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North Korean refugees in South Korea: Some statistics

HRWF (26.12.2014) - Some statistics collected by Human Rights Without Frontiers:

- There were 26,483 North Korean refugees living in South Korea as of March of 2014, 40% of them being children and young adults aged 10 to 29 (Ministry of Unification, 2014).
- It should be highlighted that 70% of North Korean refugees are female, and North Korean women are at high risk of being victims of sexual violence and exploitation as well as human trafficking either in North Korea or China According to a survey conducted by the Database Center for North Korean Human rights (NKDB) in 2012, 290 sexual violence cases were reported out of 8,703 witnesses.
- In a recent study on the effects of PTSD (Choi et al., 2012), two thirds of 301 North Korean refugees surveyed showed PTSD symptoms such as insomnia and feeling of helplessness that made it difficult for those with the symptoms to hold steady jobs or perform well academically.
- A study conducted by the NK Refugees Foundation in 2012 found that 53.5% of those surveyed belonged to single parent households, as opposed to 8.6% among South Korean households (Korean Bureau of Statistics, 2005).

Recommended Reading:

Resettling in South Korea: Challenges for Young North Korean Refugees

<http://en.asaninst.org/contents/resettling-in-south-korea-challenges-for-young-north-korean-refugees/>

A North Korean refugee under threat of deportation from Paris to Pyongyang

Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l (Brussels) and the French Committee for Help to the North Korean Population (Paris) strongly urge the French government NOT to deport a North Korean refugee to the worst dictatorship in the world

HRWF Int'l (10.12.2014) – According to an official document dated 29th August 2014 that StreetPress has managed to obtain, the prefecture of Paris plans to deport a North Korean refugee, to his country of origin if he does not leave France within 30 days.

Mr C. was almost 30 when he arrived in France in 2013. Not knowing a single word of French, he started the complicated procedure of asking for political asylum from the OFPRA (French Office of Protection of Refugees and Apatrids) with the help of France Terre d'Asile. In May 2014, the Office rejected his request. Without raising any issue, the Prefecture of Paris automatically drafted an order of deportation if he does not leave the country and go back to the country he is a citizen of, North Korea.

At the end of November, he was caught by the police of Finistère and put in a "retention center". He was then in possession of a Mongol passport but the whole interview took place in Korean with an interpreter speaking that language. It is then decided to deport him but the procedure is interrupted by the judge in charge of freedoms and detention who rules that he should be released because of a legal flaw on another issue. During his detention, the refugee has introduced a new asylum request. The threat of deportation is not over. Yesterday, France's National Assembly started examining a draft law aiming at reducing the duration of the asylum procedure and simplify it.

Last month, France was involved in another human rights issue concerning North Korea. A North Korean college student in Paris had been missing since the beginning of November amid speculation that agents from the North might have attempted to forcibly take him back to the communist nation. The student, only identified by his surname Han, is a son of an aide to Jang Song-thaek, the once powerful uncle of the North's leader Kim Jong-un. Jang was executed in December last year on treason charges. Han's father is known to have been purged recently as part of the Kim regime's continued work to clear the remnants of the Jang era.

On 18th November, the U.N. General Assembly committee dealing with human rights passed a resolution calling for the U.N. Security Council to consider referring North Korea to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged crimes against humanity.

North Koreans are needed to do the dangerous jobs, says Malaysia

Minister says no locals would dare work underground after death of North Korean in mining accident raises questions about the use of foreign labour

The Guardian (24.11.2014) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/24/-sp-north-korea-malaysia-mine-labour> - [Malaysia](#) has defended the use of North Korean labourers in its mining industry, saying they are particularly good workers because of their dedication, strength and bravery.

After [a North Korean was among those killed in a mine explosion](#) at the weekend, Malaysia's deputy home minister, Datuk Seri Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, told reporters that the men had been working legally under a special agreement between Pyongyang and authorities in the Malaysian state of Sarawak.

"When it comes to industries such as coal mines, the jobs are very dangerous and tough," Wan Junaidi said. "No local or Sarawakian will dare to take up such jobs — that is why [we] need foreign workers. In the coal-mining sector, only Britain, China and [North Korea](#) have highly-skilled workers."

Defectors' groups claim there may be as many as 65,000 North Koreans currently working abroad — primarily in China, [Russia](#), Mongolia and the Middle East — where they are sent to jobs in construction, forestry, factories, restaurants and mines.

They have questioned the ethics of using North Korean workers, amid suggestions that their salaries are paid directly to the government in Pyongyang.

The minister's comments come just two days after three men — Tun Tun Win, 36, from Burma; Kardianto, 38, from Indonesia; and Pang Chung-hyok, 29, from North Korea — were killed after a blast ripped through the mine on Saturday morning. Another 29 men were injured, seven of them from North Korea. Forty-nine of the 119 foreign workers at the Sarawak mine were North Koreans.

North Korean labour is sought after in Sarawak state on Borneo island, which is the only place in Malaysia permitted to hire workers from the country. Peninsular Malaysia has no such privilege, Wan Junaidi said.

The minister said the labourers had valid work and immigration permits and that the Malaysian government had given the go-ahead for their recruitment: "There are many

people from communist countries working in our country and having businesses here," he added. "All we require is that they come here legally, work legally and stay free of trouble with our laws."

Whether or not they are being paid for the work they do in Sarawak, however, is unclear. "Almost all of the wages of the workers sent abroad are remitted back to Kim Jong-un's regime," the defectors' organisation [North Korea Strategy Centre](#) claims.

Some labourers receive 10 or 15% of their full wages, defectors say, as their salaries are [sent straight to North Korean state-run agencies](#) where they are then shared among the higher echelons of Pyongyang's government.

One North Korean labourer working on a £28bn construction site in [Qatar](#), where the 86,000-seat stadium will host the 2022 World Cup final, recently told the Guardian that he hadn't seen a penny of his salary. "I don't get paid – the company gets the money," he said. "When I go back to North Korea I'll get paid, I think."

[Malaysia was recently downgraded](#) to the lowest tier on the US's Trafficking in Persons index, ranking it alongside North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Son of Jang Song-thaek's aide disappears in Paris

Yonhap (19.11.2014) –

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/search1/2603000000.html?cid=AEN20141119008151315> - A North Korean college student in Paris has been missing for more than two weeks, sources here said Wednesday, amid speculation that agents from the North are attempting to forcibly take him back to the communist nation.

The student, only identified by his surname Han, is a son of an aide to Jang Song-thaek, the once powerful uncle of the North's leader Kim Jong-un. Jang was executed in December last year on treason charges.

Han's father is known to have been purged recently as part of the Kim regime's continued work to clear the remnants of the Jang era.

A senior official at Han's school told Yonhap News Agency that, "I asked other students and faculty members about Han's whereabouts but nobody has seen him at least for the past 15 days."

Local police came to the school last week in search of Han, added the official.

A source said Han had been picked up by North Korean agents dispatched to Paris.

He dramatically escaped while being taken to an airport and he is now staying at a certain location, the source said.

If confirmed true, the case could cause a diplomatic rift between North Korea and France.

The two sides have no formal diplomatic ties. The North maintains a diplomatic delegation in Paris to pursue economic and cultural exchanges on a limited basis.

In 2011, the French government reportedly offered a chance for Han and nine other

North Korean students to study at the famous architecture school named "Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-La Villette."

All of them were students at the Kim Il-sung University in Pyongyang.

Last December, meanwhile, the North recalled Hong Yong, its deputy delegate to UNESCO in Paris, amid reports that he was a close confidant to Jang. On his way back to Pyongyang, Hong was spotted at Beijing Capital International Airport being closely watched by North Korean agents.

For interviews, please contact Pierre Rigoulot, director of the Institut d'Histoire Sociale and a member of the board of HRWF Int'l, in Paris 3361290565

U.N. panel calls for North Korea referral to international court

Reuters (18.11.2014) - The U.N. General Assembly committee dealing with human rights passed a resolution on Tuesday calling for the U.N. Security Council to consider referring North Korea to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged crimes against humanity.

The non-binding resolution passed by the U.N. Third Committee linked the alleged abuses to the policies of North Korea's top leadership and called on the Security Council to consider targeted sanctions against those responsible for such crimes.

Tuesday's vote followed a U.N. Commission of Inquiry report published in February detailing wide-ranging abuses in North Korea, including the use of prison camps, systematic torture, starvation and killings comparable to Nazi-era atrocities.

The vote will increase political pressure on North Korea on human rights, but it is largely symbolic as it is unlikely to actually lead to action in the Hague-based International Criminal Court, which looks at serious abuses like genocide and other crimes against humanity.

Diplomats say longtime North Korea ally China would be likely to use its Security Council veto power to knock down an ICC referral. They say Beijing's stance would likely be supported by Russia.

Both China and Russia backed a proposed amendment to the resolution by Cuba, which was rejected in a vote that would have removed the call to refer North Korea to the ICC and an acknowledgement of the commission's view that there were reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity had been committed.

China said the Security Council was not the appropriate forum for human-rights discussions.

North Korea's representative to the Third Committee reacted angrily ahead of the vote, blaming the United States and its allies and warning of the possibility of further nuclear tests, something that has made it subject to U.N. sanctions.

"The reality is indicative of the need for us to maintain powerful state capabilities in order to defend our people's human rights," he said.

"The outrageous and unreasonable human rights campaign staged by the United States and its followers in their attempts to eliminate the state and social system of (North Korea) is compelling us not to refrain any further from conducting nuclear tests.

Americans Kenneth Bae, Matthew Todd Miller freed by North Korea: U.S. officials

Huff Post (08.11.2014) - North Korea freed two Americans from prison and they were returning to the United States on Saturday after the surprise involvement of the top-ranking U.S. intelligence official in their release.

Kenneth Bae and Matthew Todd Miller, who had been doing hard labor for months in the reclusive country, were being accompanied home by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, his office said. Their release comes less than three weeks after another American was freed by Pyongyang.

Bae, a missionary from Washington state, was arrested in North Korea in November 2012 and sentenced to 15 years hard labor for crimes against the state. Miller, who reportedly was tried on an espionage charge, had been in custody since April this year and was serving a six-year hard labor sentence.

The United States had frequently called for the men to be freed for humanitarian reasons, especially since Bae was said to have health problems.

North Korea has been on a diplomatic campaign to counter charges by a U.N. body that highlighted widespread human rights abuses and a move by some U.N. members to refer the state to an international tribunal. But it was not clear what prompted Pyongyang to free the two men at this time.

Their release did not constitute an opening in relations with North Korea, said a senior State Department official, who declined to be identified. The official said for that to happen, Pyongyang must fulfill its commitments on denuclearization and human rights.

"He (Clapper) was not there to negotiate. And our position hasn't changed."

The men were released just hours before President Barack Obama was to start a trip to Asia that will include talks with Chinese leaders about how Beijing can use its influence with North Korea to rein in its nuclear weapons program, U.S. officials have said.

"It's a wonderful day for them and their families," Obama said at the White House. "Obviously we are very grateful for their safe return and I appreciate Director Clapper doing a great job on what was obviously a challenging mission."

A senior U.S. official said: "The DNI (Clapper) did carry a brief message from the President indicating that Director Clapper was his personal envoy to bring the two Americans home."

Myung Hee Bae, Kenneth Bae's mother, said she was told that her son would arrive soon at a U.S. Air Force base in Tacoma, Washington. She said she did not know when he was scheduled to arrive.

