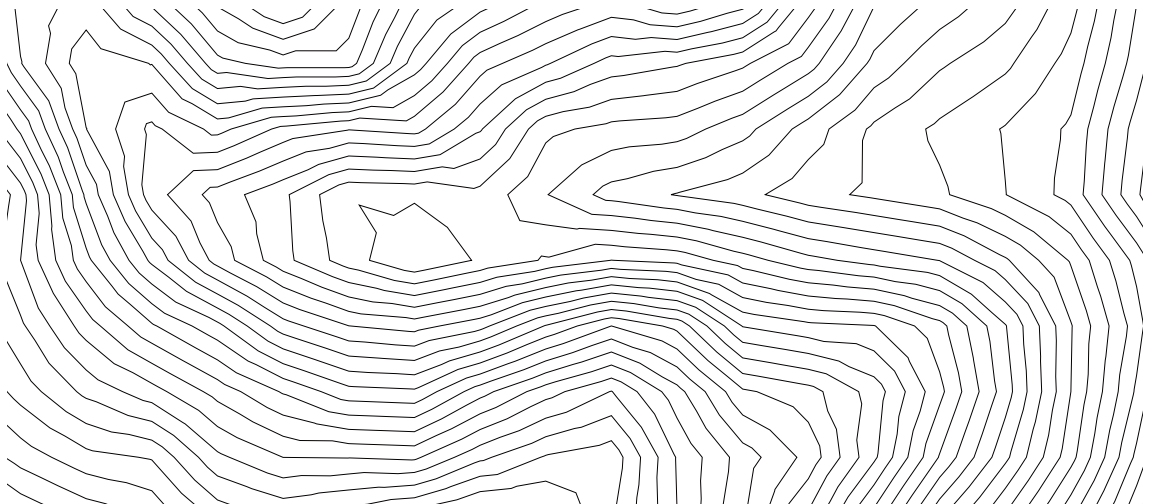


Effects of International Advocacy toward Human Rights of North Korea



NK Watch 2020 Report

Effects of International Advocacy toward Human Rights of North Korea

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Preface

NK Watch exists for one reason. NK Watch investigates and documents cases of human rights violations in North Korea to contribute in preparing a reasonable and objective way of transitional justice after North Korea respects universal human rights and achieves democracy.

The supreme leader of North Korea and few members of the ruling class have been and are committing systematic and widespread human rights violations for over 75 years in order to maintain its dictatorship and rationalize the absolute power of the supreme leader. As shown in the history of South Korea and several other countries, dictatorship can never co-exist with human rights. Over the 75 years, North Koreans are conditioned to accept the regime's abuse and terror as something normal. In North Korea, often times, some of the people who express dissent are sent to prison/detention facilities and/or executed, and some of them even flee the country out of fear of persecution.

A significant number of North Koreans do not know that they, as 'human beings,' have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. People, in North Korea, are forced to believe that only the supreme leader has the right to be treated with dignity, and this belief became an indisputable principle in the lives of North Koreans. North Koreans do not even know what 'human rights' is. It seemed like these circumstances would never change. However, North Korea has shown some meaningful changes.

Over a long period of time, the international community has advocated for the promotion and protection of human rights in North Korea. Since the 2000s, the United Nations (UN) engaged in activities to monitor and improve the situation of human rights in North Korea.

Likewise, various countries, such as the European Union, the United States of America, and Japan, and international NGOs have engaged in a variety of activities to protect and advance human rights in North Korea. International human rights advocacy was effective in raising awareness among the international community to know and acknowledge North Korea's gross situation of human rights.

However, it was unclear whether these efforts had any impact on North Korea's human rights situation. The international community was unsure whether the advocacy had achieved a meaningful advancement in human rights in North Korea. The international community also wanted to know what changes or improvements were made to North Korea's human rights conditions. This uncertainty caused exhaustion among the international community, resulting in decreased motivation to carry out such advocacy.

As NK Watch faced the same situation of uncertainty and exhaustion, the organization thought it was pivotal to research on the impacts and changes in the situation of human rights in North Korea. It is believed that fundamental changes to the situation of human rights in North Korea is difficult to achieve, because human rights violations in North Korea stem from its leadership and dictatorial system deeply rooted in people's lives. However, from this research, NK Watch realized that the situation of human rights in North Korea was and can be improved with continuous advocacy and attention by the international community. It was found that North Korea made small but meaningful progress in its human rights situation.

NK Watch hopes that this report could assist international human rights advocacy in creating positive changes to North Korea's human rights situation and serve as a basis for protecting and improving human rights in North Korea.

Lastly, NK Watch supports all North Koreans, whom are hoping to live in freedom and with dignity, and all members of the international community, whom are working to improve North Korea's human rights. NK Watch appreciates all the efforts that the international community, including the UN, had made to protect and promote human rights in North Korea, asking individuals citizens of the international community to band together for a cause.

Thank you.

May, 2020

NK Watch

Introduction

1. Research Overview

Background and Purpose

The purpose of this research was to assess whether international human rights advocacy has had any impact on the situation of human rights in North Korea.

Human rights violations in North Korea stem from the dictatorship of the Kim family, which the power passed from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un. In the 1950s, Kim Il-sung carried out a wide range of purge of his political enemies and rival factions. Political prison camp, created in the early 1950s, was one of the methods Kim Il-sung used to eliminate his opposition forces. His political enemies and members of rival factions were either executed or sent to political prison camps. Kim Jong-il, the successor to Kim Il-sung, created ideological and systematic framework that established today's dictatorial system in North Korea. Kim Jong-il emphasized that he, the son of Kim Il-sung, is the only rightful heir apparent who could enable North Korea to develop and to pursue permanent revolution. This claim of Kim Jong-il was later reflected into the ideology of North Korea. Anyone who did not comply with the absolute leadership were either executed or sent to political prison camps. Furthermore, Kim Jong-il eliminated all potential threats that could damage his leadership. Kim Jong-un, the successor to Kim Jong-il, came into power and is the current leader who runs the dictatorship.

North Korea has violated human rights systematically since the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). These violations have and are being committed to this day. In the 1960s, the international community began to criticize North Korea's human rights

practices. And, in the 2000s, international organizations and countries, such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), United States of America (US) and Japan, have expressed concerns about the situation of human rights in North Korea. Over a long period of time, various measures and resources were utilized to advocate for North Korean human rights. However, it was unclear whether these advocacy efforts have had any impact on North Korea's human rights situation. Thus, this research, conducted by NK Watch, assessed the impact of international human rights advocacy on the human rights situation in North Korea.

Sources and Data

While various sources and data were used in this research, the supporting materials can be divided into three types: NK Watch's data, North Korean publications, and Academic journals. First, NK Watch's data includes UN petitions and Ahn Myeong-Chul (Also known as, Ann Myeong-Chul)'s testimony.¹ Since 2013, NK Watch has interviewed North Korean defectors to investigate and document human rights violations in North Korea. Based on the interviews, individual cases were then written into petitions, which were submitted to the UN. While the submitted petitions did not show any evidence of overall changes in North Korea's human rights situation, the petitions served as a crucial data to verify changes in the treatment of prisoners in North Korean prison/detention facilities. In addition, Ahn's testimony provided an overview of political prison camps in North Korea. Ahn Myeong-Chul is the only person, living outside of North Korea, who can identify the structures and functions of facilities in each North Korean political prison camp. In this research, Ahn's testimony played a crucial role in understanding the process of demolition of political prison camps in North Korea from the late 1980s to present.

North Korean publications included all types of publications, such as books and newspapers, issued in North Korea. As the North Korean government has officially stated, these publications aim to promote the regime and to idolize the supreme leader.² While the Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) could not reveal North Korea's true motives, the data still gave a big picture on the government's response and stance on the issue of human rights. In other words, the OSINT was used to assess how the North Korean government reacted and responded to international

¹ Ahn Myeong-Chul (Ann Myeong-Chul), who defected to South Korea in October 1994, worked as a prison guard at Political Prison Camp No. 11, No. 13, No. 22, and No. 26 from 1987 until his defection in September 1994. He has been working as the Executive Director of NK Watch since May 2014.

² "(Editorial) Our Party publications are a powerful weapon to keep socialist ideology strong," *Rodong Sinmun*, 1 November 1995.

human rights criticism and/or advocacy.

Lastly, academic journals, both Korean and international journals, were used to support the research.

2. Summary

In short, international human rights advocacy had a positive impact on the situation of human rights in North Korea. One of the impacts was reducing the number of political prison camps. The international criticism of North Korea's human rights practices has contributed to the demolition of political prison camps in North Korea between the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a result of this demolition, the number of political prison camps reduced from 12 to 6. Furthermore, when Kim Jong-un came into power, two political prison camps were additionally dismantled. Now, only four political prison camps are in operation.

Despite the demolition, it should be noted that not all prisoners of the dismantled camps were released. Some of the political prisoners were moved to other existing political prison camps, and remaining political prison camps underwent expansion to accommodate these transferred prisoners. In other words, it could be said that there has not been a major change to the North Korean government's perception or policy on human rights.

However, without continuous advocacy efforts by the international community, changes in the situation of human rights in North Korea could not have happened. The research specifically focused on the UN's and the US's human rights advocacy. It assessed how North Korea changed its stance in response to these two advocacies. In addition, the research examined changes in the treatment of prisoners in prison facilities in North Korea.

A summary of each chapter is as the followings:

Chapter II is an overview of the core concepts of North Korea's political system and human rights. The systematic and widespread human rights violations in North Korea, which have and are being committed to this day, are inevitable consequences of the dictatorship of the Kim family since the establishment of the DPRK in 1948. Thus, it is necessary to know the political system of North Korea in order to understand the situation of human rights in North Korea.

Chapter III is an overview of the North Korean government's responses to international

advocacy from the 1970s to present. The chapter particularly focused on North Korea's response to 1) the international NGO advocacy, 2) the UN advocacy, and 3) the US advocacy. For North Korea's response to US advocacy, the official stances, given by the North Korean government in response to the establishment of North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 and the activities of the NED, were discussed.

Chapter IV is an analysis of the impact of international human rights advocacy on North Korea's human rights situation. The analysis looked into two parts: 1) Changes to Political Prison Camps in North Korea from the 1980's to present and 2) Changes in North Korean prison facilities. The chapter included details about North Korean political prison camps, including location (latitude/longitude), size, and time of demolition. As there exists no report on the changes of North Korean political prison camps, NK Watch's report (this research) will be the very first report to discuss changes in political prison camps in North Korea. The demolition of North Korean political prison camps was clearly an achievement made by the effort of international human rights advocacy.

Chapter V is a brief analysis on the reasons why the situation of human rights in North Korea changed under the leadership of Kim Jong-un. The chapter also discussed implications necessary for human rights strategies to further address the situation of human rights in North Korea.

The Political System of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Human Rights

1. North Korea's Political System

So far, the international community has attempted to explain the political system of North Korea with various concepts and theories. Some terms that were commonly used to describe the state's political system include 'metamorphosis of state', 'corporatism', 'nation-in-arms', 'military state', 'totalitarianism', 'dictatorship', 'confucian country', and 'the *Suryong* (수령, Supreme leader) system'. Among these approaches, the theory of totalitarianism was a crucial approach that helped to elucidate North Korea's political system.

Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski identified interrelated traits in totalitarianism: Official ideology, Single political party, Control over mass media, and Control over military, central economy, and secret police.³ In addition, Anthony Giddens defined the key elements of totalitarianism as surveillance, moral totalism, terror, and prominence of a leader figure.⁴ While the findings of prominent scholars can provide a partial understanding in the North Korean regime, these findings have limits in showing the reality and truth of North Korea's political system. In other words, even if the government of North Korea is a totalitarian regime, there are some unique traits that cannot be seen in other totalitarian regimes. Also, certain shared traits

³ Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship & Autocracy, 2nd edition* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965).

⁴ Anthony Giddens, "Modernity, Totalitarianism and Critical Theory," in *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (University of California Press, 1985).

between North Korea and other totalitarian states are different to some extent. For example, North Korea is ruled by the Kim family for 75 years, where the political power has passed within the family. This power grants the leader to control all aspects of the state, such as government, economy, society and culture. Moreover, the principle of guilt-by-association is used to punish the entire family, relatives, or sometimes even colleagues of those persecuted for anti-state, anti-regime crimes. Individuals or social groups who pose a threat to the regime and its leadership are also punished as well.

Because of the principle of guilt-by-association, popular uprising or community building cannot take place in North Korea. For instance, if the government identifies an individual expressing animosity towards the regime or its leadership, this person and people around them are either executed or sent to political prison camps. As a result, by completely destroying points and lines between people and preventing these points and lines from evolving into lines and surfaces (cutting people's interpersonal ties with others), the government makes it impossible for its citizens to form networks.

In order to explain the political system of North Korea – Suryong Dictatorship⁵, this report takes the approach of 'dynastic totalitarianism',⁶ an extreme and comprehensive version of totalitarianism. In North Korea, human rights violations are closely related to the country's political system, and these violations have been and are being committed within this system. Thus, this chapter introduces essential components of North Korea's political system.

The political system of North Korea is a state-party system, where the Workers' Party of Korea governs the country. While North Korea may look like a typical socialist state with Marxism-Leninism, the *Suryong* (수령, Supreme leader) has the power to control the Workers' Party of Korea, the Cabinet, and the Korean People's Army. In other words, the Suryong, through the Workers' Party of Korea that oversees and controls the Cabinet and the Korean People's Army, carries out policy-making and implementations of all major policies.

The government of North Korea defines the trinity – the Suryong, the Workers' Party of

5 Hyeong Jung Park et al., "The Dynamics of the Competition for Power and Interest under Suryong Dictatorship and the Purge of Jang Sung-taek," *North Korean Studies Review*, 18(1) (2014): 3. (※Hyeong Jung Park, a renowned researcher in North Korean studies, argued that 'Suryong dictatorship' is a system where the power of the Suryong cannot be toppled by the power coalition of major apparatus and elites. The share of political power by the Suryong works in the same way of sharing rights and interest.)

6 Jae-Cheon Lim, *Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea* (London: Routledge, 2009), 85-90. (※The political power of the Kim family has passed down from father to son, which developed into 'dynastic totalitarianism'. In other words, the political system underwent a North-Korean style metamorphosis.)

Korea, and its people – as ‘socio-political entities’. The government recognizes the Suryong as the supreme leader of the trinity, emphasizing that North Korean citizen should show endless loyalty to the Suryong and the Workers’ Party of Korea.⁷ In North Korea, the existence of the Workers’ Party of Korea and its citizens depends on the existence of the Suryong, and the regime claims that the very existence of the Party and its people is to serve the Suryong. In other words, the North Korean government emphasizes that the Suryong is the absolute and ultimate source to all existences, where the Party and the people cannot exist without the supreme leader⁸. Hwang Jang-Yop, a former high-ranking government official of the Workers’ Party of Korea, criticized and described North Korea’s political system as ‘the absolute authority of the Suryong’. Hwang further elaborated that the absolute authority of the Suryong is an egotistical system, in which the dictatorship of the Suryong reflects the selfishness of the leader. Hwang stated that North Korea exhibits an extreme form of egotistical system that the interest of the Suryong supersedes all interests of people, institutions, and the nation.⁹

The state ideology of the DPRK, the values and rules that support the state’s political system, focuses to define people’s loyalty to the supreme leader and its monolithic leadership. The hierarchy of the rules and laws in North Korea can be listed as the followings: ① The Words of the Supreme Leader → ② The Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Monolithic Ideological System → ③ The Code of the Workers’ Party of Korea → ④ The Constitution of the DPRK → ⑤ The Law¹⁰ of the DPRK. The Suryong dictatorship¹¹ can be seen as a political system which the alliance of all ruling parties and government officials cannot topple the power of the Suryong. In other words, even with the combined power of ③, ④, and ⑤, it cannot preempt or supersede the power of ① and/or ②.

From the 1950s, Kim Il-sung consolidated his power by carrying out a series of purges of his

⁷ Yong-ae Cha, *The Ideology by the Supreme Leader, Kim Jong-il* (Pyongyang: Social Science Press, 1996), 66-67, 138-139. (※ The book was published in North Korea.)

⁸ Hwang Jang-yop, *I witnessed the truth of history* (Seoul: Hanul, 1999), 387. (※ Hwang Jang-yop was a former secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea who defected to South Korea in February 1997.)

⁹ Hwang, 286, 393

¹⁰ Bong-Dae Choi, *The Study on the Legal Consciousness of North Korean Refugees* (Seoul: Institute for Eastern Studies, 2011), 11. (※ The subject of the study was 73 North Korean refugees. They were asked about legal consciousness in North Korea. The result showed that 56.7% responded that the term ‘law’ reminds them of the Workers’ Party of Korea, the Ministry of State Security, the Prosecutor’s Office, the Court, the Correctional Labor Camp, and Detention facilities. 38.8% responded that the term ‘law’ reminds them of the order and words of Kim Jong-il. 90.5% responded that the law in North Korea is the order and words of Kim Jong-il.)

rival factions and potential opposition forces. The early purges, which took place right after the Korean War, targeted socialists from South Korea, and later purges, which took place in the late 1950s, targeted socialists from China and the Soviet Union. In the early 1970s, Kim Il-sung carried out another political purge, targeting individuals or groups that were a potential threat to the succession of his heir apparent (Kim Jong-il). As Kim Il-sung eliminated all political rivals, Kim Jong-il announced the Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Monolithic Ideological System at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea in June 1967. On December 27th, 1972, the enactment of the Socialist Constitution of the DPRK laid the groundwork for establishing a dictatorial system led by a single person. In the late 1960s, the ideology of socialism and communism, including Marxism-Leninism, was replaced with the word, 'Kim Il-sung, the Suryong'. Furthermore, 'Kim Jong-il, his first-born son' was added in all clauses that contained the word, the Workers' Party of Korea and the people.

In February 1974, at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, Kim Jong-il was officially appointed as the one and only successor to Kim Il-sung. Kim Jong-il responded, "Investing all powers of authorities under my power is the same as those of consolidating the power of the Suryong. My judgement, my decision, and my approval are those of the supreme leader's". As a result, beginning in 1974, Kim Jong-il centralized all political powers under his authority. Kim Jong-il now had the power to command and control the Workers' Party of Korea, the Cabinet, and the Korean People's Army. In order to establish a more stable and consolidated power, Kim Jong-il strengthened the dictatorship by promoting his father Kim Il-sung, the supreme leader of North Korea. The key to North Korea's establishment of dictatorship was the enactment of the Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Monolithic Ideological System (hereafter, the Principle) in April 1974. The Principle became the absolute rule and the supreme law of North Korea. It serves as a rule and behavioral guideline for government officials, members of the Workers' Party of Korea, and laborers to be loyal to Kim Il-sung. Some clauses of the Principle address the great deed of the Juche ideology, the organizational discipline unified under the ruling of Kim Il-sung, and the establishment of monolithic leadership of Kim Il-sung. Although the Principle is not an official codified law like those laws in other countries, it serves as

11 Hyeong Jung Park et al., "The Dynamics of the Competition for Power and Interest under Suryong Dictatorship and the Purge of Jang Sung-taek." *North Korean Studies Review*, 18(1) (2014): 3.

