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### Liberty Seized: The Government and the People

Benjamin Franklin understood the desire and requirement for liberty when the colonies were restrained from Great Britain. He acknowledged that if the colonists were corrupt and vicious, they would need tyrants because they do not deserve the right or ability to be free. After deliberation, he recognized that the colonists were virtuous people, people who were competent of being free. He once said, "Where liberty dwells, there is my country." The quotation from Franklin proves itself relevant and applicable when considering definite present day governmental laws and actions by various countries. The previous statement is epitomized through the Iraqi government and North Korean regime.

Franklin's quotation is significant in present day civilizations because there are administrations like the Iraqi government that oppress their citizen's liberty by government officials and police officers not following their own law. In Article 2 of the Kurdistan Press Law, the law protects the journalists' right to attain information of significance to citizens, and the ability to address it to the public good. In addition, the law defends any journalist from being arrested for publishing such information, and the government will investigate and discipline anyone who injures a journalist as a consequence of his work. Meanwhile, the police have detained many journalists without warrants, and they have also done so without charge for weeks or even a year. The government officials continue to not follow their own laws, and they also do not investigate unjust punishments.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Franklin's quotation proves relevant because there are still struggles with liberty in peoples countries that they call home (Iraq), even in modern day. Iraqi government officials will continue to violate their freedom of speech, since

they are annihilating opposing evidence towards them and arresting journalists who defy them. In addition, the Iraqi people are not doing anything to change the violation of laws most likely because they will be punished as well. Therefore, no further action to protect them will take place.

Even though Iraq has liberty issues, they do not compare to the restrictions and limitations of North Korea. Seongmin Lee, a man who once lived in North Korea, wrote that if you take a closer gaze, there are twenty-three million people who do not have basic human rights, not even freedom of speech or expression. He continued on to say that North Koreans are captives, and they do not know how bad it is in North Korea because they are pressured greatly by the dictatorship.<sup>2</sup> US journalists who have been in Pyongyang, North Korea, have stated how they are always encouraged by North Koreans to recognize North Koreans do in fact have freedom. Contrary to their belief, one comment of unhappiness with the North Korean regime could mean imprisonment.<sup>3</sup> As a result, Franklin's quotation proves valid yet again considering that the North Korean regime is relevant and very unusual among modern day governments. Unfortunately, the credible reason that North Koreans allow their government to take away their rights and freedom is because of the supremacy and arsenal the regime possess. Even if the North Koreans wanted to rebel, they simply could not because they would be disciplined or tortured...*unless* they had the military on their side versus government officials. However, the military leaders will not desire to sacrifice their power. Therefore, North Korea proves itself relevant in today's society because their own citizens can do nothing about their freedoms being seized, unless powerful leaders and soldiers decide to as well.

The modern day relevance of Franklin's quotation is proven through the Iraqi government officials abuse over their laws regarding freedom of speech and the North Korean regime's

restriction of liberty for all of their citizens. Even though Franklin may have intended his quote to be about the colonies and Great Britain, the situation with the colonists is similar to Iraq and North Korea in the sense that the colonists, Iraqis, and North Koreans are being restricted in some way. Unlike colonists in Franklin's time, both nations' governmental issues regarding liberty in 2013 may never be solved unless citizens with authority step in and revolutionize.

## Works Cited

<sup>1</sup> "Iraqi Kurdistan: Free Speech Under Attack." *Hrw.org*. Human Rights Watch Organization, 2 Feb. 2013. Web. 2 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/09/iraqi-kurdistan-free-speech-under-attack>>.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, Seongmin. "Give Freedom to People in North Korea, but Not Its Regime." *CNN iReport*. Cable News Network, 30 Mar. 2013. Web. 2 Oct. 2013 <<http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-948965>>.

<sup>3</sup> Sullivan, Tim. "[reveal] NOW YOU SEE IT." *National Geographic*. Oct. 2013: 96-117. Print.