Bae's delighted son, Jonathan, told Reuters from Arizona that he received a call Friday

night and spoke to his father. "The brief time on the phone, he sounded good," Jonathan said. "I'm sure he will be back to his old self in no time."

"It came out of the blue. One minute he was doing farm labor and the next minute they are saying, 'You are going home.' Just like everyone else, he was surprised," he said.

As director of national intelligence, a job created after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States, Clapper oversees the CIA and some 15 other intelligence agencies, making his involvement in the release surprising. U.S. officials said it was the first time a national intelligence director had been involved such a high-profile diplomatic matter.

An Obama administration official, who declined to be identified, said there was no connection between Clapper's trip and the issue of North Korean nuclear weapons but that he acted as a presidential envoy with a broader mandate to listen to what North Korea had to say.

Arrangements for the release had come together in the past several days and North Korea had asked for a high-ranking envoy to be involved, the official said.

Clapper went to Pyongyang but there was no indication that he met personally with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The men's release came just a few weeks after North Korea freed another American, Jeffrey Fowle, 56 - a street repair worker from Miamisburg, Ohio, who had been arrested in May for leaving a Bible in a sailor's club in the North Korean city of Chongjin, where he was traveling as a tourist.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said in a statement: "We're pleased that this humanitarian gesture has taken place and that Kenneth Bae and Matthew Miller will soon be reunited with their families."

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also welcomed the release, his office said in a statement, adding, "The Secretary-General hopes that this positive momentum for improving relations among the concerned parties for peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and beyond will be built on."

Victor Cha of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the release could indicate North Korea wants to press Obama on the eve of his Asian trip and that Pyongyang is feeling international heat from the U.N. resolution.

"This is worrying to them," Cha said. "They have never seen anything like this before. Moreover, it is not coming from the U.S. but from the entire international community. They are trying to blunt criticism and perhaps water down the resolution with these actions."

Miller, of Bakersfield, California, and said to be in his mid-20s, had gone to North Korea on a tourist visa, which state media said he tore up while demanding Pyongyang grant him asylum.

The Associated Press reported Miller was tried on an espionage charge and prosecutors at his trial said he had falsely claimed to have secret information about the U.S. military stationed in South Korea.

Bae's family said on its website that Bae had been operating out of China since 2006 and had led more than a dozen tours of North Korea. They said his health problems included diabetes, an enlarged heart, deteriorating vision and back and leg pains.

Qatar's ambitious future driven on by North Korean 'forced labour'

The Guardian (07.11.2014) - As dusk falls on the luxury high-rise emerging from the swirling sands in the desert north of Doha, dozens of labourers hurry off the construction site and its surrounding buildings and on to buses waiting to take them back to their accommodation.

First to leave are the Vietnamese, then the Indians, followed by Nepalese and Thais; a united nations of workers helping Qatar build the ambitious vision for its future.

But late into the evening, after everyone else has left, one group of workers toil on, their efforts lit only by an occasional fluorescent tube light. The voices echoing around the site reveal their unlikely origin. These men are North Korean; an army of labourers from a tyrannical dictatorship, working on perhaps the most high-profile development in Qatar: Lusail City.

When completed, the metropolis will have two golf courses, an entertainment city, housing for 200,000 and a state-of-the-art 86,000-seat stadium that is set to host the 2022 World Cup final.

"They work constantly," said a manager of the lavish tower project, which employs about 50 North Koreans. "I have even built a room for them so they can rest without having to go back to their labour camp."

The workers themselves are less forthcoming. They are highly suspicious and reluctant to talk. When one labourer was asked how long he had been working on the site that day, he said: "You don't need to know and you shouldn't know."

Despite the many hours they spend on the site, the North Koreans building the tower, and thousands more working on other sites across Qatar, may receive as little as 10% of their salary during the three-years they typically work in Qatar.

Instead, their earnings are expropriated by a chain of North Korean state-run bodies, overseen by Office 39, a department that reportedly controls a fund to bankroll Kim Jong-un's lifestyle.

Last month, the UN's special rapporteur for human rights in North Korea urged the international community to refer Kim to the international criminal court for crimes against humanity. But by allowing North Koreans to work on state-owned projects like Lusail City, Qatar is indirectly funding the Pyongyang regime.

It is all in stark contrast to the exclusive residence the men are building. When it is completed next year, the 19-storey tower will house four swimming pools and apartments that will reportedly fetch rents of nearly £9,500 a month.

It is one of about a dozen buildings now giving early shape to Lusail City. The vast development will reportedly cost £28bn, a price apparently worth paying for the honour of being the first country in the Arab world to host the World Cup.

According to the Lusail Real Estate Development Company, the state-run firm overseeing the project: "Lusail City will be one of the most important and significant cities hosting the teams, fans and audiences during the 2022 World Cup."

On the outskirts of the town of al-Wakrah, a short drive south of Doha, workers from the Indian subcontinent, Africa and China live in camps, known as bachelors' compounds.

The building that houses North Koreans remains eerily quiet on Fridays, when other workers are enjoying a precious day off. Inside, two red signboards hanging in the entrance hall leave no doubt about who lives here. "Our great Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il are with us for ever," says one. "Let us arm ourselves with the revolutionary ideals of our great Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il," reads the other.

But there is no sign of the workers. A man emerges from one of the rooms, and describes himself as a translator. "Everyone is at work," he says. "They will come back at 10 or 11pm." The translator works for one of a handful of state-run North Korean recruitment firms operating in Qatar, which supply workers to construction sites across the emirate.

"The company gets the money and we give small allowances to the individuals here in Qatar ... The workers earn on average 3,000 rials (£515) a month. 2,000-2,500 rials goes to their families in Korea," he explains reluctantly before hurrying off saying: "I don't really have time. I shouldn't be talking."

In a nearby compound, another recruitment company representative also admits the workers do not receive their salary in person. His company employs over 500 workers, and when more are needed they send an email to North Korea, he explains.

"The workers receive 3,000 rials per month and work for 12 hours a day," he says in fluent English, which he learned in Pyongyang. "About 50% is sent back to workers' families. Our company makes money from taking a cut of workers' salaries." He refuses to say how much of a cut they take. "That's a company secret!" he retorts.

However, North Korean defectors tell a very different story. According to Park Sun Il, a defector who now works for the North Korea Strategy Centre, migrant workers receive only 10%-15% of their salary. The majority goes into the pockets of government officials and the remainder is passed on to the ruling Korean Worker's party.

"In the early 90s, workers did receive their salary but it has been stopped since the mid-90s," says Rin-il, who worked as a labourer in Kuwait until he defected in 1997 by walking into the South Korean embassy. "The construction company that employed workers sent all the money directly to the North Korean government's bank account."

Kim Joo-il agrees. He runs an organisation campaigning for human rights in North Korea, having escaped in 2005. "I think that the North Korean government takes 100% of the salary in some countries," he says.

Even the workers seem unsure as to whether they will receive anything for their labour.

At a large hotel complex under construction in central Doha, a North Korean worker takes a short break close to the entrance gate. When we ask him how much he gets paid, he waits until no one else is around before answering: "I don't get paid. The company gets the money. When I go back to North Korea I'll get paid, I think."

Another more senior worker, who speaks a little English, says: "I get paid 1,500-2,000 rials a month. I receive 200 rials in person, and the company collects the rest. The company sends money to my family in North Korea." Then he pauses and changes his mind. "I'll get the money in the end when I go back. I will collect it from the company."

There is no doubt in the mind of the Egyptian security guard who watches them every day. "They start at 6am daily and continue till after midnight. Sometimes they take a

break for food, or to drink some alcohol, and then they carry on working," he says. "All the money they earn gets sent to Korea; they only get a small amount for expenses."

Nevertheless, in a sign of how dire conditions are in North Korea, working overseas is still considered a privilege reserved for those with the necessary qualifications; loyalty to the regime, a wife and two children (to guard against defection), and money to bribe officials.

Even the miserly income that workers might hope to make overseas is more than they could ever dream of earning in North Korea. And for those who receive nothing, there are advantages of working abroad. "People still want to work abroad despite not receiving a salary because they can get food and accommodation. They cannot imagine eating meat and rice in North Korea," says Rin-il. "Also, they can earn extra income after the compulsory working hours if they are lucky."

Despite this, the conditions North Korean workers endure in Qatar are likely to constitute forced labour, a modern form of slavery, says Aidan McQuade, director of Anti-Slavery International. "The fact that these conditions may be viewed as preferable to life in North Korea does not negate the conclusion of forced labour," says McQuade. "It is simply a further dreadful indictment of the dictatorship in Pyongyang, which exploits the vulnerability of its citizens to enrich itself in collusion with the Qatari autocracy."

North Korea's policy of exporting labourers is not new. Pyongyang has been sending significant numbers overseas since the 1990s, but its crumbling economy, crippled further by ever tighter UN sanctions, has lent a new urgency to the policy.

"While it is hard to be sure of the exact numbers of North Koreans labouring overseas, you can say that, after Kim Jong-un was put in power, the number has doubled or tripled," says Park.

Defectors' groups estimate there are up to 65,000 North Koreans working in around 40 countries. They can be found in forests in Siberia, mines in Mongolia, restaurants in China, factories in eastern Europe and, increasingly, on construction sites across the Gulf. There are an estimated 3,000 in Qatar, more than 2,000 in the United Arab Emirates and more than 4,000 in Kuwait.

It is easy to see why they are popular with construction companies. "I have been dealing with the North Koreans since 2003. I like them. All contractors like them," says a project manager overseeing the construction of the hotel complex in central Doha. "They follow the rules of the army. They have their own targets, and the managers know how to control their people skilfully. They are very productive."

A project manager at the Lusail City tower agrees. "They are very disciplined," he says. "They are also willing to learn ... and very hard-working. You can control them, guide and instruct them."

As dusk turns to night, the North Koreans building the tower labour on, hauling concrete blocks into the cage of the crane that looms over the site. Lusail City has been dubbed the 'city of the future', and in Qatar, this is what the future looks like.

A spokesperson from the ministry of labour and social affairs in Qatar said: "We take all issues around worker payment extremely seriously. All complaints we receive are investigated and where the law has been broken we take immediate action."

"The recently introduced Wage Protection System has been designed to ensure workers are paid their full salaries by bank transfer within seven days. The ministry of labour has

also set up a system to file electronic complaints and ensured this is accessible to guest workers by placing terminals near guest worker accommodation.

"There are currently 2,800 North Korean guest workers registered in Qatar and we have no recorded complaints about their payment or treatment. Qatar is determined to continually improve labour conditions for all who work in the country, and will continue to work with NGOs, businesses and other governments to achieve this"

In North Korea, fear takes hold over new foreign threat: Ebola

The Guardian (02.11.2014) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/02/north-korea-foreign-threat-ebola> - World's toughest measures against the disease have been imposed in a country far from west Africa, and with few tourists

Young children sit on the laps of medical staff, watching intently as a briefing describes the dangers of Ebola. Foreigners and citizens arriving at the capital's airport are held in quarantine for weeks. Tourists are banned outright.

The world's most draconian measures against the disease have been imposed not in the worst-affected west African countries, nor their neighbours, but in North Korea, thousands of miles from the outbreak.

They are increasing the isolation of a country already known for its tight controls on contact with outsiders, and risk damaging its fragile economy.