12 Seong-II Hyun, *North Korea's National Strategy and Power Elites* (Seoul: Sunin, 2007), 115. (※ Seong-II Hyun, a former DPRK Ambassador to the Republic of Zambia, defected to South Korea in January 1996. In Seoul, he earned his Ph.D. degree in 2006. Currently, he works at a policy institute for national security.)

the supreme law of North Korea¹² that governs the lives of all North Korean citizens.

Nobody, in North Korea, can disregard the Principle. Even North Korean diplomats who are at the table of nuclear negotiation, North Korean migrant workers who are trapped in forced labor, soldiers, children, and elders should all behave in accordance with the Principle. Moreover, all government officials of the Workers' Party of Korea, the Cabinet, and the Ministry of State Security should perform their tasks based on the Principle. For example, North Korean diplomats, at an international conference and/or meeting, often lie and deceive others. This is because they cannot act against the Principle. Even if such behavior is illegal or considered illegal by the international community, North Korean government officials are doing it for their own sake and survival. If the official's action was in line with the Principle and showed their loyalty to the Suryong, the North Korean government would justify their behavior. Furthermore, the Principle does not have specific clauses like those of the law, so it is possible for the regime to interpret the Principle arbitrarily. The core of the Principle is 'loyalty to the Suryong', and this constitutes reasonable grounds on why violations of rights of political prisoners/criminals could take place in North Korea.

2. Human Rights and Political Prison Camps under the North Korean Regime

The Concept and Understanding of Human Rights in North Korea

As stated in the previous section, the government of North Korea views all individuals and organizations as 'socio-political entity'. Only people who are recognized as socio-political entity by the Suryong can be regarded as 'human'. In other words, in North Korea, the term 'human rights' is defined as 'a divine right of social human beings',¹³ which can be interpreted as only individuals who are recognized as 'human' by the Suryong can enjoy human rights. Like most totalitarian states, North Korea terrorizes its deviants and out-groups as well.¹⁴ If one's citizenship is disenfranchised, that is they are not recognized as human, they would be treated like animals. The reason why agents and officers of law enforcement agencies or the Ministry of State Security can carry out public or secret execution, torture, and forced abortion without hesitation is because they are conditioned to not view or treat these people, who expressed dissent, as a

¹³ Hyeryeon Kim and Sungho Kim, *About Human Rights* (Pyongyang: Pyongyang Press, 2017), 13-14. (※ This book was published in North Korea with the purpose of countering international human rights advocacy.)

¹⁴ Anthony Giddens, "Modernity, Totalitarianism and Critical Theory," 305.

human being.

The government of North Korea does not acknowledge norms and principles commonly used in the international community. The definition of 'denuclearization' by the North Korean government is a representative example of such case. The international community defines 'denuclearization (nuclear disarmament)' as 'Complete, Verifiable, Irreversible, Dismantling (CVID)' or 'Final, Fully Verified Denuclearization (FFVD)'. On the other hand, North Korea gives a clearly different definition. Through a commentary of the Korean Central News Agency, on December 20th, 2018, the government of North Korea stated its definition on 'denuclearization' as the followings:

When we refer to the Korean peninsula, they include both the area of the DPRK and the area of South Korea where aggression troops including the nuclear weapons of the U.S. are deployed. When we refer to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, it, therefore, means removing all elements of nuclear threats from the areas of both the north and the south of Korea and also from surrounding areas from where the Korean peninsula is targeted.

North Korea refers denuclearization as removing all strategic assets, including nuclear weapons and the US military, deployed at East Asia. The North Korean government's denuclearization plan is not limited to the territory of North Korea, but rather the territory of all East Asian countries.

Likewise, North Korea does not acknowledge human rights norms and principles widely adopted in the international community. In other words, unlike capitalist countries, North Korea defines 'human rights' in terms of relativity and national sovereignty. Although the North Korean government does not publicly uses this definition, the government deems that human rights in North Korea can only be fulfilled under the existence of the Suryong. Also, as it is stated in the previous section, the government holds the view that 'human rights' can be bestowed to the people only by the Suryong.¹⁵

15 The DPRK regime does not publicly asserts the absolute authority of the Suryong. The reason is that once stating this view could result in the international community viewing the DPRK as a bizarre country. In other words, the DPRK government knows well that such exposure can lead to break off of diplomatic ties and weaker diplomatic position.

In *Report on Human Rights Situation in DPRK* published in 2014 by the Korea Association for Human Rights Studies, the organization claimed that the concept of human rights, which is understood in the international community, reflects the idea of human rights defined by capitalist countries. Furthermore, according to the report, the organization argued that the international human rights principles cannot be applied universally. In other words, the organization denied the universality of the principle of human rights. The organization, in the report, contended that the US is forcing all other countries to accept its human rights standards. It further demonstrated, "If people of a country are pleased by the standard, this standard should be accepted as a fair and right standard" and "Through daily lives, North Koreans has showed confidence that the government's protection of human rights is truly the right and fair standard, which indeed protected the autonomy of its citizens".

In order to maintain its system under the leadership of the Suryong, the government of North Korea presents an argument that contradicts the actual reality of North Korea. The North Korean government cannot accept or acknowledge the concept of universal human rights. If the government adopts this concept, it would mean the denial of its leader (the Suryong) and its justification for the country's political system.

History of Political Prison Camps in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

North Korea (officially, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) openly refuses to acknowledge the existence of political criminals/prisoners (정치범; *Jeongchi-beom*) and political prison camps(정치범수용소; *Jeongchibeom-suyongso*, 관리소; *Gwalliso*).¹⁶ The North Korean government officials claim that such terms, 'political criminal/prisoner' and 'political prison camp', do not exist in North Korea. As stated in previous section, the national interest and values of North Korea are associated with the supreme leader.

Violations of human rights in North Korea, committed by the regime, have changed extensively and systematically in order to strengthen the dictatorship of the supreme leader. Between December 1952 and January 1969, Kim Il-sung consolidated his position as the sole leader of North Korea by purging his rival factions. Charged with spying for the US or condemned as a member of anti-party, counter-revolutionary factions (반당반혁명; *Bandang-banhyeongmyeong*), political rivals of Kim Il-sung were imprisoned and/or executed. In addition,

¹⁶ "Democratic People's Republic of Korea Review - 33rd Session of Universal Periodic Review," *UN Web TV*, 9 May 2019, <http://webtv.un.org/search/democratic-people%E2%80%99s-republic-of-korea-review-33rd-session-of-universal-periodic-review/6034759611001/?term=Korea&sort=date&page=13>.

Kim Il-sung regarded anyone who oppose or pose a threat to his assumption of power as 'political criminal'. Families of political criminals were regarded as criminals as well. In the 1950s, the government forcibly relocated political criminals and their families from Pyongyang to rural areas or restricted them to live only in remote, mountainous areas.

Subsequently, in August 1958, under the direction of Kim Il-sung, the Workers' Party of Korea (조선로동당; *Chosun-rodong-dang*) implemented a sociopolitical classification system (계급정책; *Gyegeup-jeongchaek*). The government conducted background checks on all citizens, claiming its purpose as ferreting out and punishing anti-revolutionary forces (반혁명분자; *Banhyeongmyeong-bunja*). Based on the findings, North Koreans were categorized into three classes: Revolutionary Class (혁명적 요소; *Hyeongmyeong*), Wavering Class (동요 요소; *Dongyo*), and Reactionary Class (반혁명적 요소; *Banhyeongmyeong*). About 3,000,000 North Koreans were categorized as Reactionary Class. And, as the North Korean Cabinet Decree No. 149 went into effect, people of Reactionary Class were restricted to live in remote, mountainous regions, particularly located within 50km of large cities, such as Pyongyang or Kaesong, and within 20km from near coastlines and the military demarcation line.¹⁷

Moreover, from 1967 to 1970, the North Korean regime executed about 6,000 people, who opposed to North Korea's political system, and sent 70,000 people to prison camps. Furthermore, to monitor and strengthen surveillance on remaining 'hostile forces' whom were not executed or imprisoned, Kim Il-sung (or Kim Jong-il) reorganized the Political Security Bureau (정치보위국; *Jeongchibowiguk*) of the Social Security Department (사회안전부; *Sahoeanjeonbu* / currently, the Ministry of People's Security (인민보안성; *Inminboanseong*)). As a result, on February 15th, 1973,¹⁸ the Political Security Bureau was reorganized into its own new ministry, the State Security Department (국가정치보위부; *Gukgajeongchibowibu* / currently, the Ministry of State Security (국가보위성; *Gukgabowiseong*)).¹⁹

¹⁷ Dukhong Kim, *Suryong Absolutism and North Korean studies, Vol. 1* (unpublished book), 92-93. (* Together with Hwang Jang-Yop, Dukhong Kim defected to South Korea in February 1997. He is a colleague of Hwang Jang-Yop, and served as the vice chief of the Juche Research Center of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea.)

¹⁸ Ahn Myeong-Chul asserted November 11th, 1973 is the actual date when the State Security Department was created. The North Korean government claims February 15th, 1973 is when the department was founded because it is the day when Kim Il-Sung made a visit to the site.

¹⁹ Hang Kyun Oh, *A research on the command system of North Korean Armed Forces in Kim Jong Il regime* (PhD diss., University of North Korean Studies, 2012), 120-121. (* Hang Kyun Oh served as the commander-in-chief of the Republic of Korea Defense Intelligence Command)

In the late 1950s, the North Korean government created community, residential areas²⁰ to monitor and control the lives of remaining 'hostile forces'. These areas were established in remote, mountainous regions and are the very model of today's political prison camps in North Korea. Early prison camps were fenced with wood planks to indicate boundaries, and these camps were lax in security. As a result, people frequently escaped and erupted riots. So, it is hard to say that early prison camps can be considered as a type of detention facilities. However, in the 1960s, the government's control over the residential areas strengthened. Beginning in 1968, these residential areas were stationed with highly-trained security guards. The Social Security Department monitored the community, residential areas since the late 1950s. However, in 1974, the State Security Department was given jurisdiction to monitor political criminals residing in these areas.²¹

The State Security Department, created in 1973, was headed by Kim Byung-ha. Ahn Myeong-Chul testified that Kim Byung-ha carried out the order of Kim Jong-il and created 12 or more political prison camps in North Korea.²² About 300,000 people were sent to those political prison camps, and most of the prisoners were those classified as 'hostile forces' under North Korea's sociopolitical classification system. Not only people of 'hostile forces' but also their relatives and families were imprisoned as well.

20 According to the North Korean Cabinet Decree No. 149, the community, residential areas for 'hostile forces' were called 'No. 149'. Amnesty International, Amnesty International Annual Reports, 1 October 1981, confirmed that No. 149 was located in Ryanggang province.

21 Yong-sam Kim, "The Inside Story of In-vivo Studies and Secret Execution on Pregnant Women," *Monthly Chosun Magazine* Vol. 3, 1995, 191. (※ The article is an interview-based article. A South Korean media interviewed with Ahn Myeong-Chul who defected to South Korea in October 1994.)

22 The 1998 report by Asian Watch and Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee revealed that 12 political prison camps exist in North Korea. Ahn Myeong-Chul testified and confirmed the existence of North Korean political prison camps. There still is a possibility that there were more than 12 political prison camps.

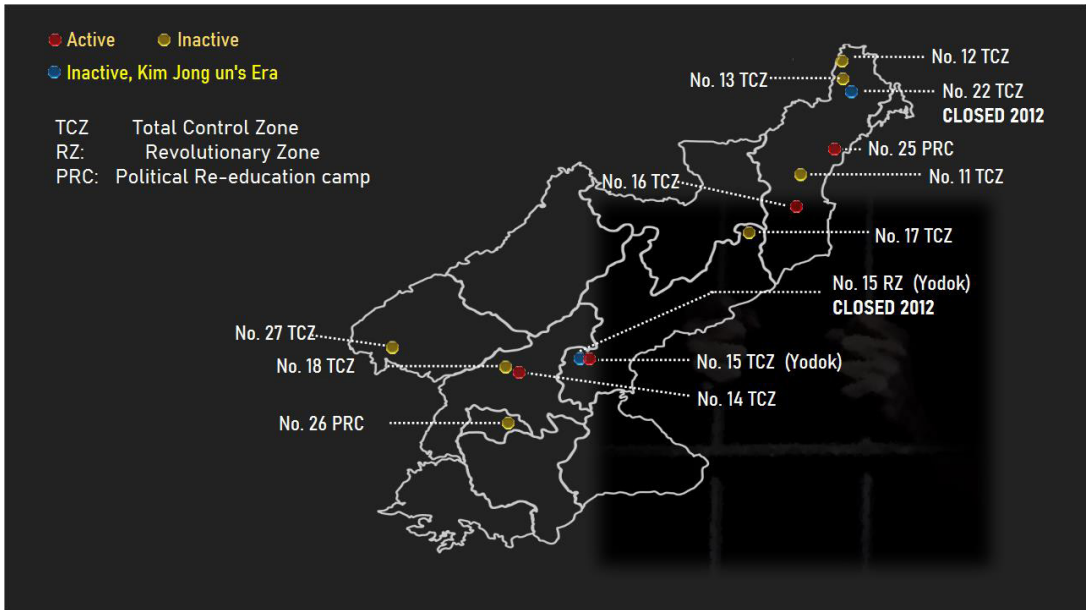


Image1, Political Prison Camps in North Korea

Image1 shows all locations of 12 political prison camps in North Korea. Currently, only four political prison camps remain open. Political Prison Camp (관리소; *Gwalliso*) No. 14, No. 15, No. 16, and Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners (정치범교화소; *Jeongchibeom-Gyohwaso*) No. 25 are the camps that remain active in operation. The Concentration Camp for Disabled Persons is also in operation as well. Yellow tags indicate all political prison camps that were closed. Political prison camps that closed under the leadership of Kim Jong-un are marked with blue tags. Red tags indicate all active political prison camps.

The Role of the Ministry of State Security

In North Korea, three major public security apparatuses are the Ministry of State Security (hereafter, MSS, 국가보위성; *Gukgabowiseong*), the Ministry of People's Security (hereafter, MPS, 인민보안성; *Inminboanseong*), and the Defense Security Command (보위사령부; *Bowisaryoengbu*). To briefly define the roles of each apparatus, the MSS and the MPS monitor and control the activities of North Korean citizens, and the Defense Security Command monitors and controls the activities of soldiers and personnel of the Korean People's Army. In addition, the MSS and the Defense Security Command are in charge of investigation, preliminary examination and execution of all cases on crimes against the state or treason against fatherland (반국가범죄 또는 반역죄; *Bangukgabeomjoe or Banyeokjoe*). These apparatuses also can make immediate decisions to either imprison or execute political criminals without any trial.²³ On the other hand, the MPS is in charge of all other criminal investigation and preliminary examination. While it functions as police agencies that ensure the safety of North Korean citizens, the MPS plays a crucial role

in monitoring the activities and lives of all North Koreans in order to protect the regime. The MPS monitors various aspects of people's lives, such as everyday lives of all citizens, activities of People's Unit (인민반; *Inminban*), economic activities, or movements of ex-convicts.²⁴

The MSS is headquartered in Pyongyang, and its regional security agencies are located in each province and municipality. The chain of command in the MSS headquarter is consisted of the Minister and six departmental heads. Under the departments, there are 35 bureaus and 10 departmental divisions. It is estimated that a total of 40,000 to 50,000 people work at the headquarter and regional security agencies of the MSS. About 4,000 to 5,000 people work at the headquarter, and about 1,000 to 2,000 people work at each municipal and provincial security agencies.²⁵

The MSS is the main apparatus that upholds the North Korean government. In North Korea, the government is the dictatorial regime under the leadership of the supreme leader. So, making critical remark, complaint, or doubt on the leadership of the supreme leader or exhibiting disloyalty to the supreme leader and the regime can be seen as 'Anti-regime', 'Anti-revolutionary', and 'Anti-state' crimes. Furthermore, in a broader sense, crossing the border to defect to South Korea, leaking inside information, contacting religious organizations, making phone calls with South Koreans, watching South Korean movies or dramas, reading South Korean books, listening to South Korean music can all be regarded as 'Anti-regime', 'Anti-revolutionary', and 'Anti-state' crimes. While North Korea claims that all crimes against the state are punished under the fair criminal justice system, investigations and punishments, in reality, are carried out in accordance with the Ten Principles for the Establishment of a Monolithic Ideological System (hereafter, the Principle), not the Criminal Law of the DPRK. Also, the government has been arbitrarily interpreting the Principle. Political criminals, particularly, are punished without any trial. The punishment of political prisoner is solely decided and executed by the MSS. **Table1** describes the process of criminal justice of the MSS from the arrest to punishment.

²³ Young-Ja Park, et al., *North Korea's State Apparatus and Stateness in the Kim Jong Un Era* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2018), 62.

²⁴ Myeong-II Kwak, *A Study on the Change of relations between People's Safety Agents and Residents in North Korea* (PhD diss., University of North Korean Studies, 2016), 31. (※ Myeong-II Kwak was a police officer of the Ministry of People's Security in the DPRK, and defected to South Korea.)

²⁵ Young-Ja Park et al., *North Korea's State Apparatus and Stateness in the Kim Jong Un Era*, 62.

Table 1. The Criminal Justice Process of the Ministry of State Security

※ Political criminals and political prisoners in the DPRK are ‘victims’, not ‘criminals’.

Steps	Administrative Agency	Involvement
Investigation, Arrest, and Interrogation	Respective municipal (city or county) Security Agency (보위부; <i>Bowibu</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the person accused of political crimes and arrest them • Detain and interrogate the accused at a detention center (구류장; <i>Guryujang</i>) of the respective municipal (city or county) Security agency • Violate human rights of the accused (torture, beating etc.) • Collect evidence and testimony of the accused, and hand over the accused and their case file to the respective provincial Security Agency
Case review	Respective provincial Security Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the case file and detain the accused at an Administrative Detention Center (집결소; <i>jipgyeolso</i>) in the respective Security Agency • Violate human rights of the accused (torture, beating etc.) • Send only the case file to the Investigation Bureau of the MSS, after reviewing.
Final Verdict on Internment	Investigation Bureau (수사국; <i>Susa-guk</i>) of the MSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Review of the case file • Final verdict on the interment of the accused • Send the case file to the Farm Bureau
Decision on the period of incarceration and the location of political prison camp	Farm Bureau (농장지도국; <i>Nongjangjido-guk</i>) of the MSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine a period of incarceration and location of political prison camp • Notify the respective provincial Security Agency about the date and location for victim (the accused) transfer
Victim (political criminals) transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respective provincial Security Agency • Farm Bureau of the MSS 	Take the victim (the accused) to the meeting place notified by the Farm Bureau (For security reasons, meeting places are usually located outside the political prison camp)

<p>Incarceration in political prison camp</p>	<p>Farm Bureau of the MSS</p>	<p>Based on the decision made by the Farm Bureau</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the victim (the accused) was sentenced to serve for life in prison, they will be imprisoned in the Total Control Zone (완전통제구역; <i>Wanjeontongjae-guyeok</i>) • If the victim (the accused) was sentenced to serve fixed terms, they would be imprisoned in the Revolutionary Zone (혁명화구역; <i>Hyeongmyeonghwa-guyeok</i>)
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International Human Rights Advocacy and the Response of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

1. Advocacy Works of International NGOs and the US Government and the Response of North Korea

In the international community, *Amnesty International ANNUAL REPORT 1968-9*, released in 1969, is the first report that publicly mentioned about North Korean human rights issues. The report commented on the difficulty of obtaining information on North Korean cases despite the probability of large number of prisoners in North Korea. With the publication of the report, Amnesty International continued to mention North Korean human rights issues. However, *ALI LAMEDA: A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE EXPERIENCE OF A PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA*, published by Amnesty International in January 1979, released the testimony of Ali Lameda, a Venezuelan poet who was imprisoned in North Korea from 1967 to 1974 because of accusations of espionage and subversive activities. While Amnesty International reported that Ali Lameda was detained in Suriwon (or Sariwon) prison camp, it is unsure whether the Venezuelan poet was detained in a political prison camp, correctional labor camp (로동교화소; *Rodong gyohawso*), or disciplinary labor center (로동단련대; *Rodong dallyeondae*).

