

The Story of Oh Kil-nam and His Family



Source: Chosunilbo

Dr. Oh Kil-nam was once a South Korean elite strongly opposed to the Yusin Constitution system, who left South Korea to study in Germany.

After the No. 3 Office of the Central Committee of the Workers Party noticed Dr. Oh in Germany, North Korean agents approached him and lured him to North Korea with promises of a position in which he could study economics as much as he pleased. The North Korean agents also promised medical treatment for Dr. Oh's wife, who was suffering from hepatitis. Because of these promises, Dr. Oh decided to enter North Korea in 1985, bringing his wife and two young daughters, Hye-won and Gyu-won, with him.

"It was a real donkey act!" Dr. Oh said of his decision. Upon arriving at the airport in Pyongyang, he had already realized his mistake. His family was sent to a military camp in the mountains, and they were forced to repeatedly and solely study the sayings of Kim Il-sung. After that he was posted to a position at the "Voice of National Salvation," a North Korean radio propaganda broadcaster targeting South Korean people.

The following year, Dr. Oh was instructed to go to Germany to win over South Korean students studying there for the North Korean government. He was not allowed to bring his family with him to Germany, and they were forced to stay in North

Korea. His wife, Shin Suk-ja, pushed him to take the opportunity to defect back to South Korea. Dr. Oh eventually asked for asylum in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1986 and reentered South Korea in 1992. In that period he had relentlessly tried to bring his family to him wherever he was, in every way conceivable, but failed to do so.

According to Dr. Oh, the so-called national composer, Yun Isang, tried to apply pressure to Dr. Oh saying, "You betrayed the Leader Kim Il-sung, who did you a favor. As well, you also know the secrets of the Mt. Chilbo Liaison Office (which is in charge of the "Voice of National Salvage"). Therefore, we have no choice but to take your family hostage."

Yun again attempted to persuade Dr. Oh to go back to North Korea by giving him a letter from Dr. Oh's wife. There was also an audio tape recorded by his wife and two daughters, which sounded as though they had been forced and threatened into recording.

Since 1987, Shin Suk-ja, Hye-won, and Gyu-won- Dr. Oh's entire family-have reportedly been imprisoned in the notorious political prison camp-Yoduk. Kang Cheol-hwan, Ahn Hyuk, Kim Tae-jin, and other former prisoners of Yoduk who now live in the South have testified unanimously that they have met Dr. Oh's family in Yoduk.

Now South Korean NGOs have undertaken this campaign to rescue Dr. Oh's wife and children from the prison camps of North Korea. The aim of this campaign is to collect signatures from South Koreans and citizens of the world to urge UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to take care of Shin Suk-ja, Hye-won, and Gyu-won, and to work to bring them back to their home in South Korea.

-ICNK
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