The Guardian was among the small number of foreigners allowed to fly in after the ban on tour groups but before the imposition of quarantine on all those entering from abroad. The fear is tangible; a factory and a research centre which journalists were due to visit cancelled the invitations, citing Ebola concerns.

"It's Ebola hysteria," said one foreigner in the country. "People are really scared."

Each night, the country's television news broadcasts a lengthy section on the disease, filling the screen with images of grieving families, ailing patients and medical workers in protective gear – as well as some coverage of its own measures, including footage of the session at the children's hospital.

On Friday the state news agency KCNA announced in a one-sentence news report: "A brisk hygienic information service goes on in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to prevent the outbreak of Ebola."

But the news bulletins appear to have alarmed rather than reassured many North Koreans.

"People are asking foreigners for information; they don't understand Ebola and don't really know what it is," said a westerner in the capital.

At Pyongyang's airport, groups of uniformed soldiers toiled at "Korea speed" – a zealous pace – to complete the gleaming new building that will soon replace the small, dingy terminal. It is evidence of the country's recent push to attract more international visitors, like the kitschily accomplished aquatic performances at the capital's dolphinarium, and

the sizeable Mirim Riding Club, where tourists can trot around a sawdust-strewn arena with a trainer for \$40 (£25). Both are lauded as projects for the people, but promoted to foreigners.

Those plans to expand tourism – earning precious foreign currency – are now on hold indefinitely. The Yanggakdo Hotel, one of the few hotels in Pyongyang where foreigners may stay, was largely deserted, though some Chinese business travellers and a handful of westerners remained. Chinese croupiers in its casino said they had seen few guests.

Some believe the stringent Ebola measures reflect the state's enduring suspicion towards the outside world, even as it tries to benefit from contact. Others think the real causes are more prosaic, citing the poor state of the country's health system and the adoption of similar measures when the respiratory disease Sars hit the region in 2003.

"I understand the logic of what they are doing, even if it seems extreme. They don't think they can control any outbreaks of anything like that and with Sars and avian flu they developed what for them are now standard operating procedures," said Hazel Smith, an expert on North Korea at the University of Central Lancashire.

"If there was someone with Ebola coming in, it wouldn't be easy to avoid contagion: they have problems with electricity, running water and disinfectants.

"Sars was close and they were one of the few countries in east Asia that avoided it. They think this approach has proved successful in the past; the question of whether [Ebola] is relevant to them is another matter."

She noted that there had been intense debates in other countries over what precautions were appropriate. Australia and Canada have introduced visa bans on people from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the countries worst affected by Ebola. Other countries have introduced screening for travellers arriving from those places. But none has taken measures even approaching those in North Korea.

The country announced it was banning all tour groups on 23 October. It also began refusing entry to citizens of countries that had had Ebola cases: a Beijing-based Spanish cameraman was told he could not make a scheduled trip.

Two individuals from African countries – both far from the outbreak zone – were ordered into quarantine after arrival in Pyongyang, though one has since been allowed to leave.

An unknown number of North Korean citizens who have returned from abroad have also been quarantined, although it is not clear if the measure applies to all countries or specific ones. North Korea has diplomatic ties with Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Kim Yong Nam, the head of the country's parliament, has been touring Africa, visiting Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Ethiopia with other senior officials including the minister of public health.

On Thursday the country tightened measures further, announcing that all foreigners entering the country would have to undergo a three-week quarantine period.

Foreign visitors who entered in the days before the quarantine announcement were told that daily temperature checks were compulsory.

The DailyNK website, which relies on sources inside the country, has also reported internal travel restrictions preventing many North Koreans from visiting the capital and requiring others to obtain a health certificate before making the journey.

"It's very much a trade-dependent economy, and especially trade with China now is absolutely crucial for the daily life of citizens at every level of society," warned Andray Abrahamian, executive director of Choson Exchange, a non-profit organisation helping North Koreans to help develop their understanding of business and economics. "To have that cut off for even a few weeks would be debilitating."

However, he added that exemptions were likely almost immediately, especially for Chinese citizens with multiple entry visas. "The people who do have contacts with Chinese businesspeople can get the message flowing upwards that this is seriously damaging to the economy."

Smith said: "North Korea is completely different from 10 years ago. There are powerful push factors that will ensure important economic exchanges will continue. The last thing they want is to stop major commercial interchange. All the elite have big commercial interests."

When it came to smaller-scale trade, officials no longer had full enforcement capacity in Chinese border areas, she added: "There will be bribes and people slipping backhanders to get people in."

Associated Press said on Friday that Chinese businesspeople on the border had said they were unaffected and China's state news agency, Xinhua, reported that no Chinese nationals had been quarantined.

Already, officials have said that diplomats and the staff of international organisations – who have to make regular trips to Beijing for cash and other supplies because of sanctions – can serve their quarantine at home rather than at designated quarantine hotels. That is a relaxation of the Sars rules.

Those in the tourism industry say thousands of westerners and perhaps a few hundred thousand Chinese visit North Korea each year, as well as many Malaysians and Singaporeans. Summer is the peak time for visitors, but several upcoming tours have been hit.

"The best guess anyone has is that this will last for the rest of this year – and after that we will see," said Simon Cockerell, general manager of Koryo Tours, which has already cancelled one trip.

"If Ebola subsides, they can open up the country and say, 'We got it right'," said Gareth Johnson, managing director of the firm Young Pioneers, which had several tours booked this winter. "The problem is that if it gets any worse, or there's an Ebola case in China, they will feel they cannot open up again."

EU confirms North Korea invite for rights visit

Washington Post (31.10.2014) http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/n-korea-says-it-has-invited-eu-rights-official/2014/10/30/c6331a74-6095-11e4-827b-2d813561bdfd_story.html - A European Union official on Friday confirmed that North Korea has invited the EU's special representative for human rights to visit, which would

be a significant step toward resuming a human rights dialogue that Pyongyang broke off in 2003.

On Thursday, a North Korean diplomat to the United Nations told The Associated Press that the invitation to Stavros Lambrinidis had been sent.

"The invite is currently being considered," the EU's foreign affairs spokeswoman, Maja Kocijancic, said in an email. "The two sides will discuss timing and substance of a visit through appropriate diplomatic channels."

The EU has said Lambrinidis recently met with a Pyongyang representative.

Kocijancic also said a team of experts from the union's diplomatic service had been scheduled to visit Pyongyang next week for meetings with authorities, but "new Ebola-related entry restrictions" enacted by the government have postponed it.

For North Korea to offer any dialogue on human rights, a topic which its government until recently would not discuss, is seen as significant by the international community. But such an offer also has been greeted with skepticism by rights groups and some diplomats.

North Korea also has offered the possibility of visits by United Nations rights officials, but the North Korea diplomat, Kim Un Chol, said Thursday that those offers would be dropped unless a U.N. resolution on the country removes any reference to the International Criminal Court before Saturday.

Kim treated the EU invitation as a separate issue and said the visit by Lambrinidis is expected next March.

North Korea has been on the defensive since a U.N. commission of inquiry early this year detailed what it said were vast human rights abuses in the impoverished but nuclear-armed country and warned that leader Kim Jong Un could be held accountable.

The new EU-Japan resolution at the U.N. echoes the report's recommendations, saying the Security Council should refer North Korea's human rights situation to the International Criminal Court.

Although ally China, a permanent council member, has signaled it would veto such a move, Pyongyang has been unnerved that international attention to its dismal human rights record hasn't seemed to fade.

U.N. rights investigator says North Korea may allow a visit

New York Times (28.10.2014) - A special [United Nations](#) human rights investigator said Tuesday that diplomats from [North Korea](#), in what he described as an abrupt and "interesting turn of events," were now prepared to invite him to visit their isolated nuclear-armed country for the first time - but only if a growing effort aimed at prosecuting North Korea's leader and other officials for crimes against humanity was dropped.

The investigator, Marzuki Darusman, made the disclosure at a news conference after he presented his annual report to the General Assembly's human rights commission. Mr. Darusman, a member of a panel that produced a devastating report on human rights

abuses in North Korea early this year, said the offer for a visit, which would be unprecedented, had been made by four North Korean diplomats who had unexpectedly agreed to meet with him on Monday.

North Korea's mission to the United Nations did not respond to requests for comment on Mr. Darusman's assertions. North Korean diplomats have denounced the panel's report as a collection of fabrications and smears and have refused to meet with Mr. Darusman or any other panel member. The report said the North Korean authorities maintained a murderous police state and a system of gulag-like prison camps that incarcerated more than 100,000 people. It recommended that the Security Council refer North Korea to the International Criminal Court for prosecution.

In recent weeks, however, North Korea's reclusive government, possibly sensing that a General Assembly resolution urging such a referral would probably pass by a strong majority, has adopted counterstrategies to avoid an acute embarrassment. They include the government's own human rights report, released last month, which asserted improbably that North Korean citizens enjoy unparalleled freedoms. The North has also shown more eagerness to engage with South Korea and Japan, and last week it unexpectedly released one of three imprisoned Americans.

Mr. Darusman, whose annual requests for meetings with North Korean officials have been routinely ignored, said he was surprised the request had been granted. "There has been an interesting turn of events," he said. "There was discussion about a possible visit, there was a discussion about certain parts of the resolution, so you will be able to make your own conclusions as to how they relate to each other."

Asked to elaborate, he said the North Koreans had requested that two provisions of the General Assembly resolution, which was drafted by Japan and the European Union, be deleted: a recommendation that the International Criminal Court prosecute abuses, and a warning that North Korea's leader, [Kim Jong-un](#), could be held personally accountable for crimes.

Efforts to reach Japanese diplomats for comment were not successful. A spokesman for the European Union, while not ruling out any proposals made by North Korea, said the objective of the resolution was "to bring change to the human rights situation in the country, by which we mean real improvements on the ground."

Human rights advocates who have strongly endorsed the recommendations of Mr. Darusman's panel expressed wariness about the conditional North Korean invitation to him, suggesting it was a tactical stalling move. They urged the General Assembly to vote on the resolution, which could happen next month.

"It would be a terrible geopolitical bargain to trade away a major and historic U.N. resolution in exchange for a single visit by a U.N. rapporteur," said John Sifton, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch. "It is the diplomatic equivalent to giving away a valuable house in exchange for a sandwich."

The developments came against a backdrop of resilient political intrigue over Mr. Kim, whose prolonged absence from public view had aroused rumors that he was ill or had been deposed, or both.

On Tuesday, South Korea's intelligence officials told lawmakers in Seoul that they had partly solved the mystery of his whereabouts, having learned that Mr. Kim was recovering from surgery on his left foot.

[North Korea](#)'s state news media did not report any public appearances by Mr. Kim for almost six weeks until Oct. 14, when he was shown visiting a housing project in

Pyongyang, walking with a cane. The North Korean accounts have not explained the reason for his absence.

The South Korean information about Mr. Kim's foot was disclosed during a closed parliamentary audit of the National Intelligence Service, the South Korean spy agency.

Its representatives told lawmakers that Mr. Kim, who has appeared to be gaining weight and now resembles his grandfather, Kim Il-sung, the deified founder of North Korea, had undergone surgery for [tarsal tunnel syndrome](#), a painful foot condition caused by the compression of a nerve, according to two lawmakers who briefed reporters on what they had been told. One suggested that Mr. Kim's weight might aggravate the problem.