Moreover, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1979*,²⁶ published by the US Department of State in February 1980, is the first report that mentioned about the situation of

²⁶ The US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1979* (Washington, D.C.: The US Department of State, 1890), 467-472.

human rights in North Korea. The report detailed the political and ideology system of North Korea, and it also pointed out North Korea's problematic human rights practices, including usage of torture, unfair trials, violation on the rights to food and health care, and violation on citizens' political rights and freedom. Through its annual publication on human rights conditions outside the US, the US Department of State continues to criticize North Korea's situation of human rights.

In 1988, Asia Watch and Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee (MLIHRC) published a first-ever comprehensive survey that brought light to human rights conditions in North Korea. The report revealed a society where the government consistently deprived its citizens from basic human rights and freedom, such as unfairness in the judicial system, executions, existence of political prison camps, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and inhumane treatment, socio-political classification system (성분제도; *Seongbun jaedo*), restraint on freedom of movement, and violation on freedom of expression. The report criticized the North Korean government for not complying with international human rights instruments, and listed recommendations that both the North Korean government and international organizations have to implement in order to improve the human rights situation of North Korea.²⁷

Also, this study was included in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1989*.²⁸ Through this publication, the study informed the international community that 12 political prison camps, which were built by the North Korean government until 1982, exist in the territory of North Korea. In short, since the late 1980s, different international organizations, such as the US Department of State, has brought up human rights violations in North Korea, including the existence of political prison camps.²⁹

International advocacy for North Korean human rights continued in the 1990s. In June 1994, publishing *North Korea: New Information about Political Prisoners*, Amnesty International released a report that revealed information about 49 political prisoners. In March 1995, Ahn Myeong-Chul, a former North Korean prison guard who defected to South Korea in October 1994, revealed the

²⁷ Asia Watch and Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee, *North Korean Human Rights* (Seoul: Koryowon, 1990), 34-38. (※ Its Korean version was published in 1990.)

²⁸ The US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1989* (Washington, D.C.: The US Department of State, 1990), 879.

²⁹ Other reports on North Korean human rights problems include, William Shaw, *Human rights in Korea: historical and policy perspectives* (East Asian Legal Studies Program of the Harvard Law School and Council on East Asian Studies / Harvard University, 1991); Amnesty etc.

³⁰ Yong-Sam Kim, "The Inside Story of Secret Execution and Vivo Experiment on Pregnant Women," 200-201.

name of 35 political prisoners at a press interview in South Korea.³⁰

On the other hand, the North Korean government did not respond to such international advocacy until the 1980s. Till the early 1970s, the government was more focused on perfecting its political system under the dictatorship of the Suryong (Supreme Leader). As a result, beginning the 1980s, North Korea successfully established a dictatorship where the Suryong had absolute control over the Workers' Party of Korea, the Korean People's Army, the Cabinet, and the lives of ordinary citizens. So, 'human rights' was not a concern to the North Korean government. However, international politics started to change in the 1990s. Germany unified in 1990, the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 creating democratic momentum across Eastern European countries, and China established diplomatic ties with South Korea in 1992. This brought decline of diplomacy in North Korea, which the North Korean government started to fear of becoming isolated by the international community. As a result, in 1993, North Korea declared withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), resulting in heightening tension on nuclear crisis. This issue was temporarily diffused as North Korea agreed to sign the Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter, the Agreed Framework) in October 1994.

Starting from the 1990s, the North Korean government began to actively respond to advocacy for North Korean human rights. Particularly, the annual publication of Country Reports on Human Rights Practices by the US Department of State, pressed the North Korean government to fear international isolation. North Korea feared that the country would be shunned because of its problematic human rights practices. In August 1990, through a propaganda magazine, North Korea released its response to the US human rights advocacy.

*The United States of America is an ambitious country that strives to gain political dominance over the world. The country engages in power politics, and the US government's <peaceful transition strategy> is a political scheme that targets to bring demise to socialism. The US is making false accusations on human rights issues and violations in order to implement capitalist transformations. 'Human rights advocacy' is simply a political scheme that lures socialist states to adopt capitalist methods. Human rights advocacy by the American imperialists incites anti-socialists to rebel against their country's regimes. Furthermore, these advocacy activities mainly target to discredit the supremacy of socialism by eradicating the benefits of socialism.*³¹

In addition, North Korea created an organization called 'Korea Association for Human Rights studies (조선인권연구협회; *Chosun-ingwon-yeongu-hyephoe*)' in 1992.³² Countering international human rights advocacy, the organization outlined North Korea's concept and rationale of human rights. While the nature of this organization is unknown, it is important to note that the North Korean government³³ began to respond to international human rights advocacy. From the 1990s, the government altered its position regarding human rights advocacy, because human rights issues, especially the existence of political prison camps, were exposed to the international community in the 1980s. As a response, the government closed some of its 12 political prison camps between the late 1980s and 1992, resulting in closure of six political prison camps.³⁴ As North Korea completed its closing of six political prison camps, the government used various outlets, such as 'Korea Association for Human Rights studies' and individual³⁵ authors, to counter international criticism on North Korea's human rights practices.

Also, after the Agreed Framework was signed, American nuclear experts were sent to North Korea to check whether 8,000 nuclear fuel rods were removed from the 5MWe reactor. On June 24th, 1995, when the experts finished the evaluation, the Workers' Party of Korea announced its official stance on the issue of human rights through the *Rodong Sinmun* (로동신문). The Party's

31 Myung-Hyuk An, "The Perpetrator of Human Rights Violations is the US," *Geunroja*, August 1990, 95. (※ 'Geunroja,' a magazine published by the North Korean government, is published nine to eleven times a year.)

32 Korea Association for Human Rights Studies, *Report on Human rights Situation in DPRK* (Pyongyang, 2014), 108. (※ The North Korean government claims that Korea Association for Human Rights Studies is a human rights NGO founded in August 27th, 1992. However, NGOs or autonomous organizations cannot exist in North Korea.)

33 Anna Fifield, "He ran North Korea's secret moneymaking operation. Now he lives in Virginia," *The Washington Post*, 13 July 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/he-ran-north-koreas-secret-money-making-operation-now-he-lives-in-virginia/2017/07/12/4cb9a590-6584-11e7-94ab-5b1f0ff459df_story.html?utm_term=.a77d4f7b8f09. (※ It is a mistake to equate North Korean with other normal countries. The Suryong and the Workers' Party of Korea have exclusive control over all aspects of lives in North Korea. In other words, it easy for the North Korean government to change or create new organizations, trading company, and the name of a job title. We can see some examples of this through the US and UN's sanction against North Korea. Jong Ho Ri, a former high-level official of Bureau (or Office) 39 who defected to the US in 2014, said the following: "North Korea is a 100 percent state enterprise, so these companies just change their names the day after they're sanctioned ... That way the company continues, but with a different name than the one on the sanctions list".)

34 Ahn Myeong-Chul's testimony.

35 Kyong Sop Jong, *The Rebound Effect of Human Rights Advocacy by Imperialists* (Pyongyang: Choson Rodongdang Press, 1992). (※ While this book was published under an individual author, the content of the book reflects the stance of the North Korean government. The book delivers the government's stance on why they disagree with international human rights advocacy.)

official statement is as the following:

This is our fight to protect our nation's institution and sovereignty from enemies of the state. It is a political scheme that the enemies of the state accuse our country of human rights violations. However, we will not tolerate any insults by imperialists of these countries. If the imperialists attempt to smear our superior socialist concept of human rights or violate our national sovereignty, we would fight against them. We will not back away from fighting against imperialist forces, and this is the Party's determination on how we will deal with the issue of human rights.³⁶

Among various types of data in Open Source Intelligence (OSINT)³⁷, North Korean media is one of the sources that show the response and stance of the North Korean regime on international human rights advocacy. The Rodong Sinmun, an official newspaper of the Workers' Party of Korea, serves as a communication channel to the North Korean government. Through the Rodong Sinmun's editorials, columns, and opinion pieces, the government releases its official statement and stance on various issues to the outside world.³⁸ In other words, the Workers' Party of Korea's statement on June 24th 1995, through the Rodong Sinmun's editorials, has a significant meaning. In the editorials, the Workers' Party of Korea described human rights advocacy by the US as an insult to North Korea, claiming such activities constitute violation to North Korea's national sovereignty. Such view of the North Korean government continues to be expressed in statements responding to different issues, such as human rights, nuclear, existing North Korean sanctions. The government continues to particularly censure the annual publication of the US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. The government's responses are listed in **Table 2**.

³⁶ "Advocating for Real Human Rights," *Rodong Sinmun*, (Pyongyang), Jun. 24, 1995.

³⁷ "The Party's publication is a Weapon to protect and strengthen the country's socialist ideology (Editorials)," *Rodong Sinmun*, (Pyongyang), Nov. 1st, 1995, 1. (※ All publications and media coverage that are released to the outside world exist to promote the superiority of the Suryong and justify the political system of North Korea.)

³⁸ In North Korea, all media, including the Rodong Sinum, are used an outlet for the government to express its opinion or deliver its statement. Government statement or Q&A session is some types of reporting that contains the government's statement or stance. While there is a difference between statement and discourse, both are called 'statement' in North Korea.

Table 2. The North Korean government comments on the Annual Report³⁹ of the US Department of State

※ The table above lists only a fraction of the North Korean government statements.

No.	Date	Types of Publicity	Organization/Media	Statement Content
1	13/Mar/1996 21:13	The Response of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK	Korean Central Radio	The recent <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> , released by the US Department of State, vilified our nation and regime.
2	06/Feb/1997 22:07			
3	07/Mar/1999 06:08			
4	02/Mar/2000 07:11			
5	02/Mar/2001 07:09	The Response of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK		The US tried to vilify our nation, the DPRK, by accusing of human rights abuses.
6	02/Mar/2002 06:07			
7	04/Apr/2003 06:23	The Statement of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK		The US released the annual report on human rights conditions in countries outside the US.
8	05/Mar/2005 22:07	The Response of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK		The US tried to vilify our nation, the DPRK, by accusing of human rights abuses.
9	14/Mar/2006 07:07	The Statement of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK		The US Department of State criticized the DPRK, saying that the country has been committing the most egregious human rights violations.

10	11/Jun/2007	Editorials of the Korean Central News Agency	Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)	It criticized the US Special Representative for North Korea for releasing the annual report to the US Congress. It further stated, "A country's human rights issue is the concern of the country itself. The US is attempting to meddle in this issue, violating our national sovereignty".
11	30/ May/2012 06:10	The Statement of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK	Korean Central Television	The <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011</i> maliciously libeled anti-imperialist states, including the DPRK.
12	23/Apr/2013 17:35	The Statement of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK	Radio Pyongyang	The <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012</i> maliciously libeled the DPRK.
13	07/Mar/2014 21:25	The Indictment by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)		Publishing another report on human rights conditions in other countries that are none of its concern, the US is facing denunciation from the international community.
14	29/Apr/2018		Sogwang (website)	Criticized the publication of the <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017</i> . It pointed the US as, "the actual criminal who is violating human rights is the US"

39 In North Korea, the government refers *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, published by the US Department of State, as 'Annual Report'.

It is typical for North Korea to censure all claims made by the international community. If the international community makes criticisms or accusations on the Supreme Leader, North Korean human rights, or North Korea's nuclear program, the North Korean government and its government officials would deny those claims and argue that imperialist/capitalist countries are defaming North Korea without any solid evidence. Furthermore, comments and statements by the North Korean government typically are malicious and straightforward. When necessary, some of the statements contain distorted or false information in order to disguise the truth. North Korea claims the US as its biggest enemy. The North Korean government asserts that North Korea establishes diplomatic relations with countries that treat North Korea favorably. The government also affirms that these diplomatic relations are maintained based on North Korea's foreign policy – autonomy, peace, and amity. However, in reality, North Korea views all foreign nations, including China, as enemies of the state.⁴⁰ To North Korea, other countries are simply those that the North Korean government could take advantage of.

In this sense, international human rights advocacy, including those of the US, is a sensitive issue to the North Korean government. Since the North Korean regime educated its citizens and promoted its country as an 'ideal heaven on earth ruled by the almighty Suryong (Supreme Leader)' for 75 years, it is impossible for the government to admit that violations of human rights exist within its territory. If North Korea admits such claims, it signifies the denial of the Suryong (Supreme Leader) and its regime. As a result, the annual publication of the US government, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, which reports the human rights situation of North Korea, is surely a burden to the North Korean government.

While North Korea censured the human rights report of the US Department of State since the 1990s, the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, published in April 2018, received the most criticism by the North Korean government. As shown in **Table 2**, between April 27th, 2018 and May 16th, 2018, several North Korean media, including *Sogwang* (서광, an official newspaper of the Korean People's Army), released 14 news articles that criticized the US. Furthermore, the US government's consistent criticism on the human rights situation of North Korea even before the US-DPRK Summit, which was scheduled on June 12th 2018, came as a surprise to North Korea.⁴¹ *Uriminzokkiri* (우리민족끼리), a propaganda media controlled by

⁴⁰ KwanHyung Lee, "A Study on North Korean Spies: Interviews with Former Elite Secret Agents of North Korea," *Korean Journal of Military Art and Science*, 76(1), 2020, 322.

⁴¹ One in *Ryomyong* (려명), Two in *DPRK Today* (조선의 오늘), Five in *Uriminzokkiri* (우리민족끼리), Three in *Arirang Meari* (메아리), One in *Ryugyong* (류경), and Two in *Tongil Voice* (통일의 메아리).

the United Front Department (통일전선부; *Tongil Jeonseonbu*) under the Workers' Party of Korea, released the most number of criticism articles. These articles can also be viewed as a complaint to the South Korean government, which offered to work as a mediator between the US and the DPRK.

2. United Nations (UN) Advocacy and North Korea's Response

From 2003 to 2005, the UN Commission on Human Rights has adopted the resolution 'Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK' (hereafter, the Resolution). Furthermore, the UN Human Rights Council, replacing the UN Commission on Human Rights, adopted the Resolution annually from 2008 (See **Table 3** for voting information about Human Rights Council's resolution). In 2019, the resolution was adopted without a vote. The UN General Assembly has also adopted the Resolution since 2005, expressing its concern on North Korea's human rights situation (See **Table 4** for voting information about General Assembly's resolution). Moreover, in March 2013, the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK (hereafter, the CoIDPRK), was established by the UN Human Rights Council. Investigating the human rights situation in North Korea for a year, the CoIDPRK reported systematic, widespread, and grave violations of human rights are committed by the North Korean government. The CoIDPRK further wrote that the violations entail crimes against humanity. In order to monitor the situation of human rights in North Korea, the UN Human Rights Office (Seoul) was established in June 2015.

Criticizing North Korea for its problematic human rights practices, the UN began to advocate for North Korean human rights in the 1990s. North Korea was careful about expressing criticism on the UN until the mid-2000s. As a result, when the UN General Assembly Third Committee, in November 2005, adopted the Resolution, North Korea did not challenge the committee's decision in adopting the Resolution.⁴² Furthermore, even when the North Korean government censured the UN, the government's criticism was not as severe as those of criticizing the US

⁴² "Who is the 'Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in North Korea' for (Editorials)", *Korean Central News Agency*, (Pyongyang), Nov. 22, 2005. (※ Through KCNA editorials, the North Korean government pointed out the EU, not the UN, as the target of its criticism for the adoption of the Resolution. While the EU was the one who drafted the Resolution, it seems more likely that North Korea restrained from directly criticizing the UN because of its fear of international isolation. North Korea argued, "the Resolution is based on false information and fabricated data. The EU is acting in accordance with the US's politicization of human rights.")

Table 3. Voting record of the UN Human Rights Council for adoption of the Resolution on the Situation of Human rights in the DPRK

No.	Session	Date	For	Against	Abstain	ROK vote
1	59th session of the Commission on Human Rights	16/Apr/2003	28	10	14	Not attended
2	60th session of the Commission on Human Rights	15/Apr/2004	29	8	16	Abstain
3	61st session of the Commission on Human Rights	14/Apr/2005	30	9	14	Abstain
4	7th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2008	22	7	18	For
5	10th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2009	26	6	15	Co-Sponsor
6	13th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2010	28	5	13	Co-Sponsor
7	16th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2011	30	3	11	Co-Sponsor
8	19th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2012	consensus			Co-Sponsor
9	22nd session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2013	consensus			Co-Sponsor
10	25th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2014	30	6	11	Co-Sponsor
11	26th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2015	27	6	14	Co-Sponsor
12	31st session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2016	consensus			Co-Sponsor
13	34th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2017	consensus			Co-Sponsor
14	37th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2018	consensus			Co-Sponsor
15	40th session of the Human Rights Council	16/Mar/2019	consensus			Co-Sponsor Not attended

Table 4. Voting record of the UN General Assembly for the adoption of the Resolution titled 'Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK

No.	Session	Date	For	Against	Abstain	ROK vote
1	60th session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	17/Nov/2005	84	22	62	Abstain
	60th session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	16/Dec/2005	88	21	60	
2	61st session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	17/Nov/2006	91	21	60	For
	61st session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	19/Dec/2006	99	21	56	
3	62nd session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	20/Nov/2007	97	23	60	Abstain
	62nd session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	18/Dec/2007	101	22	59	
4	63rd session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	21/Nov/2008	95	24	62	Co-Sponsor
	63rd session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	18/Dec/2008	94	22	63	
5	64th session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	19/Nov/2009	97	19	65	Co-Sponsor
	64th session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	18/Dec/2009	99	20	63	
6	65th session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	18/Nov/2010	103	18	60	Co-Sponsor
	65th session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	22/Dec/2010	106	21	55	
7	66th session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	21/Nov/2011	112	16	55	Co-Sponsor
	66th session of the General Assembly (Main Committee)	19/Dec/2011	123	16	51	
8	67th session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	27/Nov/2012	consensus			Co-Sponsor
	67th session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	20/Dec/2012				

9	68th session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	19/Nov/2013	consensus			Co-Sponsor
	68th session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	18/Dec/2013				
10	69th session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	18/Nov/2014	111	19	55	Co-Sponsor
	69th session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	18/Dec/2014	116	20	53	
11	70th session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	19/Nov/2015	112	19	50	Co-Sponsor
	70th session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	17/Dec/2015	119	19	48	
12	71st session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	15/Nov/2016	consensus			Co-Sponsor
	71st session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	19/Dec/2016				
13	72nd session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	14/Nov/2017	consensus			Co-Sponsor
	72nd session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	19/Dec/2017				
14	73rd session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	15/Nov/2018	consensus			Co-Sponsor
	73rd session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	17/Dec/2018				
15	74rd session of the General Assembly (Third Committee)	14/Nov/2019	consensus			Co-Sponsor Not attended
	74rd session of the General Assembly (Plenary Meeting)	18/Dec/2019				

government.⁴³ The DPRK Ambassador to the UN said the following at a press briefing, when the UN General Assembly adopted the Resolution at the plenary meeting on December 16th, 2005 for the first time.

