

The Korea Herald

Book examines N. Korean defectors' troubles in the South

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation has released a book highlighting the current plight of North Korean refugees in South Korea. Their successful integration serves as an important step towards peaceful unification, said Marc Ziemek, resident representative of the foundation. As the number of North Korean refugees in South Korea is steadily increasing, necessary measures have to be taken.

In the first chapter of the publication, North Korean refugees describe their lives in the North, the process and the reasons for defection and their challenges in adapting to South Korean society as well as their expectations for the future. The second chapter gives expert analysis about governmental and nongovernmental integration initiatives for North Korean refugees in South Korea. While doing this, the authors share their personal views as well as professional experience in participating in this integration process and envisions mutual understanding and future unification.

In the North Korean Refugee Report, the biggest challenge for North Korean defectors upon arrival in South Korea is adapting to the new political and economic environment. Believing that all people have potential and that education is one of the most important criteria for success in South Korea, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, together with its Korean partner organizations, decided to focus on this specific target group.

In the days to come, North Koreans could serve as mediators and mentors for those who newly arrive. Fully integrated, they become important assets who can help to overcome prejudice and misunderstanding prior to a possible territorial or political unification, said Ziemek. The book also examines how the North positions itself by propagating that it is the only country providing free education and medical treatment to its people. The regime touts that North Koreans are exempt from taxes, treated equally, and thus live in a fair society. In the book, one North Korean defector talks about the reason he was rejected from a North Korean university.

One day, I found out my family did not have a respectable background. I realized there was no place for me in the North, which is a hierarchical society, because my grandfather had chosen to cross the border to live in the South during the Korean War, the defector said.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation is an independent German political foundation which operates 200 projects in more than 120 countries worldwide. At the national and international level, they provide political education to promote peace, freedom, and justice.

Their key concerns include consolidating democracy, promoting the unification of Europe, intensifying transatlantic relations, and cooperating on development policies.

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www.kas.de/korea

The Foundation began operating in Korea in 1978. One of their present key dedications is the promotion of the peace and reconciliation process on the Korean peninsula at a national and regional level.

For more information about where to purchase the book or to learn more about the Foundation visit www.kas.de

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