The intelligence agency did not disclose how it had obtained the information, but it added that a European expert had operated on Mr. Kim, the lawmakers said.

Human rights: Key report must be sent to UN Security Council, says UN Special Rapporteur

OHCHR (28.10.2014) - The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Marzuki Darusman, today urged the UN General Assembly to submit the report by a special commission of inquiry that documents wide-ranging and ongoing crimes against humanity in the country to the Security Council and urge its referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"This would send an unequivocal signal that the international community is determined to take the follow up to the work the commission of inquiry on the DPRK to a new level," Mr. Darusman said during the presentation of his latest report* to the global body.

The Special Rapporteur held his first ever meeting with DPRK officials on the margins of the General Assembly on Monday 27 October.

"I welcome these signs of increased engagement by the DPRK with the Human Rights Council and international community, and I hope they will bear fruit," Darusman said. "But these must be premised on a more fundamental acknowledgement of the scale of the problems and must not divert from efforts to ensure the accountability of those responsible."

In a landmark report submitted in March 2014 to the Human Rights Council, the commission of inquiry concluded that a number of long-standing and ongoing patterns of systematic and widespread violations in North Korea met the high threshold required for crimes against humanity in international law.

Such violations relate to arbitrary detention, torture, executions and prisons camps; violations of the freedoms of thought, expression and religion; discrimination on the basis of State-assigned social class, gender and disability; violations of the freedom of movement and residence; violations of the right to food; and enforced disappearances, including through international abductions and enforced disappearances.

The expert further urged the United Nations system as a whole to follow up the commission of inquiry's report in a coordinated and unified way, as envisaged in the 'Rights up Front' initiative.

"To this end, all relevant parts of the UN system should work to alleviate specific areas of sufferings, as relevant to their mandates, in relation to the aforementioned violations

documented by the commission of inquiry and the recommendations accepted during the universal periodic review," Mr. Darusman said.

The Special Rapporteur welcomed the North Korean authorities active engagement in the second review of the human rights situation in the country carried out by other States in a process known as the 'universal periodic review.' He noted that the Government accepted 113 recommendations out of the 268 made, mainly related to the fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights and the protection of women's and children's rights.

Mr. Darusman asked the UN General Assembly to request the DPRK to grant access to the UN human rights mechanisms to assist, assess and verify the implementation of such recommendations. However, he noted with deep concern that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea failed to accept any recommendations relating to the findings of the commission of inquiry.

Finally, the expert said he was encouraged by recent moves to reopen the investigation of international abductions and enforced disappearances committed by the DPRK. "The North Korean authorities should allow all persons who have been abducted or otherwise forcibly disappeared, as well as their descendants, to return immediately to their countries of origin, and speed up the investigation into the fate of those missing in a transparent and verifiable manner," Darusman said. (*)

Marzuki Darusman (Indonesia) was appointed Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by the UN Human Rights Council in August 2010. As Special Rapporteur, he is independent from any government or organisation and serves in his individual capacity. He has served in a three-member UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and chaired the UN Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Sri Lanka. In March 2013, the Human Rights Council designated Mr. Darusman to serve simultaneously on a three-member Commission of Inquiry to investigate and to report on the systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in DPRK.

Regarding the passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act, 10 years later

Inside North Korea (18.10.2014) - Today, October 18th marks the 10th anniversary of the passage of the **North Korean Human Rights Act** (NKHRA), by the United States Congress.

The members of the **Free North Korean Association United States (FNKAUS)** would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to the US government for its continued interest in the human rights situation of North Korea, for passing the NKHR Act, and for allowing free North Koreans (defectors) to enter and resettle in the United States.

Of course, the South Korean government recognizes free North Koreans (defectors) as South Korean citizens and has guaranteed the best conditions and benefits for those who have resettled there.

However, it is a sad reality that in South Korea, the country that should be the leader in reunification, a legislation regarding North Korean human rights still has not been passed, despite the international community taking up this issue – for example in the United Nations, where an important side event occurred last month regarding the human rights situation in North Korea, and also with calls for the dictatorship of the North Korean regime to be held accountable at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The North Korea of today went from a Japanese colony to a slave nation ruled over by the Kim family dictatorship.

For the people of North Korea, if one's father was a farmer, a miner, or laborer, that person is destined to become a farmer, miner, or a laborer; in the neighboring country of China, a socialist country, Chinese citizens can travel anywhere they want to, but only in North Korea are the people living like slaves to the Kim family dictators, unable to travel anywhere without permission, and unable to do anything without permission – this is the reality of North Korea today in the 21st century.

The Kim family dictatorship can also purge and kill anyone who is their 'slave' – be they their uncle, aunt, or whoever it may be; all the laws in the world are useless in the face of this slave state power structure.

Countless number of patriots and citizens have given their lives, countless number of meetings have been held, proclamations made, and 'agreements' have been discussed, but there is no end in sight regarding the division of South and North Korea, a division that has been ongoing for more than 60 years.

Many experts, scholars, and think-tanks say that the extinction of the North Korean regime will pave the way for reunification, but what is the reason behind the three generations of succession in power, and the continuing existence of the regime?

The most important thing is that those who are closest to the Kim family dictatorship in North Korea and allow the regime to survive and function, these few are the ones who know so very well regarding the reality of the outside world and the international community.

These elites and regime supporters know very well that the democratization and freedom for North Korea as supported by the international community, will lead to reunification, which will ultimate lead to their own demise; these elites and regime supporters know and realize that the only way to maintain their own power and lifestyle and livelihood is to continue aligning with the regime in exploiting and oppressing the people, no matter how young and inexperienced and bumbling the dictator may be. They will continue to allow the dictator to remain in power, and despite clamoring for reunification, it is only in words, and their actions will never allow for reunification to happen.

Also, another important factor for the regime in North Korea not collapsing is the fact that the propagandizing and brainwashing of the people in idol worship of the dictatorship will continue and become even more strengthened, and interaction with the outside world can be something to only dream about; the eyes and ears of the North Korean people are closed off, since the people cannot even freely listen to radio broadcasts.

What can the deaf and blind do?

The most rational, common-sense way to bring about the collapse of the regime is to surround and encircle North Korea – through the Tumen River, Yalu River, East Sea, Yellow Sea, the DMZ – and send in radios, smartphones, and find ways for and allow Wi-Fi signals to be broadcast into North Korea, thus providing an opportunity for the North Korean citizens to be able to access outside information and find out about the truth. If this can lead to just a small spark being created in opposition to the Kim family dictatorship, that small spark can grow to be a fearsome, huge fireball or volcano that cannot be put out.

THIS is what the regime fears the most, and right now in North Korea if the regime senses any small spark about to be ignited, they will do whatever it takes to block out and oppress the people.

The North Korean regime has already purchased anti-riot gear and equipment from China in case anything should happen, and a few years ago even banned the movie 'Rim KokJung' [*a film made in 1987 in North Korea set in the feudal times where the oppressed rise up against the corrupt yangban-class rulers, that was banned starting from 1997 as the conditions in the country deteriorated*], and also punished those found to be singing the theme song from the movie, "Arise, Brother".

This is the reality of North Korea, yet some in the international community have a delusional fantasy regarding the country and go into North Korea for visits, as tourists with tour groups, and for various other reasons, but we as free North Koreans and defectors who were born, and grew up and escaped from North Korea, beseech all nations, organizations, and private individuals once again regarding this.

Please face the fact that the North Korean regime is currently holding three American citizens as prisoners for political purposes.

Today, as we celebrate in the United States the 10th anniversary of the passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act, we implore the ruling and minority parties in the South Korean National Assembly to put down party politics and scheming, and pass a North Korean human rights legislation and thereby proclaim and guarantee the basic human rights of the North Korean people.

We free North Koreans will continue to support and encourage the US as it takes the lead in sending the leadership of the North Korean regime to the International Community Court (ICC), and we also implore all those in the world with a conscience and a sense of justice to do so as well.

Please rise up and help in guaranteeing the most basic human right to the North Korean people.

North Korean refugees in China

US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (09.10.2014) – http://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/2014%20annual%20report_0.PDF -

China's treatment of North Korean refugees came under increased scrutiny in 2014 amid growing international concern over human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

A widely publicized United Nations Commission of Inquiry report released in February 2014 condemned China for forcibly repatriating North Korean refugees, stating that such action could be considered aiding and abetting crimes against humanity in the DPRK. Chinese authorities continue to detain and repatriate North Korean refugees to the DPRK despite repatriated persons facing torture, detention, and other inhumane treatment.

The Chinese government maintains that North Koreans who enter China without proper documentation are illegal economic migrants and continues to repatriate them based on a 1961 treaty with the DPRK and 1986 border protocol.

China's repatriation of North Korean refugees contravenes its international obligations under the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. China is also obligated under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment to refrain from repatriating persons if there are "grounds for believing that they would be in danger of being subject to torture."

Unlawful repatriation and worsening border conditions

Throughout the 2014 reporting year, China appeared to strengthen measures to stem the flow of North Korean refugees into China, including increasing border security and detaining and repatriating refugees to the DPRK. Chinese security officials reportedly were provided guidelines in November 2013 directing them to handle refugees "in the same way they deal with major crimes against the state." South Korean and other international media outlets reported on several instances throughout the 2014 reporting year in which Chinese authorities reportedly detained and, in some cases, repatriated North Korean refugees to the DPRK:

- **November 2.** South Korean media, citing a source in China, reported that Chinese authorities detained and later repatriated 17 North Korean refugees in the following three locations: Shenyang municipality, Liaoning province; Yanji city, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin province; and Dandong municipality, Liaoning province.
- **November 7.** South Korean media, citing a South Korean activist, reported that Chinese authorities near Beijing municipality detained and later repatriated five North Korean refugees.
- **November 15.** Chinese authorities reportedly detained between 13 and 15 North Korean refugees, including 2 guides reported to be ethnic Korean Chinese citizens, in Yunnan province. As of November 19, South Korean media reported Chinese authorities had transferred the refugees to Liaoning in preparation for repatriation.
- **June 19.** Chinese authorities reportedly detained 11 North Korean refugees in Jilin province. As of July 3, a refugee advocacy organization reported authorities continued to detain the refugees in the cities of Yanji and Tumen in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin.
- **July 15-17.** Chinese authorities reportedly detained between 20 and 29 North Korean refugees and several others assisting them in Shandong and Yunnan provinces. As of July 24, South Korean media indicated the refugees faced repatriation following their transfer by Chinese authorities to a detention center in Tumen.
- **August 12.** Chinese authorities reportedly detained 11 North Korean refugees in Yunnan along the border with Laos.

China's heightened efforts to stem the flow of refugees came amid increased political instability in the DPRK. Border security reportedly increased sharply following the execution of Jang Sungtaek, a leading figure in the North Korean government and uncle of DPRK paramount leader Kim Jong-un, in December 2013.

Christian missionaries and aid groups also reported over the last year that Chinese authorities have been cracking down on "Christian-run NGOs and businesses" working along the China-North Korea border, in some cases detaining foreign nationals, including citizens from South Korea, Canada, and the United States. International and Chinese Christian communities reportedly have been active in assisting refugees, in some cases running orphanages for refugee children or providing aid to refugees in China.

Heightened security on both sides of the China-North Korea border appears to be limiting the outflow of North Korean refugees into China and neighboring countries. According to the South Korean Ministry of Unification, the number of refugees who reached South Korea in 2013 changed only marginally to 1,516 from 1,509 in 2012. The low number of arrivals continued a trend that has seen a significant drop in the number of refugees entering South Korea since 2009.