*The “Resolution” is based on false information and data that were fabricated by enemy states of the DPRK. The Resolution is a slander that targets to topple the political system and institution of the DPRK. So, we completely denounce this resolution ... In order to end accusations of human rights violations and achieve cooperation, we should first condemn the US for using human rights issues as a political tactic. Furthermore, other countries, such as Japan and member countries of the European Union, should also be condemned for taking sides with the US.*⁴⁴

When the UN Human Rights Council, in March 2008, adopted the Resolution, the North Korean government described the Resolution as “a political scheme that targets to destroy our ideology and institution” and “a politically-fueled resolution that is based on false information and fabricated data”. North Korea also labelled the EU and Japan as “countries that were instigated by the US government to take the side of anti-North Korea propaganda”⁴⁵ Such views of North Korea continue to this day.

One of the UN activities which completely surprised the North Korean government was the adoption of the Resolution at the 22nd session of the UN Human Rights Council on March 21st, 2013. The Resolution was adopted without a vote, resulting in the establishment of the CoIDPRK. Furthermore, in February 2014, the CoIDPRK released *Report of the commission of*

43 “The Statement of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK – If Human Rights Issue is Misused to Abuse the Nation, We would Take Decisive Steps to Counter,” *Korean Central News Agency* (Pyongyang), Apr. 20, 2005. (※ The Press Secretary stated, “If the Resolution is misused to abuse our nation, we will take decisive steps to counter this measure.”); “The Statement of the Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK – Denunciation of ‘the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in North Korea’ as Non-Statutory Document,” *Korean Central News Agency*, (Pyongyang), Nov. 21, 2005

44 “The Denunciation of ‘the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in North Korea,’ the Press Briefing of the DPRK Ambassador to the UN,” *Korean Central News Agency*, (Pyongyang), Dec. 27, 2005

45 “The Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, ‘The Resolution’ of the UN Human Rights Council is a document aiming for political mudslinging,” *Korean Central News Agency* (Pyongyang), Mar. 29, 2008.

inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. While various international organizations and experts assisted the CoIDPRK's investigation into the situation of human rights in North Korea, NK Watch assisted the CoIDPRK by presenting UN petitions that contained testimonies of victims of North Korean human rights abuses. This information greatly helped the CoIDPRK's investigation. Because of the investigation, North Korea was very sensitive about the CoIDPRK. As a result, the North Korean government denounced Michael Kirby, the Chair of the CoIDPRK, even though the government typically refrained from criticizing the UN.

While many reporters questioned the authenticity of Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the CoIDPRK made excuses such as the information is based on testimonies of North Korean defectors. The CoIDPRK also scurrilously suggested that now is the time to refer the situation of human rights in the DPRK to the UN Security Council and the International Criminal Court. By enticing political imposters like Michael Kirby, it is raving about publicizing North Korean human rights abuses internationally. However, such abuses do not exist in reality. Those North Korean defectors, whom Michael Kirby mentioned, are criminals, terrorists, and fugitives who committed serious crimes that can never be forgiven.⁴⁶

The reason why the North Korean government responded in such way is that the CoIDPRK report was the first-ever official report by the UN that surveyed the situation of human rights in North Korea. The report included testimonies of North Korean defectors, including the UN petitions submitted by NK Watch. As the report contained detailed testimonies of North Korean defectors, the North Korean government was more responsive to counter this issue. Since the 1990s, the North Korean government called North Korean defectors as 'scumbags', 'criminals' and 'traitors'. As North Korea views the outside world as enemies of the state, the act of crossing

⁴⁶ "We will End All Political Mudslinging Campaigns by Crazy, Political Imposters (Editorials)", *Korean Central News Agency*, (Pyongyang), Apr. 22, 2008.

⁴⁷ North Koreans living outside North Korea are those who carry out duties under the direction of the North Korean government. Thus, ordered by the North Korean government, these people (North Korean citizens) live in foreign countries and engage in diplomatic missions, trade, workforce, or espionage.

the border constitutes a crime.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the term 'scumbags' is often used to refer North Korean defectors, especially those who testify the truth of the North Korean regime or engage in activities that could expose the cruel reality of North Korea.⁴⁸

Following the same logic, the North Korean government undermined and invalidated the report of the CoIDPRK (North Korean defectors = Scumbags = False testimony = the report of the CoIDPRK). This logic was also reflected in a speech by Ri Su-Yong, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK. On March 3rd, 2015, at a session of the UN Human Rights Council, the Minister, Ri Su-Yong, delivered a keynote address as the followings:

In regards to the situation of human rights in the DPRK, the enemies of the State are only interested in listening to the words of North Korean defectors, who are actually scumbags that have sinned and abandoned their family.

It was revealed that all key witness testimonies, which the report of the CoIDPRK based on, were lies. This apparently proves the falsity of the Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council.

All countries, in a court of law, nullifies a judge's decision when the decision is based on false testimonies.

While the report claims that several other defectors have testified as such, it is a known fact that anonymous witness statements are not admissible as evidence in a court of any country. Thus, the UN's adoption of the Resolution should be nullified immediately.

The UN Human Rights Council should also promptly add the issue of torture by the US to its agenda. This action can put an end to the UN's selectivity and double standard in addressing human rights issues.

48 Anna Fifield, "He ran North Korea's secret moneymaking operation. Now he lives in Virginia," *The Washington Post*, July 13, 2017. (※When a reporter asked the DPRK Ambassador to the UN about Jong Ho Ri (a former high-level official of Bureau (or Office) 39), the ambassador answered, "He's garbage".)

The participation of the DPRK's Foreign Minister in the UN can be seen as a reaction against the report of the CoDPRK and the UN General Assembly's recommendation for a referral of Kim Jong-un to the International Criminal Court. In other words, Ri Su-Yong's presence at the UN proves how international human rights advocacy has influenced and pressured North Korea.

Besides the denunciation of Michael Kirby and the CoDPRK's activities, the North Korean government also released a report, Report on Human Rights Situation in DPRK. The report was written by Korea Association for Human Rights Studies, which the North Korean government claims the association is an NGO⁴⁹ established in August 1992. While the North Korean government, under the name of Korea Association for Human Rights Studies, criticized international human rights advocacy,⁵⁰ it was the first time that the association released a report. This report was also the first-ever report that gave description of the human rights situation in North Korea. The total page count of Report on Human rights Situation in DPRK is 109 pages, and the list below shows the contents of the report.

Preface

The Protection Mechanism of Human Rights in the DPRK

The Enjoyment of Human Rights in the DPRK

The Stance and Efforts of the DPRK in Ensuring Human Rights

Challenges in Protection of Human Rights in the DPRK

The Prospects of Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the DPRK

Conclusion

*Appendix (Introduction to Korea Association for Human Rights Studies)*⁵¹

According to the Preface, the purpose of the report was to correct inaccurate, distorted views on human rights conditions of North Korea. The Preface stated, "In the international

⁴⁹ In North Korea, establishing non-governmental organizations is considered as crimes against the state. So, NGO cannot exist in North Korea.

⁵⁰ Since 1992, Korea Association for Human Rights Studies has delivered its statement through North Korean media in various formats, such as statement or open Q&A session. However, as of February 2019, the organization has not delivered any statement to the press.

⁵¹ Korea Association for Human Rights Studies, *Report on Human rights Situation in DPRK*, (Pyongyang, 2014), 1-3.

community, several anti-North Korea forces spread false information and rumors of North Korea, especially about its human rights situation. The North Korean government has experienced various disadvantages because of this, so the report provides correct data and information on the situation of human rights in North Korea". According to the report, North Korea is a country with absolutely no issues of human rights. The report wrote that if a human rights violation occurs in North Korea, the issue would be addressed accordingly under the fair system and procedures. Regardless of the report's credibility, it is important to note that North Korea released such type of report and opened it to the outside world. This change can be seen as an evidence that the North Korean government is responsive to international human rights advocacy.

Common characteristics that are shown among the government's responses to the UN advocacy are the followings. 1) The targets of North Korea's criticism are the US, the EU, and Japan, not the UN. The South Korean government is also criticized since the country decided to co-sponsor 'the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK'. Since North Korea fears international isolation, the government refrains from denouncing the UN General Assembly. 2) North Korea claims that human rights issues also exist in the territory of the US, the EU, Japan, and South Korea. It criticizes the double standard of the international community for not taking issues of human rights violations committed in those countries but constantly takes issues of human rights violations in North Korea. The North Korean government officials point Japan to apologize for its past wrongdoings, urging the international community to place sanctions against Japan. An interesting fact seen among the comments is that the North Korean government officials emphasize the country's unique situation, in which the concept of human rights is defined differently under North Korea's political system. In other words, North Korea claims that the concept of human rights is different across countries as the concept is the product of each country's political system. However, during meetings at the UN or other international conferences, North Korean government officials acknowledge and apply the general concept of human rights, which is commonly used by the international community. 3) North Korea describes all international human rights criticism on the country's system as 'political scheme', 'subversion' and 'violation of national sovereignty'. These terms are typical expressions and responses when North Korean government officials refute international criticisms.

Although it is difficult to confirm whether the UN advocacy brought effective and positive changes to the situation of human rights in North Korea, it is evident that the government's stance and perception on human rights, expressed during international conferences and meetings, have partially changed. In other words, the adoption of the UN General Assembly on the Resolution since 2005, the establishment of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) since 2008,

the establishment and activities of the CoIDPRK in 2013, and the establishment and activities of the UN Human Rights Office (Seoul) in 2015 all influenced the North Korean government to change its human rights situation at a surface level.

3. United States Advocacy and North Korea's Response

The early to mid-2000s marked a period that exhibited strategic changes to international advocacy for North Korean human rights. In October 2004, the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 was enacted and went into effect in the US. Based on this Act, the US government and private, non-profit organizations exerted greater influence on the human rights situation of North Korea.⁵² Especially, the assistance of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) on NGOs in South Korea enabled the NGOs to carry out activities, which brought small but effective changes to human rights conditions in North Korea.

The NED is a "private, non-profit foundation that supports the projects of non-governmental groups abroad who are working for democratic goals"⁵³, founded in 1983 under the collaborated efforts of Republicans and Democrats. The foundation aims to promote activities that can bring growth and strengthen democratic institutions around the world. Supporting a workshop of the Institute for Far Eastern Studies Kyungnam University titled 'The Prospect of the DPRK's Economic Reform and Liberation' in December 1998, the NED became interested in human rights conditions in North Korea. Around the year 2000, NED began to fund several South Korean NGOs that advocate for North Korean human rights, such as The Founding Ceremony of Democracy Network against North Korean Gulag⁵⁴, Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights,

⁵² The US Congress legislated North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 with three aims: Promotion of North Korean human rights, Assistance to North Koreans in need, and Protection of North Korean refugees. From this period, the US started to offer funds to various international organizations, including South Korean NGOs, in order to promote human rights and democracy in North Korea. Based on the Act, the US government was able to authorize about \$2,000,000 yearly for North Korean human rights. Especially, under the administration of Bush, the government increased funding for programs to support democracy and human rights, which also increased the budget of NED.

⁵³ The US Department of State, *The Budget in Brief – Fiscal Year 2005* (Washington D.C.: The US Department of State, 2005), 124.

⁵⁴ The organization changed its name to 'Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights' in 2003 and to 'NK Watch' in 2014.

Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights.⁵⁵

The early 2000s was a period that the number of North Korean human rights NGOs increased and NGOs carried out a more dynamic form of human rights advocacy. Along with various NGOs, the Founding Ceremony of Democracy Network against North Korean Gulag, founded by Ahn Myeong-Chul⁵⁶, a former prison guard of North Korean political prison camps, and Kang Cheol Hwan, a survivor of North Korean political prison camp, had greatly affected advocacy for North Korean human rights. This surge of North Korean human rights advocacy is because of the South Korean government's questionable stance on dealing with the situation of human rights in North Korea. As shown in **Table 3**, the South Korean government did not attend the 59th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights and voted abstained at the 60th session and 61st session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Furthermore, South Korea voted abstained at the UN General Assembly in 2005 and 2007. Victims of North Korean human rights abuses were unable to understand the South Korean government's decision. Such stance of the South Korean government raised suspicion on the government's belief in human rights. As a result, North Korean defectors started to think that only direct actions by themselves could bring changes to the situation of human rights in North Korea.

The early and mid-2000s was a period of time that showed robust advocacy activities for North Korean human rights. The US Congress introduced the North Korean Freedom Act of 2003. The North Korean Freedom Act of 2004 went into effect. The UN Commission on Human Rights adopted 'the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK', and the UN General Assembly adopted 'the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK' in 2005. In order to counter such international human rights advocacy, the North Korean government started to use different tactics, which were different from those in the 1990s. From the 1990s to early-2000s, North Korea experienced economic depression and collapse of socialist system, facing an immense crisis. The nuclear crisis, which was brought up upon the North Korean government

⁵⁵ North Korean human rights projects, which NED has funded, can be divided into the following categories: Freedom of information, Civic education, Documentation of North Korean Human Rights, Democratic ideas and values, and Developing market economy.

⁵⁶ "Testimony of Two Fugitives at the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (Editorials)," *Korean Central News Agency*, (Pyongyang), May. 5, 1999. (※ In 1999, Ahn Myeong Chul and Kang Cheol Hwan testified to the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that about the situation of human rights in North Korea. Their testimonies placed immense burden to the North Korean regime, which the government reacted sensitively. The government referred them as "criminals," "scumbags" and "fugitives".)

itself, also worsened the country's diplomatic relations. However, as the country resolved these issues, Kim Jong-il became more responsive to international criticisms on North Korean human rights practices.

Han Jin-Myeong⁵⁷, a former third secretary at the DPRK Embassy in Vietnam who defected to South Korea in 2015, testified that Kim Jong-il delivered a guidance, "Human Rights is National Sovereignty"; in 2003. To this day, this sentence is often cited when North Korea explains its concept of human rights. This sentence was also cited by a North Korean media in April 2003.⁵⁸ According to Han, this message implies that one's efforts to counter international criticisms on North Korean human rights are the same as protecting the national sovereignty.

Moreover, Han stated that Kim Jong-il ordered personnel of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK to use their diplomatic powers to halt all international North Korean human rights advocacy. North Korean diplomats, stationed in foreign countries,⁵⁹ were particularly ordered to convince other UN representatives, whom attend the UN General Assembly or the UN Human Rights Council. The diplomats were ordered to convince these representatives to vote either against or abstain for the adoption of the Resolution. If the diplomats failed to persuade the UN representatives, the North Korean government sent high-level delegations from Pyongyang to those countries in order to request those UN representatives to take the side of North Korea.⁶⁰

In addition, the North Korean government created the Division of Human Rights⁶¹ under the Department of International Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK in 2003 (See **Table 5** for the structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK). Furthermore, scholars of the DPRK Academy of Social Sciences⁶² were in charge of writing official statements or developing mechanisms to counter international criticisms.

⁵⁷ KwanHyung Lee, Program Director of NK Watch, is also a researcher in North Korean studies. Since January 19th 2017, Lee has interviewed Han Jin-Myeong (a false name for the purpose of protection of interviewee). Interviews took place in Seoul. All interviews were conducted in Korean, and were recorded. The recordings and interview transcripts are stored.

⁵⁸ "U.S. not qualified to talk about human rights," *Korean Central News Agency*, (Pyongyang), Apr. 3, 2003.

⁵⁹ According to data by South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as of 2003, there were 42 DPRK Embassies, 3 DPRK Consulates, and 5 DPRK Offices. In present, there are 47 DPRK Embassies, 3 Consulates, and 4 DPRK Offices.

⁶⁰ As shown in **Table 4**, until 2007, there were significant number of delegations who voted either against or abstained for the adoption on 'the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK'. It is assumed that the regime's tactics on persuading and convincing the UN representatives resulted in such pattern of voting.

⁶¹ Han Jin-Myeong said that, in the end of 2000s, 7 people, including the head of the department, worked at the Human Rights Division of the Department of International Organizations under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK.

Table 5. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK Organization Chart

※ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK website: <http://www.mfa.gov.kp/kp/about-us/>

Organization Type	Name of Department
Regional and Country Departments	Asian Affairs Department 1, Asian Affairs Department 2, European Affairs Department 1, European Affairs Department 2, North American Affairs Department, African, Arab and Latin American Affairs Department
Other Departments	Department of Press and Information, Consular Department, Treaties and Legal Affairs Department, Protocol Department, Department of International Organizations, Department of Economic Cooperation
Institutes under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Institute for Disarmament and Peace (IDP), Institute for American Studies (IFAS), Institute for Studies of Japan
Civil Organizations Sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Korea-China Association for Civil Exchange Promotion (KOCHACEP), Korea-Canada Cooperation Association (KCCA), Korea-Japan Interchange Association (KJIA), Association for the Promotion of International Economic and Technological Exchange (APIETE), Korea-Europe Association (KEA), Korea-Asia Association (KAA), Korea-Russia Association for Promotion of Exchange and Cooperation (KORUA)

62 “U.S., Western Countries Are to Blame for World’s Biggest Refugee Crisis: DPRK Human Rights Institute”, *Korean Central News Agency*, (Pyongyang), Jun. 17, 2017 (※ Currently, it is known that Human Rights Institute of the DPRK Academy of Social Sciences exists in North Korea. The existence of this institution was revealed to the public in June 17th 2017 by a North Korean media. The North Korean government claimed that the Human Rights Institute published a report on human rights conditions. However, records show that the 2018 and 2019 report were not published.)

Table 6. North Korea's Response to NED Activities

No.	Date	Media Type	Name of Media	Title and Content
1	21/Aug/2004	General News		<i>"Truth behind 'Issue of North Korean Defectors' Exposed"</i> , the KCNA accused the NED of using South Korean right-wing NGOs (North Korean human rights NGOs) to kidnap North Koreans. (In other words, the NED was criticized for assisting North Koreans to defect to South Korea)
2	3/Mar/2005	Memorandum of DPRK Foreign Ministry	KCNA	<i>"Memorandum of the DPRK Foreign Ministry"</i> , President Bush was under severe censure for naming the DPRK as "outposts of oppression" at the 20th anniversary of the NED on November 6th 2003
3	30/Apr/2005	General News		<i>"Political scheme of the US on promoting pro-US forces in South Korea"</i> , the KCNA accused the US of promoting pro-American forces through the activities of the NED.
4	3/Aug/2012	Columns of the Rodong Sinmun	Rodong Sinmun	<i>"Terms U.S. Kingpin of Int'l Plots, Terrorism"</i> , the KCNA criticized NED, together with politicians, South Korean, Japanese, and European NGOs, for organizing 'Alliance for North Korean Freedom'
5	8/Aug/2012	The Statement by the National Reunification Institute	KCNA	<i>"Truth about US, S. Korean Abduction and Terrorism Disclosed"</i> , the statement contained accusation on the NED of luring and kidnapping North Korean citizens. Ki-Won Chon, a pastor of Turi Hana, was especially defamed for kidnapping 900 North Korean citizens between 1990 and 2009.

