

Hello, and welcome to “As It Is,” our daily show for people learning American English!

I’m Christopher Cruise in Washington.

Today on the program we take you back 60 years to the day when fierce fighting on the Korean peninsula finally came to an end...

*“My fellow citizens, tonight we greet with prayers of thanksgiving the official news that an armistice was signed almost an hour ago in Korea.”*

But first, we report on a sharp increase in the number of young, single mothers in China...

## **More -- and Younger -- Unwed Mothers in China**

Every year in China, the number of unmarried women giving birth grows by 10 to 13 percent. And surveys by Chinese media show that unwed mothers are getting younger and younger. Many are struggling in a society ruled by tradition.

Mario Ritter reports...

Three years ago Yi Ran learned she was pregnant. She was scared. But the 30-year-old store assistant felt that, at her age, this could be her last chance to have a child. So she decided to continue her pregnancy.

Like many other unmarried women, Yi Ran did not tell anybody she was pregnant. She chose instead to quit her job, open an online store and work from home. That way she could look after her son at the same time.

She says that her heart is heavy with anxiety as she tries to pay her bills. And she is concerned about a fine imposed on illegal births.

“I fear I will not be able to pay” she says.

Yi Ran’s son does not exist on China’s population records. Household registrations, known as hukou in Chinese, are only available to children born within a legal marriage.

Rising incomes, liberal sexual behavior and growing mobility are all affecting women’s choices about family and relationships.

The Guangdong Province Research Center on Family Planning did a survey. It found that up to 80 percent of female migrant workers in the province have premarital sex. Fifty to 60 percent of them have had an accidental pregnancy.

When they decide to keep their baby, single women are aware they are breaking the law. Chinese family planning agencies punish any violation of the one-child policy, including birth out of wedlock.

## Little Support for Single Mothers and Children

Wei Wei is a social worker with Little Bird, an NGO that provides help for migrant workers. He says Chinese society does not support aid to unwed mothers.

*“Their status is illegal. They do not have any legal protection. And this is a thorny social group, there’s no organization that looks after them.”*

Wei Wei says the problem is widespread, especially in manufacturing areas like Guangzhou and Shenzhen where migrant workers flock together.

*“The biggest problem they face once their partner abandons them is the issue of hukou, they are not able to get a household registration for the child. They also find themselves in very hard economic condition, because the original family excludes them, they do not have any income and it’s hard for them to find a job.”*

Yi Ran’s son is now three years old. Without the household registration he will not be allowed into kindergarten. Each time he gets sick, medical fees are higher than average. Since his mother does not have a marriage certificate, she cannot apply for registration.

Little Bird’s Wei Wei says there are few solutions other than marriage.

But there is no way to avoid the social compensation fees for unwed mothers for breaking the one-child policy.

The fines are often paid only by single mothers because their partners abandon them. The amount differs and, in some areas, can be equal to one year's income. People like Yi Ran do not have family support and fall outside social welfare programs for married couples. The women find it very difficult to pay social compensation fees.

### **Growing Importance of Social Networks**

With little to no help available to them, unwed mothers rely heavily on each other. Many go on the Internet to find help and support.

More than 3,000 users are said to be active in an online chat forum for unwed mothers on the Internet portal Baidu.

Yi Ran explains that the Internet is the only place where she can express her feelings and frustrations as a single mother. She says she has never sought help from strangers or social welfare.

“There are things I cannot say in real life, but the Internet is my little space of freedom.”

I'm Mario Ritter.

## The War in Korea Finally Comes to an End

Finally, July 27th marks the 60th anniversary of the signing of the agreement that officially ended the fighting on the Korean peninsula.

(Voice of newsreel announcer)

Representatives of North Korea and the United Nations signed the armistice on July 27, 1953. The agreement came after the two sides met 575 times during the previous two years. At that time, it was the longest truce negotiation in the history of warfare.

President Dwight Eisenhower told the American people about the agreement in a broadcast from the White House.

*“My fellow citizens, tonight we greet with prayers of thanksgiving the official news that an armistice was signed almost an hour ago in Korea. It will quickly bring to an end the fighting between the United Nation(s) forces and the Communist armies.”*

The 1953 armistice called for a withdrawal of military forces from what was to be a demilitarized -- or neutral -- zone. It also called for the return of prisoners of war and the planning of a political conference to organize the withdrawal of foreign troops from Korea.

I'm Christopher Cruise, and that's "As It Is" on The Voice of America.



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