

Committee: Security Council

Topic: Human Rights situation in North Korea

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Introduction



Worldwide talks concerning North Korea have so far focused on trade and denuclearization. However, North Korea remains one of the world's most repressive states. Almost total political control is gathered in the hands of Kim Jong-Un

(chairman of the States Affairs Commission and head of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea). North Korea has been ruled by the Kim family for three generations, and its citizens are required to show complete devotion to the family and its current leader. The state controls everything, and actively spies on its citizens using a vast surveillance and informer network. It has been able to develop an expensive nuclear program by ignoring the shortages of food that occur in most parts of the country and expending its income in its nuclear and missile program.

Key-word definition

Repatriation: Sending someone back to their home country

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNHRC: United Nations Human Rights Council

DRRK: Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Pyongyang: The capital of North Korea

Countries and organizations concerned

DPRK or North Korea: Country in East Asia with limited human rights

China: Under a border agreement with North Korea, it forcibly repatriates North Koreans who try to flee from their country

The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK): It was launched by a distinguished group of specialists in October 2001 to promote human rights in North Korea

Commission of Inquiry (COI) in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: It was established by the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in North Korea

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC): It examines via the COI in the DPRK the violation of the human rights in North Korea

Background Information

Human rights in North Korea are very limited as the government restricts all civil and political liberties. In order to maintain fear and control over the population, the government will recurrently use arbitrary arrest and punishment of crimes, torture in custody, and executions. These punishments



are often implemented to people that have not committed an internationally recognized criminal offence, but they were accused of being related to individuals considered as threatening to the state.

North Korea will also send thousands of people to work overseas in slave-like conditions with minimum wages. A large percentage of workers' salaries is seized by the state and constitutes a huge source of income for the country. However, countries like China, Kuwait, Poland, Qatar and Sri Lanka have stopped renewing work visas to North Koreans to comply with UN sanctions.

The government forces labor to ordinary citizens, including children, to control its people and sustain its economy. Most North Koreans will not choose their own job, but will be assigned with one by the government and at some point of their life they will have to do unpaid labor.

North Koreans get all their news, entertainment and information from state media, which praises the leadership. Citizens who try to have access to content provided by international media outlets, will most likely be imprisoned. There is also a closed network that only certain people are allowed to use, but most North Koreans will never go online. Mobile phones are more common than they used to be, but making an overseas phone call is prohibited and North Koreans trying to make contact with the outside world are punished.



The government restricts unauthorized cross-border travel to China. North Korean refugees who flee to China are often later forcibly brought back to North Korea by the authorities and sent to prison camps.

Women in North Korea are deprived of education and job opportunities and they face greater difficulty than men in being admitted to university and in joining the military. They are also often victims of sexual violence. However, the state authorities do not offer any protection or justice to women facing sexual abuse.

Nevertheless, North Korea refuses having a flawed human rights system and has declared that discussion on the matter will not be welcomed.

Recent development and timeline of key events

There has been no discernible improvement in human rights in North Korea since Kim Jong-Un assumed power after his father's death in 2011. Pyongyang's record of cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms remains among the worst in the world. Since 2013, its human rights record has been the subject of more focused UN attention than ever before.

21 March 2013	Establishment of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Human Rights in North Korea by the United Nations Human Rights Council.
February 2014	A UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on North Korea said in a report that Pyongyang's abuses were so severe, the Security Council should refer the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague.
10 November 2014	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC) is ratified by North Korea.
2016	Kim Jong-Un's government increased efforts to stop North Koreans from crossing into China without permission. Both countries increased patrols and established barriers to crossing the border by building barbed-wire fences.

6 December 2016	The North Korean government ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
September 2017	South Korea approved a US\$8 million aid package for North Korean children and women at risk that will be monitored by UNICEF and the UN World Food Program (WFP).

Relevant treaties

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR): It was accessioned by North Korea on 14 September 1981

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): It was signed on 23 August 1990 and ratified on 21 September 1990 by North Korea

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): It was accessioned by North Korea on 27 September 2001

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR): It was accessioned by North Korea on 14 September 1981

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC): It was signed on 9 September 2014 and ratified on 10 November 2014 by North Korea

Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): It was signed on 3 July 2013 and ratified on 6 December 2016 by North Korea

Previous attempts to solve the issue

On 21 March 2013, the United Nations Human Rights Council established the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Human Rights in North Korea. The purpose of



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this body is to investigate the systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in order to ensure full accountability. The Commission of Inquiry

looks into violations discrimination, torture and inhuman treatment in prison camps, forced disappearances and violations of the right to life, of the right to food, of freedom of expression, of freedom of movement.

Possible solutions

- ✓ In order to stop the criminalization of the act of leaving North Korea without permission, you could include that if the UNHCR intervenes in North Korea's border areas, the escapees will not be forcibly repatriated.
- ✓ Since the North Korean citizens are prohibited of making any contact with the outside world, providing them with information (via radio and other media) would end their forced isolation.
- ✓ Another efficient solution would be to raise awareness to the rest of the world of the human rights situation in North Korea so that the true picture of conditions there is revealed. This could be achieved if human rights organizations are given full access to North Korea.



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Links for further reading

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