and eventually defected to South Korea in 1999. In 2004, he founded Free North Korea Radio to provide an independent source of news and information to his fellow North Koreans. Since then, FNKR has grown from its initial internet broadcast to 5 hours of daily programming on shortwave radio, earning it the 2008 Media Prize from Reporters Without Borders. Over the years, Kim has persisted in this endeavor to challenge and undermine the censorship and propaganda of the North Korean government, despite threats to his life. Kim is highly respected in the North Korean community in South Korea, and was elected chairman of the North Korean Defectors Association in 2004.

Mr. Kim was chosen from a pool of 32 nominations, after a two-stage review process. The final review panel was comprised of: Ms. Sunila Abeysekera, Executive Director of International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific; Dr. Nisuke Ando, Director of the Kyoto Human Rights Institute and former Chairman of the United Nations Human Rights Committee; Dr. Alex Boraine, Chairperson of the International Center for Transitional Justice and former Deputy Chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission; Ms. Asma Jahangir, Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief; Dr. Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the 2008 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award laureate; Hon. Wang Jin-pyng, Chairman of the TFD; and Dr. Wen-cheng Lin, President of the TFD.

In their reviews, Ms. Jahangir praised Mr. Kim for being "exceptionally brave." Dr. Boraine commented that "Kim brings the good news of people who are prepared to risk their lives for the sake of oppressed people in his own country. Radio is a very powerful tool to bring home the message of freedom and human rights." Dr. Samar pointed out that "the people in North Korea need food to survive as well as food for thought. Kim Seong-Min provides food for thought by establishing Free North Korea Radio and promoting the right to information for people who are in great danger."

Mr. Kim Seong-Min will formally receive the 2009 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award at a ceremony in Taipei on December 10th, International Human Rights Day. The Award includes a US\$100,000 grant to support his work at Free North Korea Radio.

Media Contact:

Email: award@taiwandemocracy.org.tw

Tel: +886-2-2708-0100 #211

Fax: +886-2-2708-1148

For more information about the Award, please

visit: http://www.tfd.org.tw/english/HTML/ADHRA_2009_main.html