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Factors Affecting Domestic Refugee Policy Development: An Analysis of South Korea's Case

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Research Panel: Mass Displacement and Migration

Presenter: Yun Ju Kang, Indiana University

Title: Factors Affecting Domestic Refugee Policy Development: An Analysis of South Korea's Case

Abstract:

Asia is no exception to the global refugee crisis. The number of asylum-seekers in Asian countries has escalated very quickly in recent years. In the United States, President Trump's recent executive orders suspended refugee admissions, and hostile immigration policy sparked the controversy about refugees.

The rising number of refugees and migrants from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia created political conflicts inside the European countries. The refugee issue has emerged as a global problem.

How is the world dealing with these refugee situations? What are the common barriers in designing humanistic refugee policy, and what is the best way to break through these barriers?

In exploring these questions, this paper will take a closer look at the refugee situation in Korea by examining the history of the development of its refugee act of 2013 and barriers to the refugee-friendly policy. South Korea is the first country in Asia to adopt a separate Refugee Act at the national level. South Korea has played an important role among Asian countries regarding human rights policy; its refugee discussion will impact other countries' decisions to solve the current immigration crisis.

This paper examines the global and local influences on South Korea's attitude toward refugees. Firstly, this paper looks at the role of social movements and activists as local engagement, impacting South Korea's refugee policy. It points out that increasing the social awareness and attention on the refugees can guide the government that has sovereignty over immigration policies. Secondly, this paper will analyze the role of the international human rights treaty body at the global level to South Korea's refugee act of 2013. This paper aims to encourage continuing global attention and cooperation in social movements toward the refugee problem by evidencing their role in the history of human rights development.

About the presenter:

Yun Ju Kang is a current S.J.D. candidate of Indiana University Maurer School of Law. Before she came to IU, she worked as a human rights counsel and immigration lawyer for Korean refugees. She taught International Law at College of Law, Hong-Ik University, Seoul, South Korea. Her research focuses on international human rights law and people in crisis.