North Korea sentences American Matthew Miller to 6 years at hard labor

Washington Post (14.09.2014) http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/north-korea-sentences-american-matthew-miller-to-6-years-of-hard-labor/2014/09/14/aa91ac40-3c05-11e4-b03f-de718edeb92f_story.html - North Korea has sentenced Matthew Miller to six years of hard labor for committing "hostile acts," after the American reportedly ripped up his tourist visa upon arrival at the Pyongyang airport in April.

During a show trial that lasted 90 minutes, the Supreme Court found that Miller — who had no legal representation — had committed "acts hostile to the DPRK while entering . . . under the guise of a tourist," the state-run Korean Central News Agency reported, using the official abbreviation for North Korea.

Analysts say that Pyongyang is using Miller and two other men as bargaining chips in its dispute with Washington over its nuclear program — but that the United States is preoccupied with the turmoil in the Middle East, where Islamic State extremists are not just capturing Westerners but [also beheading them](#).

KCNA photos showed Miller, looking pale and wearing a black turtleneck despite it being summer, in a courtroom decorated with a North Korean flag.

Although the setup resembled a courtroom in democratic countries, very little is known about North Korea's justice system, except that it is neither independent nor transparent.

Before Miller was handcuffed and led from the room, the three regime-appointed judges said they would not consider any appeals, according to reports from Pyongyang.

North Korea has three Americans in custody: Miller; [Jeffrey Fowle](#), a 56-year-old from Ohio who was arrested in May after leaving a Bible in a seamen's club in the northeastern city of Chongjin and who is awaiting trial; and Kenneth Bae, a Korean American missionary who is two years into a 15-year hard-labor sentence for "hostile acts to bring down the government."

In North Korea, where the only religion is devotion to the ruling Kim family, proselytizing is considered treasonous and carries heavy penalties, and ethnic Koreans face harsher treatment than Caucasian or other Americans.

Miller and Fowle are being held separately in hotel rooms in Pyongyang — they apparently have not seen each other — while North Korea has created what amounts to a one-man prison camp for Bae, who is working eight hours a day, six days a week in the fields.

But Kim Jong Un's regime, which is [trying to lure tourists](#) even as it detains the three men, apparently wants to cut a deal with the United States.

It delivered the three Americans to visiting news organizations in Pyongyang this month for [highly orchestrated interviews](#), during which each of the men called on Washington to send an envoy to secure their release.

Other Americans detained in North Korea have been released after visits by former U.S. presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. Pyongyang used the diplomats' arrivals for internal propaganda. Footage of former American leaders in the North Korean capital is presented as a sign of North Korea having the upper hand.

The State Department has offered to send Robert King, its point man on North Korean human rights, to Pyongyang, but nothing has come of it. The regime apparently wants someone with a higher profile.

Even for North Korea, the Miller case is unusual.

Initial reports said that when he arrived April 10 in Pyongyang, he tore up his tourist visa and shouted that he wanted asylum. "He came to the DPRK after choosing it as a shelter," the KCNA reported.

In an interview with CNN this month, during which Miller was monitored by North Korean officials, he said he "prepared to violate the law of DPRK before coming here, and I deliberately committed my crime."

During Sunday's trial, Miller said he tore up his tourist visa at the Pyongyang airport because he had the "wild ambition" of experiencing prison life in North Korea so he could write about human rights in the country, reported the Associated Press, which was allowed to attend the trial.

The asylum stunt was just a trick by Miller to get himself into a jail, the prosecution said. It also said that he falsely claimed to have secret information about the U.S. military in South Korea on his iPad and iPod, the AP reported.

Another photo released by the KCNA showed an iPod and an iPad, with chargers.

Miller's and Fowle's families have been actively lobbying for their release, calling on the U.S. government to do more. Fowle's Russian wife has appealed to Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who has better relations with North Korea, to intervene.

But little is known about Miller, who is in his mid-20s and comes from Bakersfield, Calif.

The State Department has said it will make every effort to get the men released.

Daniel Russel, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, has accused North Korea of using Americans as "pawns."

"This is the way that they play," he told Reuters news agency on Friday. "They use human beings, and in this case American citizens, as pawns. And we find that both objectionable and distressing."

Matthew Todd Miller sentenced to 6 years of hard labor in North Korea

New York Times (14.09.2014) – <http://nyti.ms/2mFwXoZ> - The Supreme Court in North Korea on Sunday sentenced one of the three Americans known to be held in the country to six years of hard labor for committing "hostile acts" against the North.

North Korea said the American, Matthew Todd Miller of Bakersfield, Calif., committed the crime while entering the country [on a tourist visa](#) in April, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

The agency also carried photographs that showed Mr. Miller, who North Korean court records say is 25, in the defendant's seat in the courtroom with his eyes downcast, and flanked by uniformed security officials. The news agency gave no further details of the trial.

But The Associated Press and The Choson Sinbo, a pro-North Korean newspaper in Japan, both of which were allowed to attend the trial, said that Mr. Miller was convicted on spy charges under Article 64 of the country's criminal code.

Mr. Miller was accused of entering North Korea with the "ambition" to deliberately violate North Korean law so he could experience life in a North Korean prison and later become a firsthand witness about the human rights conditions in the North, The Associated Press and The Choson Sinbo reported.

Matthew Todd Miller, an American, after his trial on Sunday at the Supreme Court in Pyongyang. Mr. Miller committed "hostile acts" against North Korea while entering the country in April, the Korean Central News Agency said. Credit Kim Kwang Hyon/Associated Press

International attention to the North's human rights conditions has grown since a United Nations commission of inquiry [issued a report](#) in February documenting what it called "widespread, systematic and gross" violations, including enslavement, torture, rape and executions in the North's prison camps. The United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution in March calling on the Security Council to take action.

The Choson Sinbo, quoting the North Korean court in its ruling on Mr. Miller, wrote, "His was an anti-state crime perpetrated under the protection and encouragement of the current U.S. government, which is intent on isolating and stifling our republic, and must be sternly punished."

North Korea had earlier accused Mr. Miller of unruly behavior, saying that he had torn up his visa at the Pyongyang airport and demanded asylum. In interviews with The Associated Press and CNN, which were conducted while North Korean officials were present, Mr. Miller said he apologized for his crime but did not discuss whether he had asked for asylum.

One of the two other Americans known to be held in North Korea, Kenneth Bae, a missionary, has been [sentenced to 15 years](#) of hard labor on charges of trying to build an underground proselytizing network in a plot to overthrow the North Korean government.

The other, [Jeffrey Fowle](#), 56, is expected to go on trial soon, also on charges of committing hostile acts. Mr. Fowle, an Ohio municipal worker, entered North Korea in April on a tourist visa. He had said in an earlier interview with CNN that he was taken into custody because he had tried to leave the country after having left behind a Bible.

North Korea treats proselytizing by outsiders as an attempt to undermine its government.

In their separate interviews with CNN and The Associated Press this month, the three Americans [beseached](#) Washington to send a high-ranking envoy to negotiate their freedom.

The United States has no diplomatic ties with North Korea and relies on the Swedish Embassy to represent the interests of Americans held in the reclusive country. Washington has repeatedly offered to send its envoy for North Korean human rights issues, Robert R. King, to Pyongyang, the North's capital, to gain the release of the three Americans, but North Korea did not agree to see him, apparently seeking bigger concessions from Washington, like a visit by a more prominent American.

The Choson Sinbo, quoting North Korean court records, reported on Sunday that Mr. Miller was born in California on Aug. 26, 1989, and visited South Korea before entering North Korea through China on April 10.

The newspaper said he had developed a deep hostility against North Korea while reading anti-North Korean publications.

During the trial, the prosecution presented as evidence Mr. Miller's iPad and iPod, his American passport, his torn-up North Korean tourist visa and his notebook.

While under interrogation, he asked to meet Mr. Bae and tried to mislead investigators by saying, untruthfully, that his iPod and iPad contained important data on American military bases in South Korea, The Choson Sinbo quoted the prosecution as saying.

Few outside analysts believed that Mr. Miller would have a fair trial with a proper legal defense. On Sunday, the court said that he had waived his right to hire a lawyer and that it would not permit an appeal.

Senior member of N. Korea secret police met Japan diplomat over abduction issue

Japan Times (02.09.2014) - <http://bit.ly/2nexxX4> - A senior official of North Korea's secret police organ directly linked to leader Kim Jong Un met Japan's top diplomat for Asian affairs in a closed-door meeting last month to discuss the abduction issue, diplomatic sources close to Tokyo and Pyongyang said Tuesday.

The North Korean representative and Junichi Ihara, director general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, apparently held the secret contact around Aug. 21 in Kuala Lumpur, the sources said.

The official belongs to the Ministry of State Security, which is leading North Korea's reinvestigation into the fates of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s following an accord between Tokyo and Pyongyang in May.

North Korea's special committee on the Japanese abductees, launched on July 4, is expected to issue the first report of its probe into the whereabouts of the Japanese abductees including the 12 Japanese nationals on Tokyo's official list of 17 abduction victims.

Japan believes it must get a grasp on the progress made so far by the committee but has found limitations to holding dialogue with the North through the Japanese Embassy in Beijing, the sources said.

For a better picture on the progress over the abduction issue, Ihara, who serves as its chief negotiator in direct talks with North Korea, was sent to represent Japan in the secret meeting late last month.

During their secret contact, the North Korean side did not provide any new information about abductees and called for Tokyo to take steps such as lifting the ban preventing the Mangyongbong-92 passenger-cargo ferry from entering Japanese ports in exchange for the report on the abductees, the sources said.

The two countries failed to fix the exact timing of the report's release, which was initially seen to be in the second week of September, as Ihara could not work out differences with the North Korean representative over the progress made in the new abductee investigation, according to the sources.

Japan plans to urge North Korea to take more steps to shed light into the abduction issue and obtain the report at an early date, but there is a possibility the report may come in the third week of September or later.

Pyongyang's probe into the abductions was launched following an agreement between Japan and North Korea on May 29 under which Japan pledged to partially lift its unilateral sanctions on the North after Pyongyang agreed to form a special committee on the Japanese abductees.

After the committee was set up, Japan lifted some of its sanctions against North Korea.

China investigates Canadian couple for stealing state secrets

USA TODAY (05.08.2014) - Canadian Christians Kevin and Julie Garratt promised the "best coffee on the border" to customers who found their riverside cafe in Dandong, on China's border with reclusive North Korea. Tuesday, Chinese authorities accused the couple of doing far more than serving up espressos, burgers and American breakfasts.

The pair "are suspected of collecting and stealing intelligence materials" related to Chinese military targets and defense research programs, "and engaging in activities that endanger China's national security," said a statement by China's Foreign Ministry Tuesday, Reuters reported.

The State Security Bureau of Dandong, in northeast China's Liaoning province, is investigating the case as it involves the "suspected theft of state secrets," the state news agency Xinhua said.

The definition of "state secret" is kept deliberately vague by the Chinese government, which regularly uses the crime of "leaking state secrets" to silence dissidents. Conviction carries a punishment of five years to life imprisonment and the death penalty in very serious cases.

The couple's son Simeon Garratt, 27, called the investigation "crazy." "It sounds like something somebody made up," Garratt, who runs a software company in Vancouver, Garratt told Agence France-Presse. "It's just so absurd."