6	15/Jan/2014	Columns of the Rodong Sinmun	Rodong Sinmun	<i>"Insight into Reactionary Elements of Western Democracy (Columns)"</i> , the article accused the NED of brainwashing people to yearn for western democracy.
7	1/Jan/2016	General News	Uriminzokkiri	"Country with Massive Kidnapping Slanderosly Drums Up North Korean Human Rights" / Criticized the NED for kidnapping North Koreans living in Northern border areas
8	24/Feb/2016	Indictment	Rodong Sinmun	"Korea Association for Human Rights Studies Reveals Horrible Human Rights Situation in the US and Other Western Countries" / Criticized the US government for giving \$65,000,000 to an Eastern European country through the NDI and the NED
9	11/May/2017	Memorandum of the Korea News Central Agency	Korea News Central Agency	"Memorandum – The US's Attempt to Terrorize the DPRK would be its Crushing Defeat" / Criticized the NED for kidnapping North Korean citizens living near Northern border areas, and described the NED as a terrorist organization created by the CIA.
10	17/May/2017	Statement by the Press Secretary of the Ministry of State Security in the DPRK	Ryomyong	"The Statement by the Press Secretary of the Ministry of State Security in the DPRK – We will Eliminate All Axis of Evil" / Criticized the NED for kidnapping North Korean citizens living near Northern border areas, and pointed out that the NED spent over \$309,700,000 for such kidnapping.

As it is stated previously, the reason why North Korea became more responsive to international human rights criticism in 2003 is that the UN Commission on Human Rights, on April 16th, 2003, adopted *the Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK* for the first time. In addition, in the early 2000s, the US Congress passed several bills in regard to North Korean human rights.

One of the main diplomatic goals of the US is to promote human rights and the spread of democracy. The US government has been involved in a number of foreign interventions, particularly in those countries that pose a national security threat to the US and/or have committed serious human rights violation. Especially, after the 9/11 attacks, the US government and the US Congress have been more committed in supporting and promoting human rights policies.

On June 19th, 2002, the US Senate unanimously passed and adopted a resolution that argued against China's forcible repatriation of North Koreans. On June 20th, at the Heritage Foundation, Mark S. Kirk, a former member of the US House of Representative, delivered a speech, suggesting the US government to give Temporary Protected Status to North Korean refugees and allow them to live in the US. Furthermore, in November 2003, the US Congress held a congressional hearing to address the situation of human rights in North Korea's political prison camps.

The North Korean government was very reactive to the US Congress's bills and resolutions on North Korean human rights. The following is a response of North Korea to the US House of Representative for passing a *resolution on human rights in North Korea* and deciding to introduce that resolution at the 59th session of the UN Human Rights Council.

The U.S. House of Representatives reportedly adopted a "resolution on human rights in North Korea" calling for respecting and protecting human rights of North Koreans and decided to present it to the 59th meeting of the UN commission on human rights.

It goes without saying that the resolution is full of nonsense as it is based on "testimonies" made by those renegades who fled overseas after committing crimes in the north and is laced with a whole string of stereo-typed vituperation made by the U.S. against the political system in the DPRK over the last half a century, pursuant to its hostile policy toward it.

What matters is that U.S. Congress adopted a separate resolution exclusively dealing with the human rights issue in the DPRK before the administration.⁶³

Because of the Iraq War, North Korea was in a state of limbo at the time. North Korea was in fear of the US. The North Korean government was afraid that the US would invade or attack North Korea. As a result, on October 4th, 2002, when James A. Kelly, a former Assistant US Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, visited North Korea, North Korea admitted that the country has been building a highly enriched uranium program. This resulted in the resurgence of North Korea nuclear crisis as an international issue. It seemed that, among these situations, North Korea viewed the Iraq War, which began in March 2003, as a huge threat. In addition, North Korea's animosity toward international criticism grew stronger as the international community made an issue out of non-military issues of North Korea, such as human rights issues.

Based on the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, which was signed by President George W. Bush on October 18th 2004, the US government carried out various advocacies to promote and protect North Korean human rights. Among those advocacies, the activities of the NED especially came under severe censure. Between 2004 and 2017, through its media of propaganda, North Korea denounced the NED without any grounds. For example, North Korean media condemned the NED for kidnapping North Korean citizens, calling the organization as criminal and terrorist (Specific comments by North Korea can be referred to **Table 6**). The media also criticized that the NED is planning on conspiring against North Korea to implement western democracy.

In short, North Korea altered its way of dealing with international human rights criticism starting in 2003. Unlike the 1990s when the government remained silent to those criticisms, the government's approach became more aggressive after the UN officially advocated for North Korean human rights in 2003 and the US carried out human rights advocacy in 2004. North Korea became more responsive in countering international criticism of its human rights record. These actions of the North Korean government later led to changes in North Korea.

63 "KCNA refutes U.S. Congress anti-DPRK 'resolution,'" *Korean Central News Agency*, (Pyongyang), May. 25, 2003.

IV

Actual Changes in the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

1. Reduction in Political Prison Camps

One of the biggest achievements in advocacy for North Korean human rights was exposing the existence of political prison camps to the international community. The survey report by Asia Watch and MLHRC, released in 1988, revealed that 12 political prison camps exist within the territory of North Korea. This release greatly affected the North Korean government. The existence of political prison camps was re-confirmed as Ahn Myeong-Chul, a former prison guard of North Korean political prison camps who defected to South Korea in October 1994, gave testimony. Ahn worked as a prison guard from 1987 to 1994, stationed at four different political prison camps: No. 11, No. 13, No. 22, and No. 26. In North Korea, political prison camps are under the jurisdiction of the MSS. As Ahn defected to South Korea, the international community was able to know the details of the structure, function, role, operation system, prison capacity, and security system of political prison camps in North Korea. As far as we know, for now, Ahn is the only civilian who has the most accurate and detailed information on North Korean political prison camps. Ahn continues to look out for any changes made to political prison camps by monitoring satellite images of each camp.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Ahn Myeong-Chul is the executive director of NK Watch, a North Korean human rights NGO. Analysis on North Korean political prison camps, based on Ahn's testimony, is posted on NK Watch website. http://www.nkwatch.org/?page_id=4297&lang=en

During his time as a prison guard, Ahn was recruited for dismantling political prison camps. While it was known that 12 political prison camps exist in North Korea in the early 1990s, Ahn testified that the North Korean government dismantled six political prison camps between the late 1980s and 1992 because of international human rights advocacy. The timeline of closure of six political prison camps is the followings: No. 12 (May 1987), No. 11(1989), No. 17⁶⁵ (in the late 1980s), No. 13 (1990), No. 27 (1990), and No. 26 (1991). As the international community began to acknowledge the existence of political prison camps in North Korea, the North Korean government felt pressured and decided to shutdown six political prison camps (See **Table 7** for the order of steps on how North Korea dismantles/expands its political prison camp). Some political prisoners of the dismantled camps were released, and other political prisoners were moved to other political prison camps. Remaining political camps, which were not dismantled, went under construction to expand the housing site to accommodate prisoners from closed prison camps. According to Ahn, complete demolition of just one political prison camp takes 2-3 years, and it costs an astronomical amount of money.

Table 7. Procedure for dismantling/expanding political prison camps (late 1980s to early 1990s)

※ The information on the table is based on the testimony of Ahn Myeong-Chul

No.	Steps	Involvement
1	The Supreme Leader's Orders	Order to dismantle or extend an existing political prison camp
2	Planning of the Ministry of State Security(MSS)	Plan out the project under the lead of the Farm Bureau (Bureau 7) ⁶⁶ of the MSS
3	The Supreme Leader's Approval	Approve the MSS's plan
4	Selection of T/F by the MSS	Select agents, particularly personnel of the Farm Bureau, and organize task forces. The number of people required to dismantle a political prison camp is larger than those recruited for prison expansion.

⁶⁵ Political Prison Camp No. 17 was initially under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of People's Security. The camp was later operated by the MSS. However, the camp is now under the jurisdiction of the Minister of People's Security.

5	Operational T/F dismantle or expand assigned political prison camp	<p>① Figure out the number of prisoners of the T/F's⁶⁷ assigned political prison camp and send the prisoners to expanded prison camps.</p> <p>② Select transportation type, either train or truck</p> <p>③ Select which facilities of the political prison camp (crematorium, machine gun artillery unit, fleet, barbed-wire fence, and underground prison) will be dismantled. Blow up or manually demolish the selected facilities</p> <p>④ Categorize which remaining facilities will be handed over to the military and civilians.</p> <p>⑤ Decide how to dispose all crops and manufactured goods produced at the prison camp.</p> <p>⑥ Notify and conduct employee transfer of all officers (agents of the MSS) and security guards of the dismantled prison camp. They are either resigned or transferred to an expanded prison camp.</p> <p>⑦ Enlarge facilities in other existing prison camp. Facilities included in the expansion are housing site for political prisoners, various facilities where human rights violations occur, administrative buildings, and housing sites for officers.</p> <p>⑧ After the completion of dismantling a prison camp and expanding facilities of other existing prison camps, the property rights of the prison camp site and remaining facilities, such as railways, mines, or farms, are transferred to the military or other organizations.</p>
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66 The Farm Bureau (Bureau 7) is the agency, under the MSS, responsible for the custody and control of political criminals/prisoners. The agency is officially called as the 'Farm Bureau' in order to disguise its true purpose and responsibilities. On the other hand, between officials of the MSS, the Bureau is called the Bureau 7. In North Korea, a bureau's number is frequently changed if necessary. Until the early 1990s, the Farm Bureau was called the Bureau 10. But, after completion of demolition of existing political prison camps, the Farm Bureau was renamed to Bureau 7.

67 Information related to political prison camps are only known to personnel of the Farm Bureau. In other words, other departments and bureaus under the MSS do not have access to information related to political prison camps. As a result, if one is stationed to work in the Farm Bureau, they would work at the Bureau until its retirement age, age 65. Furthermore, after the retirement, these people should reside in selected housing site located near political prison camps.

Political prison camps in North Korea do not look like penitentiaries, which you can see in other countries. Political prison camps are situated inside a large, closed, self-contained compound. This compound looks like a village and functions like a village. Inside the self-contained compound, there are housing sites for political prisoners and security agents (agents of the MSS), schools for dependents of security agents and political prisoners, and farms. While some people may think that life in a political prison camp might not be that bad except restraints on freedom of movement, the reality is that egregious human rights violations are committed inside these camps, which are beyond one's imagination.⁶⁸

Other than the Revolutionary Zone (혁명화구역; *Hyeongmyeonghwa-Guyeok*) at Political Prison Camp No. 15 and Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25 (정치범교화소; *Jeongchibeom-Gyohwaso*), all political prison camps in North Korea are concentration camps with security level 'Total Control Zone' (완전통제구역; *Wanjeon-Tongje-Guyeok*). A Total Control Zone is where prisoners serve life sentence. If a person is imprisoned in the Total Control Zone, they cannot be released in any occasion. Family and relatives of political prisoners are also imprisoned in this zone. If a prisoner gives birth to a child, this child⁶⁹ would automatically be confined in the Total Control Zone as well.

There are two reasons why it costs an astronomical amount of money to dismantle just one political prison camp. First, the size of a prison camp is very large. The estate of Political Prison Camp No. 16 has an area 1,269km², measuring 47km from north to south and 27km from east to west. The area of this camp is twice large than the size of Seoul (605km²). The area of Political Prison Camp No. 22, which is considered as a mid-size concentration camp, is 414km², which is

⁶⁸ Myeong-Chul Ahn, *They are crying* (Seoul: Chunjimedia, 1995); *Total Control Zone* (Seoul: Sidaejungshin, 2007). (※Ahn Myeong-Chul affirmed that significant number of political prisoners, who are imprisoned for the first time, suicide within six months. This is because life in political prison camps is gruesome, where prisoners are treated like animals. Because of this pattern of suicide, political prisoners are under intense surveillance during the first six month of detention. The North Korean government does not execute political prisoners, because of the belief that political prisoners should pay for their sins by engaging in labor until their death. Further, if a political prisoner gives birth to a child, the government emphasizes that the children of political prisoners should continue to repay their parents' sins.)

⁶⁹ If a married couple is put into the Total Control Zone, they cannot maintain their marriage status. In other words, they live in separate housing sites (male and female), and minors live in female housing sites. On the other hand, unmarried prisoners, only those with good work performance, receive 'marriage commendation'. This policy was implemented in order to motivate on labor productivity. Through marriage, the couple can live at the same house for 7 days. If the woman bears a child during the 7 days, the child will be treated the same as those political prisoners locked in the Total Control Zone.

However, the dismantling of a political prison camp does not necessarily mean the release or execution⁷⁴ of the camp's political prisoners. To the North Korean regime, prisoners of political prison camps are people who can testify the existence and truth of political prison camps. As a result, these prisoners cannot be released alive. If the government orders to dismantle the Total Control Zone, the government would plan to expand facilities of other existing political prison camps. After the expansion, political prisoners and officers of dismantled prison camps are moved or transferred to the expanded political prison camp. In other words, political prisoners of political prison camps, which were demolished up until 2012, were moved to expanded facilities of Political Prison Camp No. 14, No, 15 (Total Control Zone), and No. 16. During the demolition of Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15, some were released and others were transferred to the Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25. Although several Total Control Zones and the Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15 were completely demolished, facilities of Political Prison Camp No. 14, No, 15 (Total Control Zone), No. 16, and Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25 are still going through constructions to expand their sites and facilities.

70 The outskirts of each political prison camp is fenced with electric barbed-wire. Nobody can step the parameter, usually 1km from the electrified fence. Anyone who steps into the parameter are shot dead.

71 In order to monitor and prevent political prisoners from escaping the prison camp, security agents of the Ministry of State Security patrol undercover and take a roll call at all times. Also, in each housing site, a guard tower is located. Within each housing site, political prisoners are overseen by a watch team, which is consisted of five political prisoners.

72 For more information on political prison camps in North Korea, visit United States Department of State (BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR), "Prisons of North Korea" (FACT SHEET), <https://www.state.gov/prisons-of-north-korea/>

73 North Korea isolates disabled persons like political prisoners. Concentration Camp for Disabled Persons where dwarfs and lepers are detained, is also known as Dwarf Concentration Camp. (난쟁이수용소: Nanjaeng-i-suyongso)

74 Another reason why the North Korean regime cannot execute all political prisoners is that the regime cannot handle the liability for genocide. However, if an emergency, such as the collapse of the regime, happens, the government is bounded to shot all political prisoners to death. Ahn Myeong-Chul asserted that security guards of political prison camps are put in charge for these shootings. Each security agent is assigned to a housing site within the political prison camp. After a security agent get a head count of prisoners living their assigned housing site, political prisoners are shot dead by the security agent. After the shooting, all major buildings are exploded and all documents stored in the headquarter office are burned to ashes. Ahn testified that this procedure is written on an instruction manual.

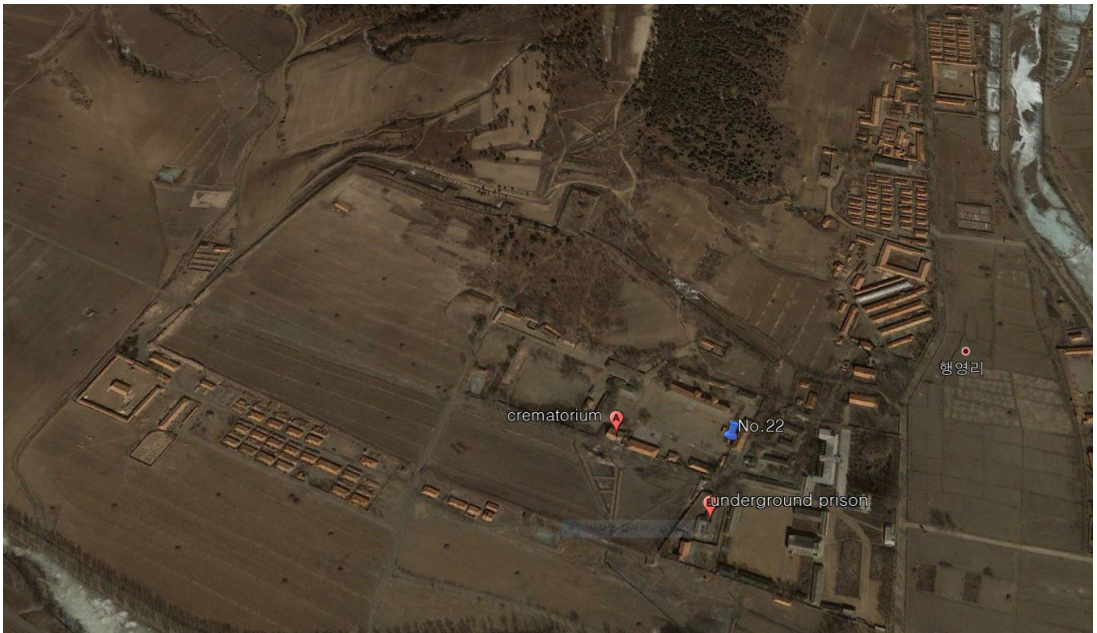
The Dismantling of Political Prison Camp No. 22 (2012)

The Total Control Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 22 was situated in Hoeryong, North Hamgyong Province (42°32'17.02"N 129°56'2.50"E). It was estimated that around 50,000 people were detained in this camp. However, in June 2012, after Kim Jong-un came into power, it was confirmed that Political Prison Camp No. 22 was closed.

While the red zone, in **Image 3**, has buildings, such as the headquarter building, crematorium (42°32'17.73"N 129°55'57.25"E), and underground prison (42°32'14.26"N 129°56'1.54"E), these buildings do not appear on **Image 4**, which was taken in 2018. These buildings were completely demolished and left no traces. At the underground prison, security agents brutally tortured political prisoners. If a prisoner died after enduring the brutal torture, security agents would take the body to the boiler room, which was used as a crematorium. (Crematorium is not an official term used in political prison camps.)

To the North Korean regime, political prison camps are a top secret that should not be exposed to the outside world. Crematorium (boiler room) and underground prison, especially, should not be known to the outside world since egregious human rights violations are committed in these facilities.

After the dismantling of Political Prison Camp No. 22 in 2012, the government moved political prisoners of No. 22 to the Total Control Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 14, No. 15 and No. 16 by train. Train was the only available transportation to move the prisoners to other existing political prison camps.



— Image 3, Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Political Prison Camp No.22 (Google Earth, 2010)



— Image 4, Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Political Prison Camp No.22 (Google Earth, 2018)

The Shutdown of Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15 (2012)

The Political Prison Camp No. 15 is situated in Yodok County, South Hamgyong Province. Unlike other political prison camps, Political Prison Camp No. 15 was comprised of two zones: The Total Control Zone (39°40'31.44"N 126°51'3.92"E) and the Revolutionary Zone (39°40'18.95"N 126°50'0.62"E).

