Madam Speaker,

in Dante’s ‘‘Divine Comedy,’’ the inscription

above the entrance to hell

reads, ‘‘Abandon hope all ye who enter

here.’’ That should also, sadly, be the

inscription above the DMZ for those

turning northward, for North Korea is

truly hell on Earth.

This is a land where the techniques

of torture and brainwashing have been

finely perfected, as portrayed in the

film ‘‘The Manchurian Candidate.’’

This is a land where political prisoners

labor under conditions of slow starvation

and massive abuse, as reflected in

the South Korean drama ‘‘Yoduk

Story.’’

Madam Speaker, I wish I could say

that North Korea was no more scary

than an Orwellian novel or a Cold War

movie or a tragic musical production.

Sadly, however, North Korea is no

mere bogeyman who disturbs a child’s

dreams in the shadows of the night.

North Korea is a frightening reality, a

daily reality for over 23 million people.

It is an immediate threat to our Armed

Forces in the Pacific and to our allies

in South Korea and Japan. It is a proliferation

of weapons of mass destruction

to fellow rogue regimes in the

Middle East.

North Korea haunts us all, but it is

no mere ghost, it is a real and constant

threat. That is why I introduced last

week a bill, H.R. 1980, the North Korea

Sanctions and Diplomatic Nonrecognition

Act. United we must stand for

North Korean human rights and for an

end to the repression of innocent

human beings. For if we wish to find

the real meaning of repression, we

should turn our gaze to Pyongyang. If

we seek the true definition of torture,

we need look no further than the killing

fields of North Korea. We must not

forget the horrific accounts which our

emaciated prisoners of war brought

back to America after the 1953 Armistice.

We must not turn a deaf ear to the

haunting tales of refugees and returned

abductees who are among the fortunate

few who are able to escape this hell on

Earth. We must not silence our consciences

in the name of diplomatic expediency.

To be silent on fundamental

freedoms and human rights is to tell

the despotic leader, Kim Jong Il, that

he can avoid these issues indefinitely.

To be silent is to be an enabler.

We must highlight how prison guards

cut still living babies out of the refugee

mothers’ wombs and slam their heads

on the pavement for the so-called

crime of being the mixed blood seed of

Chinese fathers. We must shed light on

the imprisoned Christians who were

martyred by having hot molten metal

poured on their exposed flesh. The executions

carried out for stealing a little

food to keep one’s child alive during

the famine. The refugees hunted down

or trafficked in the sex trade in China.

On a regular business day in our Nation’s

Capitol, the topic of human

rights and oppression may seem rather

abstract. But human rights is found in

each individual, case by case, and in

their tears. It is found in the tears of

Mrs. Yokota, waiting for over three

decades for the return of her little girl

snatched away by agents of North

Korea. It is in the tears of our own

American citizens, Mary Ling, waiting

for the return of her daughter, journalist

Laura Ling. Laura was grabbed,

along with fellow U.S. journalist Euna

Lee, 6 weeks ago by North Korean border

guards and then imprisoned in the

gulag.

Human rights is also found in the

tears of a Chicago citizen, Esther Kim,

waiting for the return of the remains of

her husband, U.S. permanent resident

Kim Dong-shik. Reverend Kim was kidnapped

by North Korean agents in

China 9 years ago while helping refugees,

and reportedly died of starvation

and torture at a North Korean military

base. It is found in the tears of Israeli

apartment dwellers hit by missiles developed

by North Korea for Hezbollah

in southern Lebanon in 2006 from tunnels

dug with North Korean assistance.

It is a grim picture, but we must not

despair, Madam Speaker. Justice will

ultimately prevail. In the same manner

that we prevailed against the evil empire

and Soviet-style Communism,

with perseverance, with dedication to

the defense of human rights, and the

promotion of core democratic principles,

the suffering of the North Korean

people can also be brought to an

end. May it be so.