

## **Declaration of Human Rights to Dignity and Safety**

No one will be able to survive. The sinking of the Sewol ferry on April 16, 2014, was not only an incident symbolically demonstrating that the South Korean society itself had already begun to sink but also a disaster that followed numerous other similar ones. Despite the calamity that horrendously revealed contradictions and absurdities of this society, the South Korean government is trampling on the justice, and South Korean presses and media are distorting the truth. Spitting on human dignity and covering up the truth, they say: "Do nothing and stay where you are!" But if we do nothing and stay where we are, eventually no one on this land will be left alive.

We could not stop resisting in solidarity just to live again as human beings. Standing at the Paengmok Port, in Ansan City, at Gwanghwamun Square, and on all the other streets covered with sadness, we were anxious and agonizing. We shedded tears, talked with one another, came out to squares and marched together. While faltering under persecutions, we nevertheless have been struggling together and recovering our dignity. Darkness can never overcome the light, and insult can never drive dignity away.

All human beings are free and equal in themselves. Everyone has the right to safe life. Safety is not to be secured through controls and repressions. Nor is it to be bought with money. Human dignity realized in liberty, equality and solidarity is the cornerstone of safety. We will fight against any unjust force that threatens our rights and safety by trying to reduce our beings to a mere means to earn profits and maintain privileges.

Rights never come to us by themselves. They can only be conquered and preserved through our organized struggles. Such practices for rights are the very way to democracy and the only way that we, the people, can affirm that we are the democratic sovereign. We will wear the yellow ribbon and raise candles against the forces menacing us and depriving us of our dignity and safety. This struggle that already began in the pain over the Sewol ferry tragedy will overcome any obstacles to protecting the dignity of each and every one so as to continue to march to our new world of solidarity.

With such pledges, we declare our rights as follow.

1. (Human Life and Dignity) Human life and dignity must be secured as the first and foremost priority. Money and power cannot precede human life and dignity.

2. (Liberty and Equality) All human beings are free and equal, and never subject to repressions and discriminations for any reason.

3. (Solidarity and Cooperation) Everyone has the right to solidarity. No one can live alone; one's human dignity can be preserved only when living in cooperation with others.

4. (Citizens' Right to Safety and the Government's Responsibility) Everyone has the right to live a safe life and to participate in activities to make the society safer. Everyone has the right to know, reduce and avoid dangers, and the primary responsibility to secure this right falls upon the government.

5. (The Duty to Rescue) The government must mobilize all its available powers and do its best till the end to rescue people in disaster and secure their safety. There should be no discrimination in rescue activities.

6. (The Right to Truth) Everyone has the right to know the truth including the environments and causes that gave rise to a disaster. The investigation committee should be allowed a sufficient authority and guaranteed its fairness and independence. No cover-ups and distortions can be tolerated.

7. (Responsibility and Recurrence Prevention) Disaster recovery should be carried out in a

just way. Those who are responsible for the disaster must be punished in a fair and strict manner. The government must come up with recurrence prevention measures in order to avoid similar incidents.

8. (The Right of the Victim) All victims of a disaster have the right to have their undeserved damages and sufferings recognized and respected. In particular, they have the right to receive official apologies and compensations from the government as well as representatives of the party responsible for the disaster. Furthermore, the victims have the right to participate in the entire process of disaster recovery.

9. (Healing and Recovery) All victims have equal rights to receive immediate aids and necessities from the moment that a disaster takes place. It is the government that is primarily responsible for taking active and sufficient measures for the victims' healing and recovery.

10. (Sympathy and Action) Everyone has the right to fully mourn the death of those who lost their lives in a disaster. Everyone has the right to speak, assemble and act in order to participate in the victims' pain and realize justice.

11. (Memory and Record) The community must remember victims and record the entire process of the disaster and its recovery.

12. (The Right to Resist) If agencies of power such as the government, corporations, presses and media violates human life and dignity and put safety in danger, all human beings have the right to protect themselves and struggle in solidarity.

13. (The Right to Build a Society Based on Dignity) All human beings have the right to transform a society centered around money and power into a new one based on liberty and equality, solidarity and cooperation, human life and dignity.

With feelings of loss and sadness, and with seething indignation, we hereby declare human rights to dignity and safety. We promise that we will remember the Sewol ferry disaster, uncover its truth and set the justice right through our unrelenting practices. We swear as well that we will pay attention to all disasters, calamities and miseries in the world and provide our support to them with solidarity. We will not hesitate to reveal what has been concealed and to speak out against the structure of power that encroach dignity and safety. This declaration is not to be completed in the text but in the process in which numberless others like us speak, shout and take actions again and again. Let us hold hands together. Let us act together.