Most political prison camps in North Korea have the security level 'Total Control Zone'. It is impossible for individuals or government officials to gain access to enter the facility of a total control zone. It is also impossible for political prisoners to escape or leave the facility. Only officials of the Farm Bureau, which manages all political prison camps, under the MSS have access to enter the facilities on both ground and air.⁷⁵ Currently, there is no known survivor who escaped or was released from the Total Control Zone. Most survivors of political prison camps are those who were imprisoned and/or released from the Revolutionary Zone. As a result, no one, except Ahn Myeong-Chul, can testify to the existence of the Total Control Zone.

Unlike the Total Control Zone, prisoners in the Revolutionary Zone served fixed terms. They were also excluded from the disenfranchisement of citizenship and voting rights. It was possible for political prisoners of the Revolutionary Zone to be released. The Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15, located in Yodok county, was the only Revolutionary Zone in North Korea. While some argue that Political Prison Camp No. 18 also had a Revolutionary Zone, this is not true.⁷⁶ Until 1989, based on the principle of guilt-by-association, not only political prisoners but also their family were detained in the Revolutionary Zone (The case of Kang Cheol Hwan is a representative example of this). However, beginning in 1989, only political prisoners were detained in the Revolutionary Zone.

It is estimated about 20 North Korean defectors, currently living in South Korea, are those who were released from the Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15. It seems that the testimony of survivors and witnesses of the Revolutionary Zone became a burden to the North Korean government. As a result, after Kim Jong-un came into power, the Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15 was shutdown in 2012 (See **Image 7**). Looking at **Image 6**, it is estimated that the Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No.15 detained no more than 1,000 people. After the closure of the Revolutionary Zone, some political prisoners were released, while other prisoners with remaining sentences were moved to Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25. As stated in the previous section, the Total Control Zone and the Revolutionary Zone are completely different type of political prison camps with totally different security levels. Prisoners of the Revolutionary Zone serve maximum three years in prison, and they are able to return to the society after serving their time.



— Image 5, Panorama of Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15 (2004)

Image 5 is a scene from a 2004 footage that captured North Korea’s Yodok Political Prison camp. The Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15, also known as Yodok Prison, was shown to the public by FUJI TV in February 2004. FUJI TV verified that whether the camp site of the obtained footage is the Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15 through an interview with Ahn Myeong-Chul and Kang Cheol Hwan.

75 In March 1993, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the NPT and entered a state of war. At that time, Jin-u O, the Minister of the Peoples’ Armed Forces, took a helicopter and flew over a political prison camp. This caused an incident where the Security Agency of No.22 fired at the helicopter with machine guns. In North Korea, airspace above political prison camps are prohibited airspace. If the headquarter of the Security Agency of the political prison camp detects any aircrafts flying above the political prison camp, the office is bound to shot the aircraft with 14.5mm machine guns (ZPU-4). The helicopter pilot radioed a message to the No. 22 Headquarter that the Minister is riding on the helicopter, asking to stop the shooting. Hearing the message, the No. 22 headquarter ordered the helicopter to immediately exit the prohibited airspace. Jin-u O served as the Minister of the Peoples’ Armed Forces from 1976 to his death, on February 1995. He was also one of the people whom Kim Jong-il trusted.

76 Ahn Myeong-Chul asserted that Political Prison Camp No. 18 was under the supervision of the Ministry of People’s Security since its establishment. Then, around 1974, the State Security Department took control over the Camp No. 18, and, after 1983, the Camp was reassigned to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of People’s Security. In 1983, the North Korean government ran a background check on political prisoners, resulting in a downsize of the camp’s prisoners to 300,000. It was the government’s decision to downsize the prisoners in Camp No. 18. Ahn claimed that, in 1982, during the 60th birthday of Kim Il-sung, Kim Il-sung found out his close colleagues were imprisoned in political prison camps. Kim Il-sung berated Kim Jong-il, saying “Why did you let me have so many enemies?”. Kim Jong-il turned the arrow to Kim Byung-ha. As Kim Byung-ha engaged in various corruption practices, such as building a summer house in a political prison camp site, Kim Jong-il accused Kim Byung-ha of corruption and anti-party, counter-revolution (반당반혁명분자; bandang-banhyeongmyeong-bunja) and purged him. It is known that Kim Byung-ha was not executed, but committed suicide. Since the Ministry of People’s Security took control over Camp No. 18, several major changes were made. Political prisoners of Camp No. 22 were exempted from disfranchisement of citizenship and voting rights.

Meanwhile, the Total Control Zone at Political Prison Camp No.15 is still in operation to this day (See **Image 8**). Because of the government's dismantling of existing political prison camps, the site of Political Prison Camp No. 15 underwent massive expansion until recently. The execution of Jang Song-thaek (also known as, Jang Song-taek or Jang Sung-taek) in December 2013, particularly, impacted the camp site to expand its facilities further. As of now, the Total Control Zone at Political Prison Camp No.15 is 600km² in area, measuring 24km from north to south, 25km from east to west. It is also estimated about 50,000 political prisoners are detained in this facility.



— Image 6, Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15 (Google Earth, 2008)



— Image 7, Revolutionary Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15 (Google Earth, 2014)



— Image 8, Total Control Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 15 (Google Earth, 2017)

The Expansion of Political Prison Camp No. 14 (early 1990s – present)

The Total Control Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 14 is situated in Kaechon, South Pyongan Province (39°34'9.63"N 126° 3'25.94"E). The camp site and its facilities are still undergoing expansion since the early 1990s. These changes made to the camp can be seen in **Image 9**, **Image 10**, and **Image 11**. Political Prison Camp No. 14 is 252km² in area, measuring 12km from north to south and 21km from east to west. While it was estimated that Political Prison Camp No. 14's Total Control Zone detained maximum 15,000 political prisoners as of late 1980s, it is currently estimated that around 30,000 political prisoners are detained in this facility.⁷⁷



— **Image 9, Total Control Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 14 (Google Earth, 2004)**

⁷⁷ Various facilities exist in a political prison camp. Each facility looks different based on its function and purpose. Ahn Myeong-Chul knows in detail of the inside structure and existing facilities in a political prison camp. By looking at political prisoner housing sites of a political prison camp, Ahn can estimate the number of prisoners living in the political prison camp.



— Image 10, Total Control Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 14 (Google Earth, 2018)



— Image 11, Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of the Total Control Zone of Political Prison Camp No. 14 (Google Earth, 2019)

The Expansion of Political Prison Camp No. 16 (early 1990s – Recent)

The area of Political Prison Camp No. 16 is 1,269km², which is similar to those of Los Angeles (1,300km²). This camp has the biggest site among all existing political prison camps in North Korea. From the 1990s to recent years, Political Prison Camp No. 16 underwent the biggest expansion.

Political Prison Camp No. 16 is situated in Hwasong County, North Hamgyong Province (41°18'54.04"N 129°20'33.89"E). As of 2004, it was estimated about 30,000 political prisoners were detained in the facility, but, as of now, the expanded facility can detain up to 50,000 people (Refer to **Image 12** to see the size of the camp in 2004.) The site of Political Prison Camp No. 16 was expanded in order to accommodate other political prisoners from closed prison camps (Refer to **Image 13** to see the current size of the camp.). The execution of Jang Song-thaek, in December 2013, also resulted in massive expansion of the Camp.



— Image 12, Political Prison Camp No.16 (Google Earth, 2004)



— Image 13, Political Prison Camp No.16 (Google Earth, 2019)

※ Red Circles indicate newly constructed facilities.

The Expansion of Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25 (2012 – Present)

Correction Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25 is situated in Chongjin, North Hamgyong Province (41°50'1.89"N 129°43'32.23"E). As one may have noticed by the name, this camp is a correctional labor camp designated for political prisoners, which is different from other political prison camps. In general, a political prison camp is a village-like compound that has housing sites for political prisoners. On the other hand, a correctional labor camp for political prisoners(정치범 교화소; *Jeongchibeom-Gyohwaso*) is a penitentiary, like those in other countries. In other words, prisoners of Camp No. 25 are incarcerated in jails, not in housing sites like those in other political prison camps.

In addition, it cannot be said definitively that Correction Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25 can be categorized as the Total Control Zone. While prisoners of the Total Control Zone at Political Prison Camp No. 14, No. 15, or No. 16 are detained without any trial, prisoners of Camp No. 25 are detained after standing trial. Prisoners of Camp No. 25 serve fixed terms based on their sentence by trial. However, even though the prisoners of Camp No.25 serve fixed terms, such as 10 years, 15 years or 20 years, they were rarely released even after finishing their sentences. There are some cases in the mid-2000s where prisoners were released from Correction Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25.⁷⁸

Moreover, the Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25 hold only political prisoners. Like the Revolutionary Zone at Camp No. 15, the family of political prisoners are not subjected to be detained in this prison facility. Accordingly, when the North Korean government decided to shutdown the Revolutionary Zone at Camp No. 15, some of the prisoners were moved to Camp No. 25. Currently, it is estimated about 5,000 political prisoners are detained in Camp No. 25.

⁷⁸ Person A (from Onsong-county, North Hamgyong Province), who entered South Korea in the 1990s after defection from North Korea, went back to North Korea in the mid-2000s. Subsequently, Person A was detained in Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25, and was released a year later. After release, Person A defected North Korea again and came back to South Korea.



— **Image 14, Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25 (Google Earth, 2018)**



— **Image 15, Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25 (Google Earth, 2006)**

※ Since February 2012, Camp No. 25 has been undergoing expansion work. The green line, in **Image 15** (Google Earth, 2006), marks the camp's original area before the expansion, while the red line marks expanded camp site after its expansion in 2012. In comparison with **Image 15** (Google Earth, 2006), **Image 14** (Google Earth, 2018) shows a more distinctive line that indicates the boundary of the camp. The boundary line, seen in the **Image 15**, is electric barbed-wire fenced along the camp site.

Evaluation of Changes to the Situation of Human Rights in North Korean Political Prison Camps After Kim Jong-un's Succession to Power

After the death of Kim Jong-il in December 2011, Kim Jong-un, son of Kim Jong-il, came into power. The closure of Political Prison Camp No. 22 and the Revolutionary Zone at Camp No. 15 during the leadership of Kim Jong-un is a big achievement attained by international human rights advocacy. It is true that North Korea did not dismantle all of its political prison camps. It is also true that the government did not release all prisoners of those dismantled camps. Despite these facts, the closure of political prison camps is a huge step forward that indicates North Korea's changes to its human rights situation.

It was Kim Jong-un's decision to close Political Prison Camp No. 22 and the Revolutionary Zone at Camp No. 15. When Kim Jong-un was officially anointed as the heir apparent on January 8th 2009, the Ministry of State Security and the Clandestine Operations Division of the Reconnaissance General Bureau (정찰총국; *Jeongchalchong-guk*) were under the authority of Kim Jong-un. It is believed that Kim Jong-un got a grasp on the situation of North Korean political prison camps after he began supervising the Ministry of State Security.⁷⁹

However, efforts are still needed in order to fundamentally change the human rights situation in North Korea. The closure of all remaining political prison camps and the release of all political prisoners are good index that can measure advancement in human rights conditions of North Korea. Yet, these two actions have not been carried out by the North Korean government. Also, it is hard to imagine that the human rights situation in North Korea will be basically improve in the near future. While the North Korean regime closed both Political Prison Camp No. 22 and the Revolutionary Zone at Camp No. 15, prisoners of these camps were moved to other existing prison camps, Political Prison Camp No. 14, No. 15, No. 16 and Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners No. 25. Furthermore, all facilities of existing prison camps were expanded in order to accommodate the transferred prisoners. It is also thought that the facilities were

⁷⁹ In the end of 2008, Kim Jong-un was appointed as the heir apparent at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. On Kim Jong-il's birthday, January 8th 2009, this decision was notified to other high-ranked government officials by Ri Je-Kang, the director of the Organization and Guidance Department. Afterwards, the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of People's Security, and the Korean People's Army hosted political rallies to pledge loyalty to Kim Jong-un. It is believed that Kim Jong-un began to exercise control over the government even before 2009, since Kim Jong-il's health deteriorated. In order for Kim Jong-un to have effective control over all anti-South clandestine divisions, Kim Jong-il reorganized and merged these divisions under the Reconnaissance General Bureau. In addition, Kim Jong-un began to direct the Ministry of State Security around 2009.

expanded to admit new prisoners from the purge of Jang Song-thaek in December 2013. As described in the previous section, one of the traits shown in North Korea's dynastic totalitarianism is the regime's use of extreme violence terrorizing its citizens. How the regime utilizes the principle of guilt-by-association is one of the examples. After the execution of Jang Song-thaek, Kim Jong-un executed 400 people whom had a personal connection with Jang Song-thaek.⁸⁰ Individuals whom were associates of Jang Song-thaek and entire family of these people were sent to a correctional labor camp for Political Prisoners or political prison camp. It is estimated that about 20,000 people were imprisoned during the purge.⁸¹

Thus, it is expected that the situation of human rights in North Korea would fundamentally change, only if the North Korean regime collapses or transforms its political system. In other words, political prison camps in North Korea will continue to exist, unless the regime reforms its political system. However, it is important to note that international human rights advocacy has definitely made an impact on human rights conditions in North Korea. Although it is highly unlikely the regime will additionally dismantle its existing political prison camps, it is no longer feasible for the regime to execute mass incarceration of political prisoners. It also seems impossible for the regime to build new political prison camps.

⁸⁰ Jong-Yil Ra, *The Path Taken by Jang Song-thaek: A Rebellious Outsider* (Seoul: Alma Books, 2016), 27. (※ Dr. Ra served as the First Deputy Director to the National Intelligence Service in 1999, and served as National Security Advisor to the Office of the President in 2003.)

⁸¹ Thae Yong-ho, "The Effect of Jang Song-Thaek's Execution on North Korean Society (A discussion with South Korean human rights activist on 29 January 2017)," Thae Yong Ho's Forum for Unification. <https://thaeyongho.com/2017/01/29/%EC%9E%A5%EC%84%B1%ED%83%9D%EC%88%99%EC%B2%AD%EC%82%AC%EA%B1%B4%EC%9D%B4-%EB%B6%81%ED%95%9C%EC%82%AC%ED%9A%8C%EC%97%90-%EB%AF%B8%EC%B9%9C-%EC%98%81%ED%96%A5/> (accessed 15 April\ 2019).

2. Changes in Prison/Detention Facilities in North Korea

This chapter reviews and describes what changes were made to the situation of human rights in North Korea's prison/detention facilities. Data and information of this chapter are based on UN petitions, submitted by NK Watch, and other sources.

North Korean Human Rights Advocacy by NK Watch

The Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights (renamed NK Watch in 2014) was founded in June 2003. The organization was founded by survivors of North Korean political prison camps, including Kang Cheol Hwan and Ahn Hyuk, with an aim to demolish political prison camps and to support the spread of democracy in North Korea. Despite the lack of personal network between North Korean defectors, the defectors united and created this organization as a response to the South Korean government's ambiguous position in the fight to protect human rights in North Korea.

As shown in **Table 3**, the South Korean government did not attend the 59th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights on April 16th 2003. Furthermore, the South Korean government abstained from voting at both sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2004 and 2005. To North Korean defectors, such decisions of the South Korean government were inevitably viewed as a message that the government has no intention to engage in the improvement of human rights in North Korea. As a result, this sparked an increase in the number of registered human rights NGOs protecting the rights of North Koreans, and the Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights was one of the NGOs which were founded during this time period.

The Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights strove to expose the reality of lives in North Korean political prison camps, carrying out several campaigns that advocated for the rights of North Koreans. In 2004, the organization published a book titled *'Names Lost to NK Gulags.'*⁸² This book included a summary of political prison camps in North Korea. The book also released personal information about 617 people imprisoned in political prison camps in North Korea. Additionally, in 2011, through a different publication, the organization released personal information about 245 people imprisoned in the Revolutionary Zone at Camp No. 15.⁸³

Beginning in 2013, the Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights began to collect and record all human rights violations in North Korea. The organization has surveyed

⁸² The Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights, *Names Lost to NK Gulags* (Seoul: Zeitgeist, 2004).

and interviewed North Korean defectors, particularly those whose rights were violated at North Korean prison/detention facilities. In order to better understand the situation of human rights in North Korea, the organization recruited a former prison guard, Ahn Myeong-Chul, as the executive director. And, in 2014, the organization changed its name to NK Watch.

Table 8. UN Petitions submitted by NK Watch

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Arbitrary Detention	38	-	7	27	-	2	1	75
Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances	2	20	58	4	8	2	14	108
Contemporary Forms of Slavery	-	-	17	-	4	-	-	21
Torture	-	-	18	87	133	119	88	445
Violence against Women	-	-	-	19	38	19	22	98
Persons with Disabilities	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	40	20	100	138	183	142	125	748

With funding from NED, NK Watch was able to carry out a more robust advocacy strategy for monitoring and surveying human rights conditions in North Korea. The organization began to submit petitions to the UN. All information on the submitted petitions were based on testimonies of human rights victims. Overall, NK Watch has submitted 748 petitions to the UN between 2013 and 2019 (See **Table 8** for specific types and number of petitions). The organization continues to

83 *The Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights, 245 Prisoners of Political Prison Camps in North Korea: The Revolutionary Zone at Yodok Gwanliso No. 15* (Seoul: The Network for North Korean Democracy and Human Rights, 2011).

investigate human rights violations and submit petitions to the UN.

NK Watch has submitted petitions to Special Rapporteur on Torture, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of Slavery, and Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The purpose of filing UN petitions on behalf of human rights victims is to inform the international community on the ongoing serious human rights violations in North Korea and to urge the international community to seek possible solutions that could end the violence. In case of enforced or involuntary disappearance, NK Watch has submitted petitions on behalf of North Korean defectors whose family or relative went missing after being arrested by the Ministry of State Security of the DPRK or the Ministry of People's Security. Only when the source wishes to know the whereabouts of the disappeared, the petition was filled out and submitted. Throughout the process, NK Watch has informed the source about the individual petition procedures, and asked their consent to file the petition on behalf of them. Under the consent of the source, NK Watch interviewed the source to collect relevant details on the source's case of enforced or involuntary disappearance. The testimony of the source was then written and translated into English in order for the petition to be accepted by the UN. When submitting the petition, NK Watch has requested the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to not disclose personal information of the source in order to protect the identity and safety of the source. After receiving the petition, the Working Group would review the petition and transmit the case to the respective State party – the DPRK. **Image 16** is a part of the petition submitted by NK Watch to the UN.

