



**\*\* Embargo until: 0:00 AM Thu, Jan 28, 2021 (Korea/Japan Standard Time);  
 3:00 PM Wed, Jan 27, 2021 (Greenwich Mean Time);  
 10:00 AM Wed, Feb 27, 2021 (Eastern Standard Time) \*\***  
**\*\* Images from the website and its contents are available for publication \*\***

## NGOs make public collaborative online database of North Korea’s arbitrary detention, abductions and enforced disappearances

- “Footprints” of the victims, perpetrators and other information about cases
- FOOTPRINTS currently stores files on 20,000 victims; 70,000 victims to be added
- International collaboration between 10 NGOs (9 Korean, 1 Swiss)
- The project began in 2017. NGOs have shared case information since 2019
- Next steps include researching internal disappearances in North Korea

**Explore the FOOTPRINTS database: <https://nkfootprints.info/en/>  
 Watch the user guide: <https://nkfootprints.info/en/page/hc9g6ya82gi>**

On January 28, 2021 (Seoul time), Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG), HURIDOCS, Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR), the Korean War Abductees Family Union (KWAFU), Justice for North Korea (JFNK), the 1969 KAL Abductees’ Families Association, Mulmangcho, No Chain and the Korean War POW Family Association unveil FOOTPRINTS, an online database of reported cases of arbitrary detention, abduction and enforced disappearances committed in and by North Korea.

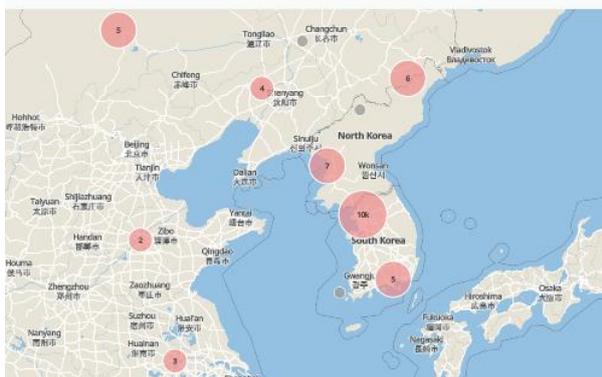
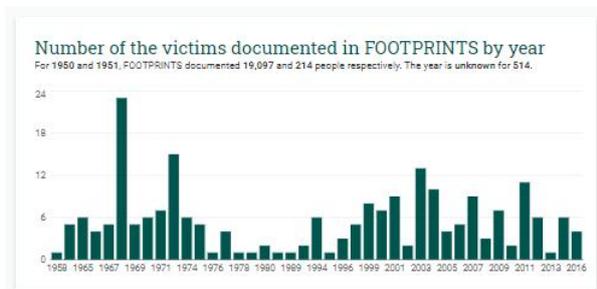


FOOTPRINTS is a joint civil society project to document and publish information concerning reported cases of arbitrary detention, abduction and enforced disappearances committed in and by North Korea, including the victims, perpetrators, proceedings to seek redress, relevant human rights instruments and North Korean resources. The open, accessible and searchable online database also provides relational and geospatial information to the users.

**20546 Victims    319 Proceedings    13 Perpetrators**

FOOTPRINTS publishes information and photos of the victims and perpetrators, submissions made to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) as well as the North Korean government’s response and judgments of South Korean and US courts. The previously classified files of South Korea’s intelligence service and police over the decades that the

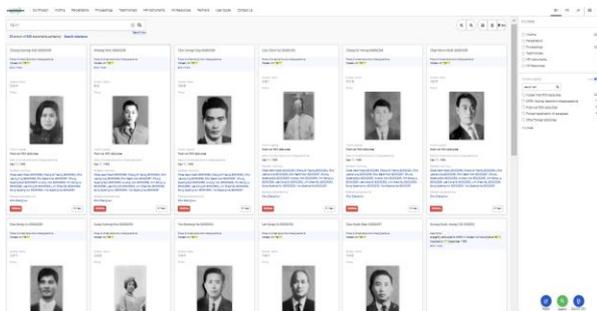
families of the abductees have obtained through freedom of information requests are also made public. The user can also access the testimonies of victims and witnesses as well as UN resolutions and reports.



FOOTPRINTS aims to increase the visibility of the scale, and international nature of crimes against humanity and war crimes perpetrated by North Korea. It will also preserve the case records of the victims and families, who have waited over 70 years for resolution, for the purpose of fact-finding, accountability, reparation and memorialization. Until now, it has been difficult to research the scattered records of North Korea’s detention, abductions and enforced disappearances, and many records have gone missing.

FOOTPRINTS will allow victims and their families, international and South Korean human rights organizations and activists, lawyers, academics, the media and interested citizens to have access to information, free

from governmental or political control. It will increase global and domestic pressure to resolve the issue.



150,000 to 200,000 South Korean civilians and POWs have been taken and held in North Korea, but successive South Korean governments have made little effort to resolve the matter or to update, preserve and make accessible the records. For decades, victims’ families have been ignored and now have low expectations for action from their government.

The Seoul-based human rights documentation NGO Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG) collected, standardized and aggregated the information and put together the online database website with technical assistance from Swiss-NGO HURIDOCS, which specializes in developing documentation and analysis programs for human rights violations. FOOTPRINTS uses the open-source Uwazi platform.

The project is an internationally rare example of the power of collaborative documentation by victims’ and their families, and human rights groups. TJWG’s international human rights documentation network, Access Accountability, will share know-how from this project to groups in documenting abuses in other contexts globally.

TJWG and NKHR began the joint project with support from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State in 2017. TJWG will maintain, update and expand the case files from 2021 onward. FOOTPRINTS is accessible in English, Korean and

Japanese for international use. In the coming years, the Japanese website will be developed, and Chinese and Spanish websites will be added. In the future, TJWG will research and add documentation regarding internal detention and disappearance of North Koreans within North Korea.

Lee Mi-Il of KWAFU said: “Identifying the lists of abductees and documenting them has been a work spanning decades. I am heartened to see it systematically stored online.”

Kim Sohee of NKHR said: “I hope that the joint effort of these organizations to interview and document North Korean escapees and other victims will bear fruit.”

Yoon Daye, TJWG’s technology officer, who set up the online database using HURIDOCS’ Uwazi program said: “FOOTPRINTS makes possible efficient documentation and data search by standardizing the records kept by different groups in different formats.”

Lee Younghwan of TJWG said: “FOOTPRINTS will help the victims and their families submit petitions to the UN and bring lawsuits in a systematic, efficient manner.”

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