Garratt told the BBC his parents had been unreachable since Monday night. "They were going to dinner with a couple of friends, and sometime between dinner and later that night, their phones were turned off and no one has really heard from them," he said.

The probe follows the Canadian government's accusation last week that a Chinese government-sponsored hacker infiltrated Canada's top research and development organization. The Foreign Ministry in Beijing responded by calling Ottawa "irresponsible" for making "groundless allegations" against China.

The Garratts, who have lived in China since 1984, founded Peter's Coffee House in 2008 across the Yalu River from North Korea. "It's a nice place, I always recommend it," said regular visitor Simon Cockerell, managing director of Beijing-based Koryo Tours, which manages trips to North Korea. "If people need a milkshake, burger or apple pie, that's the place to go," he said.

The accusations about stealing military-related material may stem from Dandong's location in a sensitive border area neighboring North Korea. Trade and supplies that pass through Dandong, within sight of the Garratts' cafe, represent the North's major lifeline.

Another factor that may have spurred China's probe, possibly at the behest of North Korea, is the Garratts' Christian activism. Simeon Garratt told AFP his parents were "openly Christian" and had sent goods, including oil and cooking supplies, to North Korea to "help basically what they feel is a group of people that have been severely neglected."

In an audio file posted on the website of the Terra Nova church in Surrey, British Columbia, Kevin Garratt told the congregation last November that God told them to go to Dandong and open a coffee house, AFP reported. "We serve the best coffee on the border... and we do some other things too," he said. "We're trying to reach North Korea with God, with Jesus and practical assistance."

The logo for Peter's Coffee House, displayed on its storefront, website and menu, shows the "t" of Peter in the shape of a crucifix on a backdrop that resembles a stained-glass window. The cafe was frequented by Christians, reported the Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail*.

In recent years, several cafes were opened near the border by people with missionary support and a desire to evangelize to North Koreans, the newspaper said, noting that one of the cafes, Gina's Place Western Restaurant in Yanji, was shut down July 15.

Video footages of 'Open North Korea'

OTV, a video production team of Open North Korea, is producing a series of talk show on North Korean situation, called "North Korea Today."

You can watch the second and special episode of the program:
<http://youtu.be/GQ1TmfUHR4Q>

The topic is North Korean children's rights, especially it is shedding the light on "kkotjebi."

The hosts, Casey and Yeonmi, are talking about how NK street children (kkotjebi) had to get through the great famine in mid-1990s and how terrible their lives were in North Korea and while escaping from the country. You can learn that such a totalitarian and dictatorial regime causes such tragic and indescribable situation even for children.

Can you imagine the feeling that a nine-year-old boy had when he had to witness to a public execution? Let's see such unbelievable stories here on the link: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLKHYjJkuXjjV9yE4nDN4uPNpluBiRFL_6

If you have more interest in NK situation, you can find more video footages here:

<http://youtu.be/zAQ9V-qCL40>
<http://youtu.be/5WBoZXPt2QI>
<http://youtu.be/1uh05ubF56Q>
<http://youtu.be/F91rWdmkQo4>
http://youtu.be/HWbw_YZ92Vs
<http://youtu.be/WVR8MvHqelU>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vR197OTk14>

Just FYI, this is the introduction to Open North Korea: <http://youtu.be/0swdqYWz4sk>

North Korea preparing to indict 2 American tourists

By Eric Talmadge

The Huffington Post (29.06.2014) - http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/29/north-korea-american-tourists_n_5542341.html - North Korea said Monday it is preparing to try two Americans who entered the country as tourists for carrying out what it says were hostile acts against it.

Investigations into Americans Matthew Todd Miller and Jeffrey Edward Fowle concluded that suspicions about their hostile acts have been confirmed by evidence and their testimonies, Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said in a short report.

KCNA said North Korea is making preparations to bring them before a court. It did not specify what the two did that was considered hostile or illegal, or what kind of punishment they might face. It also did not say when the trial would begin.

Though a small number of U.S. citizens visit North Korea each year as tourists, the State Department strongly advises against it.

Fowle arrived in the county on April 29. North Korea's state media said in June that authorities were investigating him for committing acts inconsistent with the purpose of a tourist visit.

Diplomatic sources said Fowle was detained for leaving a Bible in his hotel room. But a spokesman for Fowle's family said the 56-year-old from Miamisburg, Ohio, was not on a mission for his church.

His wife and three children, ages 9, 10, and 12, said they miss him very much and "are anxious for his return home," according to a statement after his detention that was provided by a spokesman for the family.

"It's devastating," Sergei Luzginov, a Fowle family friend who lives in North Port, Florida, said Monday. "We are praying for him. ... He loves his kids and he was very protective of

his family, and it's going to be tough for them to survive without Jeff if he's going to be sentenced for a long time."

Luzginov said he met the Fowle family in 2007 in Lebanon, Ohio's Russian immigrant community. Both Luzginov and Fowle's wife, Tatyana Fowle, 40, are Russian immigrants.

Fowle works in a city streets department.

Luzginov said Fowle's family and friends are trying to be optimistic about the outcome of the case, "but at the same time, you know the track record that's the (North) Korean government."

KCNA said Miller, 24, entered the country April 10 with a tourist visa, but tore it up at the airport and shouted that he wanted to seek asylum. A large number of Western tourists visited Pyongyang in April to run in the annual Pyongyang Marathon or attend related events. Miller came at that time, but tour organizers say he was not planning to join the marathon.

North Korea has also been separately holding Korean-American missionary Kenneth Bae since November 2012. He was convicted by a North Korean court and is serving 15 years of hard labor, also for what the North says were hostile acts against the state.

The latest arrests present a conundrum for Washington, which has no diplomatic ties with the North and no embassy in Pyongyang.

Instead, the Swedish Embassy takes responsibility for U.S. consular affairs in the North. State Department officials say they cannot release details about the cases because they need a privacy waiver to do so.

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the U.S. was aware of the reports the Americans would be tried, but had no independent confirmation. She urged North Korea to release the pair on humanitarian grounds.

"There's no greater priority for us than the welfare and safety of U.S. citizens abroad," Psaki told reporters in Washington.

She said Swedish diplomats visited Fowle on June 20 and Miller most recently on June 21.

Despite the Americans having agreed to a privacy waiver, Psaki said the department would not describe the charges they are facing or provide other information on their cases.

Pyongyang has been strongly pushing tourism lately in an effort to bring in foreign cash. The tourism push has been directed at Chinese, who by far are the most common visitors to the North, but the still small number of Western tourists to North Korea has been growing.

Despite its efforts to bring in more tourists, the North remains highly sensitive to any actions it considers political and is particularly wary of anything it deems to be Christian proselytizing.

After Miller's detention, Washington updated its travel warning to the North to note that over the past 18 months, "North Korea detained several U.S. citizens who were part of organized tours. Do not assume that joining a group tour or use of a tour guide will prevent your arrest or detention by North Korean authorities."

It added that efforts by private tour operators to prevent or resolve past detentions of U.S. citizens have not succeeded in gaining their release.

The Korean Peninsula is still in a technical state of war because the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. About 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea.

Associated Press writers Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Amanda Lee Myers in Cincinnati, Ohio; and Bradley Klapper in Washington contributed to this report. Talmadge is the AP's Pyongyang bureau chief. Follow him on Twitter [attwitter.com/EricTalmadge](https://twitter.com/EricTalmadge).

Historic North Korea trip may be in cards for Abe

Japan Times (04.06.2014) - Prime Minister Shinzo Abe may make a rare visit to North Korea, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said days after Tokyo reached a deal with Pyongyang to reopen the probe into Japanese citizens kidnapped by spies in the 1970s and 1980s.

Such a visit would be controversial, especially in South Korea and the United States, which have led the charge to further isolate the North over its ballistic missile and nuclear programs.

Only Junichiro Koizumi has ever visited the secretive state as a Japanese prime minister, in 2002 and 2004, in a futile effort to normalize bilateral ties. Tokyo and Pyongyang have no formal diplomatic ties, partly because of what Japan says is the North's unwillingness to come clean over the abductions.

But in a breakthrough last week, Pyongyang agreed to investigate the fate of the missing abductees. In exchange, Tokyo will ease some of the unilateral sanctions it has imposed on the isolated state.

Japan agreed to a North Korean request for food and medical supplies during talks last week in Sweden but said the aid would be delivered through nongovernmental or private sector organizations, a government source said on Tuesday.

Pyongyang asked for rice and medicine. Tokyo stopped short of promising direct government aid because of generally anti-North Korean public sentiment over the abductions, the source said.

Nevertheless, Japan's response was aimed at encouraging the unpredictable communist nation to fulfill its promise to reinvestigate the abductions. It said the aid would arrive after Japan detects tangible progress, the source said.

"We must think constantly what would be the most effective response and method in order to bring results," Kishida told a Diet committee Tuesday. "In doing so, we will consider (Abe) making a visit to North Korea."

Kishida noted that the government needs to act swiftly as the families of the kidnap victims are growing older, but he said nothing has been decided about a possible visit to Pyongyang by the prime minister.

Abe stopped short of confirming if he would visit Pyongyang when the negotiations reach a decisive stage. "It is premature at the moment to prejudge how the matter will develop

hereafter," he told reporters when asked if he had such a visit in mind. "We'd like to do our utmost to have the North Korean side deliver on their promise."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said over the weekend that Japan will send officials to North Korea to monitor the probe.

North Korea admitted in 2002 to having abducted 13 Japanese as part of a scheme to train its spies in local customs and language. The admission was made when Koizumi traveled to Pyongyang to hold a historic summit with supreme leader Kim Jong Il in 2002.

Five of the abductees returned home, but Pyongyang said that eight had died, without producing credible evidence, provoking an uproar in Japan, where there are suspicions the actual number of abductees could be much higher than 13.

The issue is a highly emotive one that colors all of Japan's dealings with North Korea. However, the international community, led by the United States, is primarily focused on ridding the unpredictable regime of its ballistic missiles and its nuclear program

The Stockholm accord requires the North to investigate what happened to 12 Japanese nationals whom Tokyo says are among 17 Japanese citizens abducted by North Korean agents. In 2008, Pyongyang promised to investigate the other alleged abductions but later reneged on its pledge.

Following the agreement in Sweden, the North said it would set up a new investigatory team by mid-June. Once the reinvestigation is underway, Japan said it will ease certain sanctions on the North, including travel restrictions.

That may include Tokyo lifting its ban on North Korean vessels from Japanese ports, including the Mangyongbong-92 passenger and cargo ferry. If the ban is lifted, the source suggested North Korean vessels might be free to arrive as early as July.

The Mangyongbong-92 was banned from Japan in the wake of Pyongyang's ballistic missile launches and its first nuclear test, in 2006.

If a North Korean vessel were allowed to enter a Japanese port, Pyongyang could send goods to Japan while officials from Chongryon, the pro-North Korea General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, might be free to travel to the North. However, Japan would maintain strict import and export regulations, and would bolster customs checks to intercept items intended for purposes other than humanitarian aid, the source said.

Transport minister Akihiro Ota said at a news conference Friday that Japan will lift its blockade against the Mangyongbong-92 on humanitarian grounds, to allow it to bring medicine.

In 2004, Japan shipped a portion of the 250,000 tons of food aid it had pledged to North Korea, but the shipments ground to a halt amid the row over Pyongyang's handling of the abductions issue. The shipments remain suspended.