All petitions were submitted to respective Working Group or Special Rapporteur with proof of victims' and/or sources' consent. The respective expert(s) then reviewed the content of the petition, determining the credibility of evidence and testimony included in the petition. If the Working Group or Special Rapporteur decided that the information is credible, the case would be transmitted to the State Party – the DPRK – for a reply. In cases for enforced or involuntary disappearance, the government of the DPRK is required to provide information on whether the victim is dead or alive. In general, the DPRK government replies to such cases by stating, "the case has no relevance with the DPRK" and/or "such communications represent part of the stereotyped anti-DPRK political plot pursued by hostile forces" (See **Image 17** and **Image 18** for responses submitted by the DPRK government). The DPRK government rarely tells the whereabouts of the victim. Despite this limitation, efforts of filing petitions to the UN are crucial for the following reasons: Information of the victim are compiled and stored in the UN archive and public



WORKING GROUP ON ENFORCED OR INVOLUNTARY DISAPPEARANCES

COMMUNICATION FORM

1. INFORMATION CONCERNING THE DISAPPEARED PERSON

- (a) * Family name(s): [REDACTED]
- (b) * Given names(s): [REDACTED]
- (c) Pseudonyms or other forms besides given name, by which he or she may be known: None
- (d) Sex: Female
- (e) Occupation/profession: While the victim was living in the DPRK, she was unemployed.
- (f) Father's name: [REDACTED]
Mother's name: [REDACTED]
- (g) Date of birth: [REDACTED] 1976
- (h) Place and country of birth: [REDACTED] Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- (i) Was the person below 18 years-old at the moment of the disappearance? ___ yes / ___v___ no
- (j) Identity document (passport, national identity card, voter's card or any other relevant national identity card)
Type: N/A
Number: N/A
Date of issue: N/A
Place and country of issue: N/A
- (k) Nationality or nationalities: Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- (l) Address of usual residence: [REDACTED] DPRK
- (m) Any other place of residence at the moment of the disappearance:
[REDACTED] DPRK
- (n) Marital status: [REDACTED]
- (o) Indigenous: ___ yes / ___v___ no (p) Pregnant: ___ yes / ___v___ no

awareness of the international community in North Korea's human rights violations would be a burden pressure to the DPRK. Moreover, from the government's response letters, it was shown that the DPRK government is sensitive to criticisms on its human rights practices. As a result, it is believed that the action of filing petitions to the UN would continue to play a crucial role in protecting and promoting human rights in North Korea.



Report on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances



VI. Information concerning the author of the present report:

Confidential

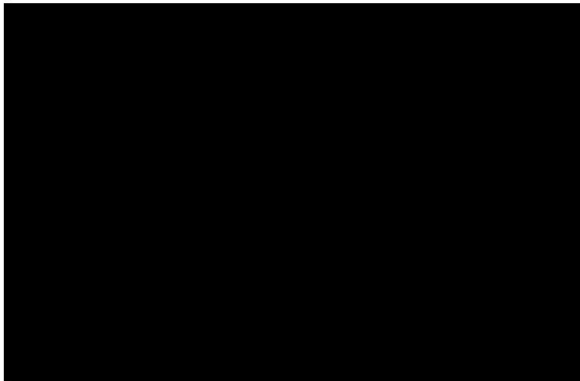
Date of submission: 1/4/2019

VII. Summary:

Session: 118

INFORMATION FROM SOURCE

Date: 1/4/2019



Transmitted to Government on: 3/6/2019

Transmitted to Source on: 21/6/2019

Section: 119

INFORMATION FROM GOVERNMENT

Date: 18/6/2019

The Government responded that: The communications mentioned in your letter lack basic correctness with unsubstantiated and prejudiced information and thus represent part of the stereotyped anti-DPRK political plots perused by hostile forces who resort to vicious anti-DPRK "human rights" racket using every conceivable means. Therefore the DPRK again categorically rejects the cases mentioned in your letter as one of the anti-DPRK scheme for sinister political purposes under the disguise of human rights.

Page 2 of 2

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA - Case No: 10008925

— Image 17, Report on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance – The Response by the DPRK Government to One of NK Watch's Submitted Petitions

제네바유엔사무국 및
기타 국제기구주재
조선민주주의인민공화국
상설대표부



Permanent Mission of the
Democratic People's Republic of
Korea to the United Nations Office
and Other International
Organizations in Geneva

Geneva, 04 June 2019

Dear Mr. Chair-Rapporteur,

I have the honour to refer to your letters Ref No. 2019/DPRK/CASE dated 17 May 2019 and Ref No. 2019/DPRK/CASE/2 dated 21 May 2019.

After having reviewed the summaries of communications attached to your letters we have concluded that the cases of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have no relevance with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

As in previous cases, such communications represent part of the stereotyped anti-DPRK political plot by hostile forces that resort to vicious anti-DPRK "human rights" racket using every conceivable means. Therefore the DPRK again categorically rejects the two cases mentioned in your letters as one of the anti-DPRK scheme for political purposes under the disguise of human rights.

I recommend you to see through the ulterior motive behind such communications and take a fair and critical attitude toward the ill-minded attempts by hostile forces to recklessly link any issues with the DPRK on the basis of false information and conjecture.

Please accept, Mr. Chair-Rapporteur, the assurances of my highest consideration.

— Image 18, Report on Arbitrary Detention – The Response by the DPRK Government to One of NK Watch's Submitted Petitions

Moreover, NK Watch has shared its record of North Korea's human rights violations with the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK (CoIDPRK) around August 2013. The organization supported and assisted the CoIDPRK's investigation that led to the publication on *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, which was published in February 2014. In addition, since March 2015,⁸⁴ NK Watch has attended the UN Human Rights Council session every year in order to bring attention to the DPRK's situations of human rights and participate in interactive dialogue.

Meanwhile, such type of NK Watch's human rights advocacy resulted in severe censure from the North Korean regime. On March 13th 2017, *Uriminzokkiri* (우리민족끼리), an online media operated by the United Front Department (통일전선부; *Tongil-jeonseonbu*) of the Central

⁸⁴ NK Watch planned to participate in the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, in March, 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the United Nation Office at Geneva asked all abroad participants to refrain from participating the session. Thus, NK Watch was unable to attend the 43rd session.

제2의 신동혁- 또다시 드러난 <증언자>의 실체

- <NK워치> 대표 안명철과 박금옥의 행적을 두고-

지금 스위스의 제네바에서는 유엔인권리사회 제34차총회가 진행되고있다.

이번 회의에서도 미국을 비롯한 적대세력들은 우리 공화국의 있지도 않은 <인권> 문제를 국제적으로 여론화하여 반공화국대결분기를 고취하고 우리에게 대한 암살야망을 손쉽게 이루어보기 위해 또다시 악질 <탈북자> 들을 비롯한 인간쓰레기들을 내몰아 그 무슨 <청문회> 니, <토론회> 니 뭐니 하는 모략광대국들을 벌려놓으며 지랄발광하고있다.

반공화국 <인권> 모략소동의 꼭두각사가 되어 그 무슨 <증언자>, <체협자> 로 나선 추물들의 면면을 들여다볼수록 쓴웃음이 절로 나오는것을 금할수 없다.

지금 김영일놈이나 리소연년과 같은 쓰레기들은 우리 공화국의 참다운 현실을 외곡하고 극구 여론화하기 위해 별의별 모략을 다 꾸며대다못해 최주연, 박경호와 같은 철부지 10대의 청소년들까지 내세워 그 무슨 <공화국경내에서의 아동인권실태> 에 대해 <증언> 하도록 하고있다. 이른바 <북인권상황의 산증인> 들이라고 떠들어대던 신동혁(본명 신인근)과 박연미같은 인간쓰레기들의 <증언> 과 경력이 완전한 거짓이고 날조였다는것이 백일하에 드러나 국제사회앞에서 깨 깨 망신하게 되자 이번에는 10대의 청소년들까지 더러운 모략소동에 끌어들이고있는것이다.

Image 19, Screenshot of the news article on the Uriminzokkiri website⁸⁵

Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, called out and denounced Ahn Myeong-Chul, the executive director of NK Watch, and the organization (See **Image 19** for partial content of the news article that criticized NK Watch).

As stated earlier, the North Korean regime, through its propaganda media, denounces all individuals and organizations that made critical remarks on the supreme leader and/or its regime. The regime also stages terror attacks if necessary. For example, Kim Chang-Hwan (a South Korean missionary who helped North Korean defectors in Dandong, China) was murdered by poisoning with neostigmine bromide on August 21st, 2011. Park Sang-Hak (a human rights activist) was a target of an assassination attempt on September 16th 2011. Kang Ho-Bin (a South Korean pastor and human rights activist) was poisoned in the beginning of 2012 by an unidentified person. While he was able to save his life by receiving emergency treatment, he later died in a car crash in Yanji, China on May 27th 2012.

85 ※ Source: The news article above can be seen on the following websites:

- <http://61.161.232.162/m/xhtml.php?ptype=urigisa&pagenum=344>
- http://kancc.org/bbs/board.php?bo_table=data&wr_id=4390
- <https://kcnawatch.org/newstream/1529080191-522801025/%ec%a0%9c2%ec%9d%98-%ec%8b%a0%eb%8f%99%ed%98%81-%eb%98%90%eb%8b%a4%ec%8b%9c-%eb%93%9c%eb%9f%ac%eb%82%9c-%e3%80%8a%ec%a6%9d%ec%96%b8%ec%9e%90%e3%80%8b%ec%9d%98-%ec%8b%a4%ec%b2%b4-%e3%80%8ank/>

Changes to the Situation of Human Rights in North Korean Detention Facilities

Reviewing and analyzing 748 petitions, which were submitted to the UN between 2013 and 2019, NK Watch has identified some changes of attitude in North Korean citizens and the North Korean government towards human rights.

First, North Korean citizens are aware of the country receiving humanitarian aids from the international community, particularly the UN. In the past, almost all North Koreans did not know or never even heard about the UN. So, the fact that North Koreans now know the UN is delivering humanitarian aid, such as food and medical supplies, to North Korea, is a huge advancement.

During in-depth interviews with North Korean defectors, NK Watch confirmed that North Koreans became aware of the deliverance of humanitarian aid from the international community and the UN since the late 1990s (1997-1999). North Koreans know that North Korea has received relief goods since the North Korean famine (aka the Arduous March). People were able to hear the news that the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Red Cross have sent rice, medicine, and infant formulas. Although there are not many cases where people received those relief goods from the government, some of them were leaked into local markets. Even if citizens had to buy the relief goods with their own money, such humanitarian assistance of the international community enabled people to have access to high-quality medicine. NK Watch has also found several cases in which North Koreans have positive impression of international humanitarian assistance. As people (North Korean citizens) were able to buy relief goods at local markets, it promoted positive view of the UN and the international community. The following excerpts from petitions of victim testimonies show the public’s perception of the UN. The parenthesis next to each excerpt lists the location and time of the victim’s case.

“During her time in the DPRK, she had heard of the United Nations(UN) at the market. She bought a medicine and the seller told her that the medicine from the UN. Her sibling also took the medicine from the UN because of tuberculosis” (North Hamgyong Province, DPRK, 2008)

“While living in the DPRK, the victim had heard of the United Nations. After being repatriated to the DPRK, live life in detention, and eventually released from confinement, she stayed over at her sister’s place for quite some time, and it was there where she found commodities that came in from the U.N. Here, she found a canister of cooking oil that was marked with the initials “U.N.” It had English text

written below, and Korean text above it. In addition, the victim was told that the U.N. also provides rice and humanitarian aid to the DPRK. The victim has also heard of this multiple times while living in China.” (North Hamgyong Province, DPRK, 2004)

“In 2003, the victim's son was diagnosed with acute diarrhea and was admitted at the hospital. But while the DPRK claimed that it would provide free medical services, the system was such that the residents must obtain the drugs or injections themselves in order to receive treatment. So, the victim went to the marketplace to buy an oral fluid and fed it to her son. Then, she was told that the oral fluid came from the UNICEF. This was because UNICEF's relief supplies were circulating in the market. She also heard then that the UNICEF is an organization dedicated to the relief of children. At the time she was purchasing medicine, the victim also heard about the UNICEF and the United Nations (UN) at the marketplace. The price of medicine varied depending on the source, but drugs from the UNICEF and the UN were expensive and good.” (North Hamgyong Province, DPRK, 2003)

Second, the treatment of prisoners in North Korean prison/detention facilities has improved little by little. Based on the petitions, prison conditions and the treatment of prisoners in North Korea are not consistent with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules). Currently, the reality of prison/detention facilities in North Korea is that prisoners are denied personal hygiene, clothing and bedding, food, and health-care services. They also are subjected to forced labor, torture, and solitary confinement. In other words, the rights of prisoners are violated to an extent where the prisoners' inherent dignity and values are not respected. However, among the victim testimonies, NK Watch was able to identify several cases that exhibit small improvements in the treatment of prisoners. Victims testified improved prison conditions and prisoners' treatment. Sanitary conditions were better compared to those of the past. Prisoners were able to receive medical treatments for illnesses. Some prisoners' sentences were reduced. Guards and security agents no longer beat ruthlessly or brutally like those in the past. According to victims, these changes were brought as the government and its officials were conscious of the international community's criticism of North Korea's human rights practices. One of the victims testified they saw a news article on the Rodong Sinmun that refuted

international criticism of North Korea's situation of human rights. The news article argued that the reality of human rights conditions in North Korea is not like those of what the international community describes as. While these changes may hardly be seen as evidence that the North Korean regime truly and fundamentally acknowledges the importance of human rights and seeks to improve its human rights conditions, its significance is prisoners in North Korea, where is a closed country, are aware of the North Korean regime being sensitive to international criticism. Despite the improvements may be temporary changes, it is meaningful fact that North Korea is sensitively embracing the international community's critic towards North Korea's internal human rights condition. These cases prove that international human rights advocacy works and pressures have had a positive impact on North Korea's human rights conditions. The following excerpts from petitions of victim testimonies show how much the North Korean regime and its government officials are conscious of the international community.

"The victim had seen the '2018 Rodong Sinmun report' on how the international community criticized North Korea as a barren land for human rights, and how the article utterly denied all claims to be true. According to the victim, North Korea has constantly been talking about human rights. The newspapers always report on how the human rights situation in North Korea is good, and that the prison guards at the police station are also being told not to hit the detainees and protect their human rights. The victim also witnessed the prison guards at the detention facility talking to each other that "they should not hit the detainees because the world has been talking about the human rights situation in North Korea" (Hyesan Police Station, Ryanggang Province, DPRK, from 2014 to 2015)

"The victim recalls that in July 2010 she began to hear about the UN while she was in Deokwon Correctional Labor Camp. At the time, there was a rumor among prisoners that the UN would be investigating DPRK detention facilities, prisons, correctional labor camps etc. Soon after the rumor spread through the camp, there were big changes in the living conditions there. Prisoners were mobilized to clean the camp, the shower and bathing rooms were maintained, and warm water became available. Thanks to this, Prisoners were able to wash themselves with warm water once a week. The food that was provided also improved remarkably. All of these improvements appear to have happened because of the rumor that

the UN would be coming to inspect detention facilities; this shows how sensitive the DPRK regime is to suggestions that the UN may investigate their detention facilities, and the improvements in conditions that can come about because of a mere rumor of an upcoming inspection or investigation” (Deokwon Correctional Labor Camp, Wonsan, Kangwon Province, DPRK, 2010)

“She suffered from fever for about a week and although she was very ill, was not able to lie down; she had to remain sitting. Because she was in very poor health, she was taken to a clinic located within the detention center where she received treatment for about two days. At that time, during 2014- 2015, human rights abuse and violence by the security agents or the police officers had become issues in North Korean society. Also, some security agents were fired because of that. Thus, the victim believed that treatment was being provided because of this situation” (the detention center of the Ryanggang Province Security Agency, Hyesan, Ryanggang Province, DPRK, 2016)

“In February 2005, the victim heard that the victim originally had to go to political prison camps, but they were reduced to civilization since the international community talked about human rights a lot. Also, she heard that violence at the prison facilities was less than the past” (Hoeryong Security Agency, North Hamgyong Province, DPRK, 2005)

Third, security agents and police officers, who are perpetrators of human rights violations in North Korean prison/detention facilities, are cautious about assaulting prisoners. Human rights advocacy work, carried out by the international community, raised awareness of the term ‘human rights’ among security agents, police officers, and prison guards of prison/detention facilities. According to the petitions, as agents and officers are conscious of human rights, prisoners are less ruthlessly battered or tortured. Some agents and officers do not even engage in inhumane treatment and abuse on prisoners. Furthermore, victims testified that the North Korea government has punished some of its notorious perpetrator of human rights violations, because the international community constantly criticized North Korea for problematic human rights practices in prison/detention facilities. Moreover, people, who witnessed international human rights advocacy work while living in China, are forcibly repatriated to North Korea. During

their time in prison/detention facilities, these people raise awareness on human rights issues to other prisoners. In other words, information on international human rights advocacy and North Korea's human rights violations are circulating among North Korean citizens in various ways. The following excerpts from petitions of victim testimonies show the awareness of human rights in North Korea.

“According to the victim’s testimony, knowledge of the human rights abuses being committed by the DPRK regime is widespread, as is knowledge that this is not normal and is wrong; even agents at the Security agencies are aware of bodies such as the UN.” (Hyesan, Ryanggang Province, DPRK, 2015)

“The term ‘human rights infringement’ is also being used in North Korea. According to people, even judges can't hit individuals because they will be caught for violating human rights. The victim has also heard of how the international community and the United Nations have been criticizing North Korea for its human rights record. Even so, the victim still feels that battery and torture are still prevalent.” (Sinuiju Security Agency, North Pyongan Province, DPRK, November 8th 2017 – December 1st 2017)

“The subsequent warning against hitting civilians or abusing their human rights, following the criticisms made by the international community around 2015 on human rights situation in North Korea. She also witnessed some people among the authorities resigning from their positions as a result.” (Chongori Correctional Labor Camp No. 12, Hoeryong, North Hamgyong Province, DPRK, from July 26,2014 to June 2015)

“In 2007, when the victim was in China, South Koreans had a Seminar about human rights violations, which the victim attended. She also shared her experience regarding prison facilities in the DPRK.” (China, 2007)

In NK Watch's petitions, there is little information available on how the situation of human rights changed in North Korea. This is because NK Watch's interview focuses on investigating

human rights violations. While the organization began to ask additional questions since the second half of 2019 in order to seek more information to identify changes in North Korea's human rights conditions, there is not enough data to provide an accurate and detailed analysis on this matter. Despite this limitation, NK Watch has identified some changes in the situation of human rights in North Korea's prison/detention facilities after Kim Jong-un came into power in 2012.

First, policies on the treatment of prisoners seem to have changed. It is unsure when this change was implemented, but, around 2017 or before, Kim Jong-un seemed to issue an order for improving the treatment and care of prisoners. As stated in the earlier section, the words of the supreme leader supersede both the Constitution and national law of the DPRK. In other words, the order and direction of the supreme leader is the absolute standard of rules in North Korea. Among victims whom NK Watch interviewed in 2020, one victim testified they heard from a security agent that a directive was issued by Kim Jong-un, "All prisoners should walk out of prison/detention facilities alive". Furthermore, another victim testified that Kim Jong-un issued an order preventing torture and physical abuse in prison/detention facilities since 2017. In the past, prisoners were frequently tortured and abused with various tools during interrogations. They were also unable to receive emergency treatment or proper medical treatment. On the other hand, currently, torture and physical abuse on prisoners seem to be eased. The following excerpts from petitions of victim testimonies show changes of treatment of prisoners.

