

NORTH KOREA: crimes against humanity demand justice

ICNK Backs Recommendations of new UN Reports

ICNK (07.03.2017) – The International Coalition to Stop Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea (ICNK) today announced its support for two new UN reports calling for the international community to hold the North Korean government accountable for crimes against humanity.

The Group of Independent Experts on Accountability, appointed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights at the request of the UN Human Rights Council last year with a specific mandate to explore approaches to accountability, asserted that “investigation and prosecution of serious crimes is critical.” They called for “measures to ensure the right of victims to reparations, the right of victims and society to know the truth about violations, and guarantees of non-recurrence of violations.”

“The North Korea government and its leaders should face justice for their crimes against humanity, which continue to this day,” said Phil Robertson, Deputy Asia Director at Human Rights Watch. “We urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to respond positively to the Special Rapporteur’s call that the recommendations of the group of independent experts be implemented without delay.”

The independent experts stressed the need to consider creating an ad hoc international tribunal even with a referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC provides an important way to hold accountable those most responsible for gross rights abuses, but given the pervasive impunity in the

DPRK, the experts argued the prosecution of some high-level perpetrators at the ICC should be complemented by other criminal accountability processes. "A dedicated international tribunal for the DPRK would allow the temporal, territorial, personal and subject-matter jurisdiction to be calibrated to meet the needs and aspirations of the victims," the experts argued.

The independent experts, Sonja Biserko, a Serbian human rights activist who served on the UN Commission of Inquiry into human rights in North Korea, and Sara Hossain, a lawyer in the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, contended that "given the severity and complexity of the human rights situation in the DPRK, a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach is required to addressing violations." They also make concrete recommendations to the Human Rights Council, to strengthen the OHCHR field office in Seoul with additional resources to "receive, preserve and consolidate information and evidence pertaining to the human rights situation in the DPRK, through a central and independent repository, for use in any future accountability mechanism."

"The two independent experts deserve backing for their hard work and strong recommendations for achieving accountability for human rights violations in North Korea," said Eunyoung Kwon, Secretary-General of the ICNK. "Member states of the Human Rights Council should now step up to provide support and provide resources to the OHCHR Seoul office to support initiatives on extending research and ensuring effective analysis for holding perpetrators accountable."

In a separate report, the new UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the DPRK, Tomas Ojea Quintana, emphasized that "addressing human rights violations, particularly allegations of crimes against humanity, requires that perpetrators be held accountable." He called for a "two-track strategy" of engagement with the DPRK on human rights where possible, and the pursuit of accountability. "These two tracks are mutually

reinforcing, and a dual approach is necessary to produce tangible and sustainable improvement in the situation of human rights.”

The Special Rapporteur endorsed the group of independent experts’ recommendations and urged “all relevant stakeholders” to act and “to ensure that serious human rights violations, especially those amounting to crimes against humanity, do not go unpunished.” He called on the Human Rights Council to implement the recommendations of the group of independent experts “without delay, ensuring that perpetrators of gross violations are held responsible and supporting all victims in their quest for truth and justice.” He further urged the United Nations “as a whole” to address “the grave human rights situation in the [DPRK] in a coordinated and unified manner.”

“Six years ago we joined together with over 40 other human rights organizations to establish the ICNK with the specific purpose of seeking accountability and justice for crimes against humanity in North Korea,” said Benedict Rogers, East Asia Team Leader at Christian Solidarity Worldwide. “The UN Commission of Inquiry and its report were a landmark step on the path to accountability. The time to end the culture of impunity surrounding North Korea’s crimes against humanity is long overdue.”

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The International Coalition to Stop Crimes against Humanity in

North Korea is a joint effort of over 40 human rights groups worldwide that seeks to protect the human rights of North Koreans and to hold the Pyongyang government accountable for its abuses and violations of the human rights of the North Korean people.

Members and supporters of the Coalition include:

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Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances
Asian Human Rights & Humanity Association of Japan
Burma Partnership (Thailand)
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International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
COMJAN (Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to North Korea)(Japan)
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