A Foreign Ministry official said if sanctions are eased, once the reinvestigation begins, they would not be eased so much as to allow North Korea substantive economic benefits.

UN renews North Korea human rights investigation

Reuters (28.03.2014) - An international investigation that found suspected crimes against humanity and other abuses in North Korea has been renewed for another year, after a testy exchange between diplomats for the communist nation and the United States.

The U.N.'s 47-nation Human Rights Council on Friday approved the resolution, sponsored by the European Union and Japan, on a vote of 30-6, with 11 abstentions.

Greece's U.N. Ambassador Alexandros Alexandris, speaking for the EU, said nations are "gravely concerned" by suspected crimes discovered so far.

But North Korea's U.N. envoy So Se Pyong said the resolution's sponsors had turned the council "into a stage of political confrontation."

The head of the U.S. delegation, Paula Schriefer, interrupted the North Korean envoy repeatedly to complain he was straying off-topic and inappropriately accusing other nations of crimes.

China, North Korea slam U.N. human rights report as 'divorced from reality'

By Madison Park

CNN (18.03.2014) - China and North Korea have slammed a U.N. report that found crimes against humanity committed in the reclusive Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

At the Monday session of the Human Rights Council, China's representative called a landmark report that was highly critical of North Korea's human rights record "divorced from reality." The diplomat's words indicate that China, a permanent member of the Security Council, may block attempts to refer North Korean issues to the International Criminal Court.

In February, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea published a 400-page report documenting the widespread torture and abuse, and called for urgent action including the referral of its findings to the ICC for possible prosecution.

Pyongyang's representative accused the entire commission of being spurred by "lies" and "hostile forces."

The North Korean official objected and left when the Japanese representative brought in the head of a Japanese association for families, whose loved ones have been reportedly abducted by North Korea, to make a statement.

The almost yearlong investigation by the commission involved more than 320 witnesses in public hearings and private interviews. It listed a litany of abuses including a new mother being forced to drown her newborn, corpses being eaten by dogs and rampant beatings.

"If this report does not give rise to action, it is difficult to imagine what will," said Michael Kirby, the Commission of Inquiry's chair.

Why North Korea probably won't change despite damning U.N. report

'Scourge of human rights violations'

He urged the international community to take action.

"Contending with the scourges of Nazism, apartheid, the Khmer Rouge and other affronts required great courage by great nations and ordinary human beings alike. It is now your solemn duty to address the scourge of human rights violations and crimes against humanity in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."

North Korea is a state, the report concluded, "that does not content itself with ensuring the authoritarian rule of a small group of people, but seeks to dominate every aspect of its citizens' lives and terrorizes them from within."

North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations, So Se Pyong said the United States and "other hostile forces" had fabricated the report in an attempt to "defame the dignified image of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and eventually eliminate its social system."

He charged that the testimonies by defectors and witnesses were fabrications by criminals who fled North Korea.

Everyone in North Korea is guaranteed human rights and freedoms, So maintained. "We defend our social system. It's the cradle of life and happiness."

So said North Korea takes "sincere efforts" to make peace in the Korean peninsula and blamed joint South Korea-U.S. military exercises. On Sunday, [North Korea launched 25 short-range rockets](#) from its east coast into open water, according to South Korea.

So did not address any of the report's points regarding the right to food, prison camps, torture and inhuman treatment, arbitrary detention, discrimination, freedom of expression, the right to life, freedom of movement, and enforced disappearances, including abductions of other citizens.

He blamed the United States saying it should be investigated for "egregious human rights violations."

Kirby said the diplomat's statement was a "diversion" instead of addressing human rights concerns.

China backs North Korea

North Korea found support from its staunchest ally, China, which also disputed the report's findings. Its representative, Chen Chuandong said the report could not be fair and impartial because of "the inability of the Commission to get support and cooperation from the country concerned."

During the 11-month investigation, the commission's request for access into North Korea and information were denied or ignored. China said the inability to get cooperation from North Korea put the credibility of the report in question.

"The commission makes conclusions and recommendations -- many of them are divorced from reality and highly politicized," Chen said.

China also came under human rights criticism by the commission for its policy of repatriating North Koreans. Many of the repatriated North Koreans are sent to prison

camps or even sentenced to death for escaping their country, according to human rights groups. Chen defended China's practice of returning North Koreans.

"The Koreans who enter illegally, they have breached China's laws and border administration," he said. "They enter illegally, they are not refugees."

China and North Korea enjoy a relatively close relationship, stemming from when China joined the Korean War on the northern side against U.N. troops in 1950. China remains North Korea's biggest trading partner and has helped sustain three generations of the Kim regime.

That relationship continues today as China's nuclear representative, Wu Dawei was in Pyongyang on Monday, according to North Korea's state-run media, KCNA.

Information technology and social controls in North Korea

By Scott Thomas Bruce

Abstract

To mitigate the risk of social unrest, the North Korean government has attempted to integrate information technology into its system of social controls. Cell phones and other communications technology are a material incentive for the North Korean elite, as well as a means of controlling information for the population. Penalties for possession of forbidden technology or the misuse of approved technology are harsh. Although the North Korean government seems confident that this social control system will allow the DPRK to take advantage of the positive elements of these technologies while minimizing the social impact on the population, the North Koreans privileged enough to access this technology can communicate in ways that are unprecedented in the history of the state.

Rather than expecting cell phones, the intranet and the Internet to induce a radical change in the North Korean state, policy-makers should adopt a more cautious approach. Overt support for information technology as a tool for circumventing state controls will result in further restrictions. Financially supporting technology in North Korea is very possible, but limited in impact due to the control mechanisms of the state, international sanctions, and the risks associated with investing in North Korea. A modest strategy would be to feed information into the DPRK that will support development that necessitates links to institutions abroad and integration with the region.

See full article at http://keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/2014_aps_scottbruce.pdf

North and South Korea hold first family reunion in three years

CNN (20.02.2014) - Families torn apart for more than 60 years - separated by the Korean War - began to reunite at a mountain resort in North Korea Thursday.

Without any regular forms of communications between the two Koreas, the family members have gone decades without phone calls, letters or emails - unable to know whether their loved ones are alive or dead.

The majority of the participants in South Korea are now in their 80s and 90s. The meetings are likely to be the last time the separated families will have contact with one another.

Thursday's reunion is the first since November 2010. The negotiations leading to the expected reunions have also been painstaking, reflecting the tensions between North and South Korean governments.

Past reunions have been emotional affairs with sobbing relatives clinging to each other and showing each other family photos. This time, the reunion wasn't conducted as freely as North Korean workers stood beside the tables and listened to every conversation. One North Korean resident thanked the Marshall, which is the country's leader, Kim Jong Un for his "blessing" and making the visit possible.

On Thursday, the first of a six-day event, an initial 200 North and South Koreans met.

Among them was Jang Chun, whose brother was 8 years old when he last saw him.

Jang, a North Korean conscript during the Korean War, was taken prisoner by UN forces in South Korea. He has since lived in the South and has been unable to see his family.

But four years ago, he received a letter and several photos of his family in North Korea through the Red Cross. The black-and-white photos showed his brother and a picture of his brother's wedding -- major life milestones Jang had been unable to attend.

"It was shocking," he said. "I didn't even know they were alive although I had hoped they were. After reading the letter, I started crying, I was filled with both joy and sorrow."

Jang clutched the only memorabilia he has of his long-lost family.

"Whenever I miss my family, I read this letter," Jang said.

Jang Chun holds a letter and several photos of his family in North Korea through the Red Cross.

Jang, silver-haired and aging, thought he finally got his chance when he learned he'd be part of a reunion group last September.

The reunion waitlist in Seoul has thousands of names and the lucky ones are selected through a computer-generated lottery.

But Pyongyang canceled the September event with only a few days notice, accusing Seoul of souring ties between the two countries.

"It was like being hit on the back of the head," Jang said about the shock of coming so close, only to have his hopes dashed. "I had to take medication and sedatives."

It may have felt like déjà-vu for Jang earlier this month. After the Korean governments reached an agreement to hold reunions, less than a day later, North Korea said it may back out if South Korea holds its annual military drills with the United States.

South Korea has refused to cancel the annual drills. Pyongyang's attempts to link the reunions to politics were rejected by both Seoul and Washington who see it as a purely humanitarian issue.

Jang finally got his wish, trembling, while he held the hands of his younger brother, Jang Hwa Chun and younger sister Jang Keum Soon, who both live in North Korea.

Jang had brought his son, Jang Ki-woong, who met his North Korean uncle and aunt for the first time. They learned coincidentally that both Jang's son and his younger brother had become locomotive engineers.

Jang's younger sister burst into tears during the conversation.

"Every time a train passes by, I thought (about you)," Jang Keum Soon told her South Korean brother, sobbing. "I missed you, older brother."

Jang Chun has been separated from his family in North Korea for more than 60 years.

Jang's son vowed to his North Korean aunt and uncle: "I will drive a train and come here. I am a locomotive engineer so I will drive the train and promise to come back. Until then, please stay healthy and live a long life."

Although delayed by snow, 82 South Korean participants accompanied by 58 other members arrived Thursday afternoon and were scheduled to have lunch before finally meeting their families.

The reunion ended for the day around 5 p.m.

Trust remains tenuous in the peninsula, separated by the world's most fortified border—the Demilitarized Zone and rocked by North Korea's nuclear test last year.

The rarity of inter-Korea reunions meant that many participants in ill health insisted on going to Mount Kumgang for the event, desperate for a chance to see their relatives. Nineteen of the South Korean participants were in wheelchairs.

Two South Korean participants departed for the reunion venue by ambulance, one of them was receiving an IV drip, refusing to miss the date.

South Korean participants of the reunion were seen bringing gifts for their family members. The most popular gifts for families in North Korea were Choco Pies, a chocolate-covered treat, along with medicine and medical supplies like pain killers, according to YTN, a CNN affiliate in South Korea.

They were greeted with a newly-made stone near their North Korean facilities that read: "Long Live General Kim Jong Un, The Sun of Military First Korea."

China rejects 'unfair criticism' in UN North Korea report

China has rejected what it termed "unreasonable criticism" from the UN over its response to alleged crimes against humanity in North Korea.

BBC (18.02.2014) - A UN report on Monday said that the countries must act on evidence that such crimes were being committed.

A panel of experts said that China might be aiding and abetting the crimes by forcibly repatriating North Koreans.

But a Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman in Beijing said China saw them as illegal migrants.

Spokeswoman Hua Chunying dismissed any suggestion of Chinese complicity in human rights violations in North Korea.

"We totally don't accept this accusation," she said at a regular briefing.

"On the North Korean defector issue, our position is very clear.

"We properly deal with that in accordance with international law and humanitarian principles."

Torture and repression

China is North Korea's only ally and on Monday said that the UN report would "not help resolve the human rights situation".

The panel of experts mandated by the UN's Human Rights Council said North Koreans had suffered "unspeakable atrocities", and that those responsible, including leader Kim Jong-un, must face justice.

The panel heard evidence of torture, political repression and other crimes.

Pyongyang refused to co-operate with the panel's investigation, and said it "categorically and totally rejected" the findings.

The UN commission said Mr Kim had failed to respond to an advance copy of the report, and a letter which warned him he could be held personally responsible for abuses.