"During my imprisonment at Kaecheon Correctional Labor Camp, I worked overtime when I did not fulfill my work quota. I was never beaten for this. However, I heard that agents battered prisoners in the past whenever the prisoners did not fulfill their work quotas. It was said that this policy has changed. Nowadays, political officers educate security agents and officers of correctional labor camps that death of a prisoner should not happen in the facilities. It was said that this decision reflects the thoughtfulness of the supreme leader where prisoners are to stay healthy and return to their families safely. I also heard that correctional labor camps in the past were infested with lice. Now, prisoners are able to take bathes and showers at public bath houses once a week. While the camp was able to get rid of lice, a small number of fleas still exist. (Kaecheon Correctional Labor Camp, South Pyongan Province, DPRK, from 2013 to 2017)"

"On January 8th 2018, I was arrested and imprisoned at the Hyesan Security

Agency for attempt to defect to South Korea. My niece, who was arrested with me, was previously repatriated to North Korea around 2012. According to my niece, in 2012, security agents brutally battered prisoner with wood planks. However, when we were imprisoned in 2018, we were not beaten at all. The security agent, who interrogated me, said, "You would have been killed if you were arrested last year. The policy changed since the supreme leader issued an order. The thoughtfulness of the government is what saved you". In order to prevent North Koreans from defecting the country, agents and officers no longer physically abuse prisoners. Since 2018, sanitary conditions improved as well. Prisoners were frequently ordered to clean their cell and bathroom. The toilet bowl was covered with a cloth in order to trap the odor. Prison cells were no longer infested with lice and fleas. The cells were disinfected for days, and officers burnt mugworts for sanitation. Although handles of toothbrushes were cut off, toothbrushes were provided to prisoners. Salts were given to prisoners instead of toothpastes. The director and vice director of the Hyesan Security Agency regularly visited the center to check the center's sanitary conditions and temperature. They also checked on prisoners for health conditions or mistreatments. I was told that there was a lot of talk around the international community on North Korea's human rights. (Detention Center at the Hyesan Security Agency, Ryanggang Province, DPRK, from 2018 to 2019)"

"Until 2010, prisoners of disciplinary labor center were frequently beaten. However, when I was imprisoned at Pochon-up disciplinary labor center, I was never beaten or battered by an agent. It was said that this change of the treatment of prisoners were the order of Kim Jong-un. I am not sure whether this change was because of 'human rights', but I was told that Kim Jong-un issued this order. During my entry upon the center, a security agent asked questions, such as "Were you beaten by someone during interrogations?" Now, ordinary people have more knowledge (prisoners should not be physically abused in prison/detention facilities) than the law enforcements. If a law enforcement officer hits a prisoner at a disciplinary labor center or detention center, they are punished. Prisoners can also sue the person after they finish serving their sentences. But, most of these cases are covered up. It is difficult for the powerless to successfully sue someone with authority. If a case goes to trial, the officer, who physically abused a prisoner,

would either be demoted or transferred. They hardly get fired for this incident. Yet, it is true that prisoners are battered less under the leadership of Kim Jong-un. (Pochon-up Disciplinary Labor Center, Pochon County, Ryanggang Province, DPRK, from 2011 to 2012)”

Second, the standard procedure of unclothed, body cavity search, especially for female detainee/prisoner, has changed. When North Koreans are repatriated from China, they are handed over to the Ministry of State Security through customs. Security agents of the MSS at each labor detention center located near the border will carry out initial investigations. Unclothed, cavity search is the first thing repatriated North Koreans go through upon entry to labor detention centers. Typically, in the past, male agents conducted cavity search on female detainee/prisoner. Since the male agents touched and searched private parts of a female detainee/prisoner, the detainee/prisoner felt extremely humiliated and violated. On the other hand, recently, female security agents and officers perform cavity search on female detainee/prisoner. There were some cases where female security agents conducted cavity search even before Kim Jong-un came into power, but male agents were still present at the scene to observe the unclothed, cavity search. Compared to the past, more and more female victims testify that female agents and officers carried out unclothed, cavity search.

Third, hygiene and sanitary conditions in prison/detention facilities seem to be significantly improved. Victims whom NK Watch interviewed in 2020 testified that sanitary conditions of prison/detention facilities have improved. Most prison/detention facilities in North Korea have poor sanitary conditions. Prison/detention facilities were infested with fleas and cockroaches. Exposed to such conditions, prisoners were unable to sleep well. On the other hand, currently, prison/detention facilities in North Korea seem to put effort in improving their sanitary conditions. According to one victim, who was detained at a detention center of the Hyesan Security Agency, officers of the detention center ordered prisoners to clean their cells. The sanitary conditions of the detention center seem to be relatively improved compared to those of the past. One of the changes in prison/detention facilities is that North Korea seems to care about the personal hygienic conditions of prisoners. As stated in the testimony above, toothbrushes were given to prisoners of detention center at the Hyesan Security Agency. In the past, toiletry items were not provided to detainees/prisoners. Furthermore, the following excerpt from a victim testimony shows that prisoners were able to take showers and do laundry. All these cases did not

exist before 2010.

“Faucets and toilets were equipped in prison cells of the Hyesan detention center. Since the faucets work, prisoners were able to do laundry and take showers. Prisoners also collected water on a bucket to drink. Shower stalls at the Hyesan detention center had dividers. Even though CCTVs were installed inside the shower room, they are not able to see the prisoners because of the divider panels. (Hyesan Detention Center, Ryanggang Province, DPRK, 2017)”

3. North Korean Government’s Portrayal of its Human Rights Situation

Besides dismantling existing political prison camps and improving the treatment of prisoners, the North Korean government has shown several instances to the international community in order to prove the improvement of human rights situation in North Korea. Although the government’s intention of such portrayal is unknown, those changes, shown by the government, are a positive sign that signifies the achievement of international human rights advocacy in protecting the rights of North Koreans.

First, the North Korean government’s involvement in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process has changed. The first UPR cycle started in April 2008, after the UN Human Rights Council was created in 2006. Since the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council adopted the resolution ‘Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK’, North Korea constantly opposed and disapproved the UN’s adoption of the resolution. On the other hand, North Korea does not seem to complain, but rather has been actively participating in UPR sessions. North Korea attended all UPR cycles: First cycle (December 2009), Second cycle (May 2014), and Third cycle (May 2019). In addition, for each cycle, the North Korean government has submitted national report, which listed the country’s legislative and administrative measures for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Indeed, during UPR sessions, the North Korean government officials continues to deny all allegations of human rights violations, especially the existence of political criminals/prisoners and political prison camps. Despite the government’s response to allegations about human rights violations, the government’s response to other types of human rights issues has changed.

① North Korea has shown efforts to adopt and implement the UPR recommendations for improving the rights of persons with disabilities. In July 2013, North Korea became a state party to the International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. The government also has built facilities for disabled persons, and permitted staff members of Handicap International (currently, named as Humanity & Inclusion), an international NGO, to reside in Pyongyang.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the North Korean government agreed send the North Korean Youth Para-Ensemble to perform at Sheldonian Theatre – University of Oxford on May 26th 2017. While this was a political move, not a real change, to purport the government’s effort in improving disability rights, such action by North Korea has a significant meaning that the government would change the situation of certain human rights issues in order to pursue national interest.

Also, in December 2018, North Korea submitted *Initial Report of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* to the UN Human Rights Council.

② North Korea admitted its use of public execution. Until recently, the government of North Korea had never admitted to its use of public execution. However, at the UPR session, on May 9th 2019, the DPRK government official said, “Public executions take place in exceptional cases. We execute the criminals by considering the opinions of the victims and people if victims and people strongly demand public execution. And, these decisions are made under careful consideration”. It was inevitable for North Korea to admit this fact, because there were too many witnesses who could testify North Korea’s public execution. The state’s use of public execution was also exposed to the outside world too many times.⁸⁷ Despite these circumstances, the fact that the North Korean government officials openly admitted allegations about public execution highlights a change.

③ North Korea organized a task force to prepare and submit the country’s national report to the OHCHR.⁸⁸ Under a condition to submit national report for participation in the UPR process, the North Korean government recruited people from various departments, such as the Ministry

⁸⁶ Thae Yong-ho, “The Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK and the Future of the DPRK’s Human Rights Diplomacy,” *Thae Yong-Ho’s Forum for Unification* (blog), 9 September 2018, <https://thaeyongho.com/2018/10/09/%eb%b6%81%ed%95%9c%ec%9d%b8%ea%b6%8c%eb%ac%b8%ec%a0%9c%ec%9d%98-%ed%98%84-%ec%83%81%ed%99%a9%ea%b3%bc-%ed%96%a5%ed%9b%84-%eb%b6%81%ed%95%9c%ec%9d%b8%ea%b6%8c%ec%99%b8%ea%b5%90-%eb%b0%a9%ed%96%a5/>

⁸⁷ The DPRK Ambassador, “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Review - 33rd Session of Universal Periodic Review,” May 9, 2019, *UN Web TV*, Geneva, Switzerland.

of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, the Legislation Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly (최고인민회의 상임위원회 법제부; *Choego-inmin-hoeui*), the DPRK Academy of Social Sciences, the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of People's Security, the Supreme Court of the DPRK, and the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of the DPRK. In North Korea, except personnel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, North Korean elites do not know how the international community, including UN, views the situation of human rights in North Korea. However, by organizing a taskforce to prepare the national report, this opportunity provided North Korean elites to learn about international human rights advocacy. This opportunity also provided the elites to learn and understand international human rights law and mechanisms, especially the core concept of human rights.

Second, the rights of North Korean migrant workers improved. The North Korean government ordered all DPRK embassies to regularly evaluate and report the working conditions/wages of North Korean migrant workers. Also, being aware of international media coverage, the North Korean government implemented policies for workers to wear safety helmets on construction sites. Although it is still mandatory for the migrant workers to forcibly "donate" part of their wages to the North Korean government, the treatment of workers improved. In the past, many North Korean government officials, who were stationed to monitor and manage North Korean migrant workers, extorted money from the workers by demanding workers to give them additional money. However, this corruption seems to be eased in nowadays.⁸⁹

88 Thae Yong-ho, "The Situation of Human Rights in the DPRK and the Future of the DPRK's Human Rights Diplomacy," *Thae Yong-Ho's Forum for Unification* (blog), September 9, 2018. <https://thaeyongho.com/2018/10/09/%eb%b6%81%ed%95%9c%ec%9d%b8%ea%b6%8c%eb%ac%b8%ec%a0%9c%ec%9d%98-%ed%98%84-%ec%83%81%ed%99%a9%ea%b3%bc-%ed%96%a5%ed%9b%84-%eb%b6%81%ed%95%9c%ec%9d%b8%ea%b6%8c%ec%99%b8%ea%b5%90-%eb%b0%a9%ed%96%a5/>

89 See note 87 above

Human Rights Strategy and its Implication

1. Why the Situation of Human Rights Improved Under the Leadership of Kim Jong-un

North Korea has made progress on its human rights conditions beginning in the late 1980s, because human rights advocates brought North Korea's situation of human rights to light. As a first step, the North Korean government dismantled six out of 12 political prison camps. In order to hide all evidence leading to the existence of North Korean political prison camps, the government dismantled political prison camps that either had locations exposed to the international community or had potential security issues. Demolition works of six political prison camps continued into the early 1990s. After completion of the works, the North Korean government officials continually deny all allegations about the existence of political criminal/prisoners and political prison camps in North Korea to this day.

Between the 1990s and early 2000s, the North Korean regime couldn't care less about the international community's criticism of North Korea. During this period, the country was going through some serious domestic issues. The North Korean leadership was facing a threat after the country suffered a severe economic downturn causing systematic problems. Such crisis made the government indifferent to respond to all criticisms of North Korea's human rights situation. However, beginning in the mid-2000s, the UN and other member states, such as the EU and the US, discussed and raised concerns about North Korea's human rights, pressuring the North Korean government to address its problematic human rights practices. As a result, North Korea

began to respond to international human rights criticism.

During the 2000s, North Korea was under significant pressure from the international community. According to Han Jin-Myeong (a former DPRK diplomat), in the mid-2000s, Kim Jong-il ordered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK and all embassies of the DPRK to lobby other members of the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council. It was North Korea's attempt to get more against and abstention voting during the vote for the adoption of the Resolution. However, as Kim Jong-il passed away in December 2011 and the UN decided to adopt the Resolution by consensus beginning in 2012, North Korea's lobbying effort became pointless afterwards.

After Kim Jong-un came into power, North Korea initiated actions to improve its human rights situation in response to international human rights criticism. North Korea ① dismantled two more political prison camps, ② improved the treatment of prisoners in prison/detention facilities, and ③ stressed its participation in the UPR.

Under the leadership of Kim Jong-un, North Korea has shown some signs of improving the human rights situation. This change is a result achieved from international human rights advocacy efforts. Such advocacy efforts can be divided into two types: Accountability advocacy (holding Kim Jong-un accountable for crimes against humanity) and Awareness Raising advocacy (raising awareness on human rights, democracy, and capitalism among North Koreans). Accountability advocacy was widely supported and implemented by the UN and other governments, such as the EU. Awareness Raising advocacy was widely carried out by various NGOs and human rights activists. With such efforts, the international community was able to pressure the North Korean regime and partially improve human rights conditions in North Korea.

2. Implication of Human Rights Strategy

First, if North Korea continues to maintain its leadership and political system, it would be almost impossible to fundamentally change or improve the situation of human rights in North Korea. Furthermore, currently, it is hard to expect from North Korea to voluntarily reform its regime. As a result, the international community should continue the efforts to hold Kim Jong-un accountable for human rights abuses. North Korea is not a typical totalitarian state. The supreme leader of North Korea maintains and exerts absolute control over the Workers' Party of Korea, the Cabinet, and the Korean People's Army, and the people. In North Korea, the supreme leader is the country's national interest, and the national security focuses to protect the supreme leader.

While North Korea publicly emphasizes the security of the state and political system – ‘collective security’, North Korea internally holds the logic that the existence of the Worker’s Party of Korea, the Cabinet, the Korean People’s Army and the people relies wholly on the existence and safety of the supreme leader.

Second, the international community should come up with a way to deliver a separate message that targets North Korean elites with lower-tier authorities or other elites working in non-government sectors. For the international community, a cautious approach is needed when reaching out to North Korean elites. In North Korea, even with the power coalition of major apparatuses and elites, the supreme leader cannot be toppled or ousted. Despite this condition, North Korean elites are the key to improve the situation of human rights in North Korea. Personnel of secret police agencies, such as the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of People’s Security, consider themselves as collaborators of the North Korean regime. They clearly understand that they are the perpetrators of human rights violations. They also know that they can be subjected to punishment if a revolution or change of leadership takes place. However, a problem among North Korean elites is that even those working in economic or cultural sectors also view themselves as ‘the perpetrators of human rights violations’. Even though these elites did not violate human rights, they believe that working for the regime and living a better life than others constitute becoming a perpetrator of human rights violations.

Lastly, it is important to reiterate the concept of universal human rights, which is widely accepted in the international community, to North Korea. When discussing human rights violations with North Korea, the international community should abide by the human rights principle. This is because North Korea, during international negotiations, always has presented its argument with a particular premise or a condition in order to get the results they want. This premise or condition typically attempted to twist the keywords related to the subject of the negotiation. While it uses the same text like those of the international community’s, North Korea creates a context that adds uniqueness to its situation. For example, North Korea describes its political system as ‘Socialism of Our Style (Korean-style Socialism)’, not the Marxist definition of socialism. In addition, in terms of the word ‘denuclearization’, North Korea refers it to ‘denuclearization of the Korean peninsula’, not ‘denuclearization of the DPRK’. North Korea’s definition of denuclearization refers to eliminating all possible threats that could impose a nuclear crisis in the peninsula.⁹⁰ In other words, it means the removal of all strategic assets, including nuclear weapons and the US military, deployed at East Asia. Likewise, North Korea

defines its own concept of 'human rights'. Thus, the international community should not overlook that North Korea could use such type of strategy when discussing/negotiating its situation of human rights.

90 "It Would Be Better to Search for New Way Rather than Facing Barrier," Korea Central News Agency (Pyongyang, DPRK), Dec. 20, 2018.

Appendix

List and Location of Political Prison camps in North Korea

※ The information on the table is based on the testimony of Ahn Myeong-Chul.

Camp Name	Concentration Camp Type	Estimated Number of Prisoners	Status	Administrative Division	Latitude, Longitude
No. 14	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	30,000	Active	Kaechon, South Pyongan Province	39°34'13.71"N, 126° 3'26.68"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.14)
No. 15	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	50,000	Active	Yodok County, South Hamgyong Province	39°40'34.79"N, 126°50'59.50"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.15)
No. 16	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	30,000 - 50,000	Active	Myonggan County (formerly known as Hwasong County), North Hamgyong Province	41°18'54.04"N, 129°20'33.89"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.16)
No. 25	Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners	5,000	Active	Chongjin, North Hamgyong Province	41°50'0.75"N, 129°43'42.74"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.25)
No. 11	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	30,000	Inactive (Closed in 1989)	Kyongsong County, North Hamgyong Province	41°33'20.94"N, 129°22'53.71"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.11)
No. 12	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	20,000	Inactive (Closed in May, 1987)	Changpyong-rodongjagu, Onsong County, North Hamgyong Province	42°48'25.79"N, 129°50'27.07"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.12)
No. 13	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	30,000	Inactive (Closed in 1990)	Chongsong-rodongjagu, Onsong County, North Hamgyong Province	42°45'32.90"N, 129°48'55.77"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.13) *The headquarter of Camp 13 is in operation as the Administrative Detention Center of the Security Agency.

No. 15	Political Prison Camp (Revolutionary Zone)	1,000	Inactive (Closed in 2012)	Yodok County, South Hamgyong Province	39°40'18.95"N, 126°50'0.62"E
No. 17	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	Unknown	Inactive (Closed in Late 1980s)	Tanchon, South Hamgyong Province	41°5'39.31"N 128°46'49.35"E ¹ (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.17)
No. 18	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	50,000	Inactive (Closed in 2002)	Pukchang County, South Pyongan Province	39°33'52.87"N, 126° 4'37.72"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.18)
No. 22	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	50,000	Inactive (Closed in June, 2012)	Hoeryong, North Hamgyong Province	42°32'17.02"N, 129°56'2.50"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.22)
No. 26	Correctional Labor Camp for Political Prisoners	10,000	Inactive (Closed in 1991)	Sungho County, North Hwanghae Province (formerly known as Sungho kuyok of Pyongyang)	39° 1'55.94"N, 126° 3'14.15"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.26)
No. 27	Political Prison Camp (Total Control Zone)	Unknown	Inactive (Closed in 1990)	Chonma County, North Pyongan Province	39°55'59.64"N, 124°50'51.55"E (Headquarter Building of the Security Agency of Camp No.27)
Disabled persons	Concentration Camp for Disabled persons	Unknown	Un-known	Hwadae County, North Hamgyong Province	40°45'29.02"N, 129°31'40.51"E

¹ Ahn Myeong-Chul testified that he did not have details of the information about Camp No.17. After Camp 17 was dismantled, the site of Camp No.17 was handed over to civilians. Thus, it is hard to estimate the number of prisoners and the size of the site of Camp No.17.

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ISBN **979-11-970711-0-2 [93340]**

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