

It's Time to End the Korean War

WILPF Statement for International Day of Peace 2021

Over 70 years after the Korean War first ignited, a formal peace agreement has yet to be reached – meaning the war that [wreaked havoc on the Koreans](#), with four million casualties and 10 million families separated, continues to this day.

This International Day of Peace, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom stands in solidarity with generations of activists and advocates to demand an official end to the Korean War – and the start of a new era of peace in the Korean Peninsula.

We are united in this call to action with [Korea Peace Now! Women Mobilizing to End the War](#), [Women Cross DMZ](#), the [Korea Peace Appeal](#), and the countless other feminists, women-led and civil society campaigns that have been organising across the world in support of a peaceful final conclusion to the Korean War.

The “three-year” war that never ended

The Korean War began just five years after the country was liberated from Japanese colonial rule at the end of the Second World War. When negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union failed to establish a single government, Korea was divided into two separate states – the Republic of Korea (ROK) in the south and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north.

The division precipitated the three-year-long Korean War (1950–1953), which saw the US and 15 other countries send combat forces to ROK to repel the north, while China sent its volunteer army to support DPRK.

Within three years, millions of people had been killed, harmed, or displaced, and the two states had been ravaged by widespread destruction. Today, many families remain separated – unable to cross the border and traumatised by generations of loss.

Although an armistice agreement was signed by DPRK and the US in 1953, bringing an end to active fighting, the war itself has never been resolved – and can re-escalate at any time.

Deadlocked on the path to peace

The adoption of several resolutions by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) intended to influence DPRK's abandonment of its [nuclear program](#) have failed to achieve their goals, impeded by hostile relations that have remained high ever since the armistice agreement was

first signed. Today, the Korean Peninsula continues to be affected by militarisation, the ongoing arms race, and the constant threat of nuclear action.

Yet signs of progress have been emerging.

In recent years, DPRK [announced](#) a decision to stop all nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests and shut down its nuclear test site as a confidence-building measure. The ROK and DPRK militaries also signed a comprehensive military agreement to completely cease all hostile acts against one another, as well as measures to transform the [Demilitarized Zone](#) into a peace zone.

But because a formal peace agreement has not been established, tensions remain vulnerable to political turmoil. In June 2020, for example, DPRK [destroyed](#) the inter-Korean liaison office in Kaesong after ROK authorities failed to prevent anti-DPRK messages from being sent across the border – demonstrating the ongoing challenges of inter-Korean reconciliation without a guiding framework.

Today, negotiations between DPRK and the US remain deadlocked, while [US and UN sanctions](#), as well as US–ROK combined military exercises, continue to exacerbate the situation. Moreover, the Biden administration is continuing to uphold the previous administration's policy of banning all US citizens from travelling to DPRK – hindering the reunion of separated families and preventing humanitarian assistance from reaching the most vulnerable people in DPRK.

WILPF demands action for a future of peace in the Koreas

The Koreas – like all nations – have the right to determine their own future. Periods of progress over the past several years towards improved inter-Korean relations have sent a powerful message about the two states' shared desire for a peaceful path forward.

But the war that was supported and perpetuated by the international community requires action from the international community in order to conclude.

Together with feminist peace activists around the world, WILPF demands that a series of tangible actions be immediately undertaken to officially end the Korean War and put the Koreas on a path to self-determined peace.

We demand:

- The US, ROK, and DPRK must immediately conclude a peace agreement in any form that reflects their mutual agreement to bring a formal end to the Korean War. This will allow the Koreas to pursue reconciliation on their own terms, break the arms race, and shift resources to human security and sustainable development.

- All countries that actively participated in the Korean War bear a responsibility to advocate for a peace agreement and must actively support ending the unresolved seven-decade-long Korean War.
- The international community should lift sanctions on DPRK that impede inter-Korean cooperation.
- DPRK, ROK, the US, Russia, China and all other nuclear-armed states must sign and ratify the [UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) to bring the world closer to a future free from the threat of nuclear warfare.
- Women must be closely involved in peace talks and the process of moving toward a peace agreement, drawing on generations of activism and recognising the unique [gendered impacts](#) of the unresolved war.

For individuals and civil society organisations: How you can help

If you are an individual or representative of a civil society organisation interested in helping to bring a formal end to the Korean War, we recommend the following actions:

- Learn about the issue and demand action (see resources below).
- Sign and promote the [Korea Peace Appeal](#).
- Sign the [LIFT \(Let Individuals Travel Freely\) petition](#) calling on the US to once again allow US citizens to travel to DPRK.
- Support US grassroots advocacy for the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act.
- Mobilise your community to engage in actions like letter-writing campaigns, publishing op-eds, hosting webinars, etc.

Learn more

To learn more about the Korean War and women-led efforts to promote peace in the Korean Peninsula, please visit the following resources:

- Report: [Path to Peace: The Case for a Peace Agreement to End the Korean War](#)
- Blog: [Changing Narratives, Building Peace](#)
- Blog: [Time to End the Seven-Decade-Long Korean War](#)
- Blog: [#KoreaPeaceNow!: Join Our New Campaign for Peace in the Korean Peninsula](#)
- Blog: [Women Cross DMZ Congratulate North and South Korean Peace Efforts](#)
- Blog: [WILPF President Kozue Akibayashi on Crossing the DMZ with Other Women Peacemakers](#)