



INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Robert L. Arsenault
President of the International League for Human Rights

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Excerpts from a speech for the anniversary celebration of the International League of Human Rights in Korea.

“I have been asked to speak to you about the history of the International League for Human Rights and to touch on some highlights. For the remainder of my talk I will give you some history of the League and comment briefly on the human rights situation in Russia and then discuss Korea.”

[...]

“I could spend the afternoon naming and shaming, alerting you the gross human rights violations in countries like Turkmenistan, Uganda, and Iran. While these countries are not our specific focus here today, before talking about Korea I would like to take a second to bring to your attention a change in the human rights situation in Russia, a country that demonstrated tremendous change the last ten years, but where a deterioration is underway that merits all of our concern. Russia is a particular interest of mine personally, and when I have a chance in any public forum I appreciate the opportunity to talk about changes there, whether positive or negative. I will be brief and then move on to the main focus of my talk today, the situation in North Korea.

“In a piece last month in *The Washington Post* Natan Sharansky, a former Soviet dissident who suffered a nine year imprisonment – now an author – and a former member of the Israeli Cabinet, wrote, ‘all those who understand the right of dissent is the cornerstone of a free society should be concerned with recent developments in Russia. Rather than being marked by the continued development of Russian democracy, the past few years have brought a regression. This is bad not only for Russia’s people but also for its neighbors and the entire free world. For while a democratic Russia would be a powerful ally in promoting freedom and stability around the world, an authoritarian Russia would undermine these efforts and thereby weaken the security of free nations everywhere.’

“Mr. Sharansky was writing about the case of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a successful businessman who was singled out among others. Khodorkovsky’s crime, it seems, was

unwillingness to rule out a run for the Presidency of Russia. Mr. Khodorkovsky now sits in a labor camp in Siberia. Russia should release Mr. Khodorkovsky from his unjust exile. That release would signal once again a turn for the better. As Mr. Sharansky wrote, 'By pressuring the Russian authorities to end this travesty of justice, the free world would be strengthening democracy with Russia and thereby strengthening an allegiance between Russia and the democratic world that is critically important for our common future.' Please join me in my appeal to Russia: release Mr. Khodorkovsky from his unjust exile."

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