Testimony given to the panel from defectors included an account of a woman forced to drown her own baby, children imprisoned from birth and starved, and families tortured for watching a foreign soap opera.

'Entrenched discrimination'

The BBC's Imogen Foulkes in Geneva says the report is one of the most detailed and devastating ever published by the United Nations.

The "gravity, scale and nature" of the allegations "reveal a state that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world", it says.

The report says that in North Korea:

- there is "an almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion"
- "entrenched patterns of discrimination", rooted in the state-assigned class system, affect every part of life
- discrimination against women is "pervasive in all aspects of society"
- the state "has used food as a means of control over the population" and deliberately blocked aid for ideological reasons, causing the deaths of "hundreds of thousands" of people
- "hundreds of thousands of political prisoners" have died in "unspeakable atrocities" in prison camps in the past 50 years
- security forces "systematically employ violence and punishments that amount to gross human rights violations in order to create a climate of fear"

"In many instances, the violations of human rights found by the commission constitute crimes against humanity," the report said.

The panel will formally present its findings next month, when the Human Rights Council will decide which recommendations to support.

World must act on North Korea rights abuse, says UN report

The international community must act on evidence of widespread crimes against humanity in North Korea, say the authors of a long-awaited UN report.

BBC (17.02.2014) - A panel of experts mandated by the UN's Human Rights Council said North Koreans had suffered "unspeakable atrocities", and that those responsible, including leader Kim Jong-un, must face justice.

The panel heard evidence of torture, political repression and other crimes.

Pyongyang refused to co-operate with the report and rejects its conclusions.

Testimony given to the panel from defectors included an account of a woman forced to drown her own baby, children imprisoned from birth and starved, and families tortured for watching a foreign soap opera.

The UN commission said leader Kim Jong-un had failed to respond to an advance copy of the report, and a letter which warned him he could be held personally responsible for abuses.

Michael Kirby, chairman of the independent Commission of Inquiry, said the report "calls for attention from the international community".

"At the end of the Second World War so many people said 'if only we had known... if only we had known the wrongs that were done in the countries of the hostile forces'," he said.

"Well, now the international community does know... There will be no excusing of failure of action because we didn't know."

"Too many times in this building there are reports and no action. Well this is a time for action."

'Unspeakable atrocities'

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- "hundreds of thousands of political prisoners" have died in "unspeakable atrocities" in prison camps in the past 50 years
- security forces "systematically employ violence and punishments that amount to gross human rights violations in order to create a climate of fear"

"In many instances, the violations of human rights found by the commission constitute crimes against humanity," says the report.

"These are not mere excesses of the state; they are essential components of a political system that has moved far from the ideals on which it claims to be founded."

It says the UN "must ensure that those most responsible for the crimes against humanity" are held accountable, through a referral to the International Criminal Court, or a UN tribunal.

The UN should also adopt targeted sanctions "against those who appear to be most responsible for crimes against humanity" and increase its monitoring of rights abuses in North Korea.

North Korea declined to participate in the panel's investigation, and said it "categorically and totally rejects" the findings.

Its response came in a two-page statement sent to Reuters from its diplomatic mission in Geneva.

"The DPRK [North Korea] once again makes it clear that the 'human rights violations' mentioned in the so-called 'report' do not exist in our country."

Mr Kirby said there was "a very good way to answer the many charges and complaints - and that is to allow the door to be opened" to the international community so they could see the situation for themselves.

Although this information has been in the public domain for years, the panel's inquiry is the highest-profile international attempt to investigate the claims.

Jared Genser, an international human rights lawyer who has campaigned to stop crimes against humanity in North Korea, said the report "puts a huge burden on the United Nations to then take the next set of steps".

"And so the real question now is, what next?"

China, North Korea's only ally, would be likely to block any attempt to refer the North to the International Criminal Court.

And an ad-hoc tribunal, like those set up for Rwanda, Sierra Leone or Cambodia, would appear unlikely without co-operation from elements within the country.

The panel will formally present its findings next month, when the Human Rights Council will decide which recommendations to support.

UN Commission documents wide-ranging and ongoing crimes against humanity, urges referral to ICC

OHCHR (17.02.2014) – A wide array of crimes against humanity, arising from “policies established at the highest level of State,” have been committed and continue to take place in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, according to a UN report released Monday, which also calls for urgent action by the international community to address the human rights situation in the country, including referral to the International Criminal Court.

In a 400-page set of linked reports and supporting documents, based on first-hand testimony from victims and witnesses, the UN Commission of Inquiry on human rights in the DPRK has documented in great detail the “unspeakable atrocities” committed in the country.

“The gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world,” the Commission -- established by the Human Rights Council in March 2013 -- says in a report that is unprecedented in scope.

“These crimes against humanity entail extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation,” the report says, adding that “Crimes against humanity are ongoing in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea because the policies, institutions and patterns of impunity that lie at their heart remain in place.”

The second more detailed section of the report cites evidence provided by individual victims and witnesses, including the harrowing treatment meted out to political prisoners, some of whom said they would catch snakes and mice to feed malnourished babies. Others told of watching family members being murdered in prison camps, and of defenceless inmates being used for martial arts practice.

“The fact that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea...has for decades pursued policies involving crimes that shock the conscience of humanity raises questions about the inadequacy of the response of the international community,” the report stated. “The international community must accept its responsibility to protect the people of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea from crimes against humanity, because the Government of the DPRK has manifestly failed to do so.”

The Commission found that the DPRK “displays many attributes of a totalitarian State.”

“There is an almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, information and association,” the report says, adding that propaganda is used by the State to manufacture absolute obedience to the Supreme Leader and to incite nationalistic hatred towards some other States and their nationals.

State surveillance permeates private lives and virtually no expression critical of the political system goes undetected – or unpunished.

"The key to the political system is the vast political and security apparatus that strategically uses surveillance, coercion, fear and punishment to preclude the expression of any dissent. Public executions and enforced disappearance to political prison camps serve as the ultimate means to terrorise the population into submission," the report states.

"The unspeakable atrocities that are being committed against inmates of the *kwanliso* political prison camps resemble the horrors of camps that totalitarian States established during the twentieth century. The institutions and officials involved are not held accountable. Impunity reigns."

It is estimated that between 80,000 and 120,000 political prisoners are currently detained in four large political prison camps, where deliberate starvation has been used as a means of control and punishment. Gross violations are also being committed in the ordinary prison system, according to the Commission's findings.

The report noted that the DPRK consists of a rigidly stratified society with entrenched patterns of discrimination. Discrimination is rooted in the *songbun* system, which classifies people on the basis of State-assigned social class and birth, and also includes consideration of political opinions and religion, and determines where they live, work, study and even whom they may marry.

Violations of the freedom of movement and residence are also heavily driven by discrimination based on *songbun*. Those considered politically loyal to the leadership can live and work in favourable locations, such as Pyongyang. Others are relegated to a lower status. For example, the distribution of food has prioritised those deemed useful to the survival of the current political system at the expense of others who are "expendable."

"Confiscation and dispossession of food from those in need, and the provision of food to other groups, follow this logic," the report notes, adding that "the State has consistently failed in its obligation to use the maximum of its available resources to feed those who are hungry."

Military spending – predominantly on hardware and the development of weapons systems and the nuclear programme – has always been prioritised, even during periods of mass starvation, the report says. The State also maintains a system of inefficient economic production and discriminatory resource allocation that inevitably produces more avoidable starvation among its citizens.

Violations of the rights to food and to freedom of movement have resulted in women and girls becoming vulnerable to trafficking and forced sex work outside the DPRK. Many take the risk of fleeing, mainly to China, despite the high chance that they will be apprehended and forcibly repatriated, then subjected to persecution, torture, prolonged arbitrary detention and, in some cases sexual violence. "Repatriated women who are pregnant are regularly subjected to forced abortions, and babies born to repatriated women are often killed," the report states.

The Commission urged all States to respect the principle of *non-refoulement* (i.e. not to forcibly return refugees to their home country) and to adopt a victim-centric and human rights-based approach to trafficking, including by providing victims with the right to stay in the country and access to legal protection and basic services.

"Crimes against humanity have been, and are being, committed against starving populations. These crimes are sourced in decisions and policies violating the universal human right to food. They were taken for purposes of sustaining the present political system, in full awareness that they would exacerbate starvation and contribute to related deaths."

The Commission also found that, since 1950, the "State's violence has been externalized through State-sponsored abductions and enforced disappearances of people from other nations. These international enforced disappearances are unique in their intensity, scale and nature."

While the Government did not respond to the Commission's requests for access to DPRK and for information, the Commission obtained first-hand testimony through public hearings with about 80 witnesses in Seoul, Tokyo, London and Washington D.C., and more than 240 confidential interviews with victims and other witnesses, including in Bangkok. Eighty formal submissions were also received from different entities.

The report includes a letter sent by the Commissioners to the Supreme Leader, Kim Jong-un, containing a summary of their most serious findings, in particular the fact that "in many instances" the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations "entail crimes against humanity," and drawing attention to the principles of command and superior responsibility under international criminal law according to which military commanders and civilian superiors can incur personal criminal responsibility for failing to prevent and repress crimes against humanity committed by persons under their effective control.

In the letter to Kim Jong-un, the Commissioners stated that it would recommend referral of the situation in the DPRK to the International Criminal Court "to render accountable all those, including possibly yourself, who may be responsible for the crimes against humanity referred to in this letter and in the Commission's report."

Among wide-ranging recommendations to the DPRK, to China and other States, and to the international community, the Commission calls on the Security Council to adopt targeted sanctions against those who appear to be most responsible for crimes against humanity, stressing that sanctions should not be targeted against the population or the economy as a whole.

DPRK restaurant in Amsterdam reopened under new ownership

North Korea Leadership Watch (21.01.2014) - <http://bit.ly/1MEtmdj> - The DPRK's only restaurant in Western Europe was rebooted and has reopened over a year after its first location closed. The Haedanghwa Korean Restaurant opened in the Rechtshuis in Watergraafsmeer in eastern Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in late December 2013 with nine employees from the DPRK (five waitresses, three cooks and a manager). Haedanghwa offers a la carte and set menus of Korean cuisine, as well as a music revue by the wait staff. This is the Haedanghwa Group's second attempt at opening a restaurant in Holland.

In January 2012 Haedanghwa opened the Pyongyang Amsterdam Restaurant in Osdorp in western Amsterdam. It was owned and operated as a joint venture between the Haedanghwa Group and two Dutch nationals. The restaurant closed seven months after it opened following a disagreement between the DPRK and Dutch co-owners and accusations that restaurant workers were being exploited and not properly compensated. A year after the Pyongyang Amsterdam Restaurant shuttered, the Haedanghwa Group found a new partner, South Korean national John Kim, and moved to a larger location southeast of Amsterdam's city centre. Kim told Het Parool that "I want to show that the Korean people has more to offer than K-pop only. We are the counterpart of Gangnam

Style" and that "I take good care of my staff, ethics is of paramount importance to me. Because I speak the language, we understand each other well. They see me as an older brother."

There are two DPRK-owned eateries currently operating in central and east European countries, and at least three restaurants have opened and closed in other European countries since 2000. The Haedanghwa Group, a large corporation owned by several DPRK elites (including late leader Kim Jong Il's sister Kim Kyong Hui), already operates two restaurants in China, as well as a restaurant and shopping center in Pyongyang.
