



HRNK Submission
Universal Periodic Review of the DPRK
2014-2018

Focus

In this submission, HRNK focuses its attention on the DPRK's—

1. System of political imprisonment, wherein a multitude of human rights violations are evidenced, including enforced disappearance, amounting to crimes against humanity.
2. Restrictions on freedom of movement, affecting women in particular, as evidenced in sexual violence, human trafficking, and arbitrary detention.
3. Policy of social and political discrimination, known as “songbun,” which impacts the economic and social rights of North Korea’s citizens, and in particular affects the health care of vulnerable groups, including prisoners.

Findings

Political Prisons and Crimes against Humanity

4. In February 2014, **the United Nations Commission of Inquiry (UN COI)** found the DPRK’s political prison camps to be places where the most egregious crimes against humanity are being committed, including extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape and other grave sexual violence, and persecution on political, religious and gender grounds.¹ Such crimes were “found by the UN COI to rise to the level of crimes against humanity in both the *kwan-li-so* and *kyo-hwa-so* [labor re-education] prisons,” and “lead to the death of prisoners in many cases.”² The UN COI called on the DPRK to acknowledge the existence of the political prison camps and provide its citizens with basic human rights.³
5. The DPRK has yet to acknowledge these camps or support any recommendation concerning detention from a member state during its UPRs.
6. Yet, satellite imagery analysis and former prisoner testimony of the situation inside political prisons (*kwan-li-so*) and re-education through labor camps (*kyo-hwa-so*) continue to yield new information on the DPRK practice of imprisoning people it deems

¹ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry*, para. 1033.

² Robert Collins and Amanda Mortwedt Oh, “From Cradle to Grave: The Path of North Korea’s Innocents,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2017) https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Collins_Cradle_to_Grave_WEB_FINALFINAL.pdf.

³ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry*, para. 1220(b).



anti-state, anti-nation, or anti-regime.⁴ HRNK has found over twenty potential re-education through labor camps inside the DPRK, recently documented in the October 2017 report *The Parallel Gulag*.⁵ These camps are in addition to its six operational political prison camps (*kwan-li-so*)—Nos. 14, 15, 16, 18, 25, and Choma-bong Restricted Area (Camp No. 22 appears no longer to be operational; there is debate as to whether Camp 18 is currently operational).⁶

7. Since the 2014 UN COI report, there have been continued reports of **ill-treatment and torture of prisoners**, including women who have attempted to flee the country, and **prisoner disappearances**. Satellite imagery has shown the **expansion of DPRK detention facilities** in some cases, as well as **increased security measures** inside these facilities.
8. Based on witness testimony, satellite imagery analysis and research from different sources and countries, HRNK found that:
 - a. Detention facilities, including Camp 25 in Chongjin, North Hamgyong Province, Camp 14 in Kaechon, South Pyongan Province, and Camp No. 12, Jongo-ri have expanded. Although political prison camps in border areas with China have been closed, thousands have reportedly disappeared in the process of transferring prisoners to inland facilities, amounting to **enforced disappearance**.
 - b. **A new political prison camp, “Choma-bong Restricted Area,” was built** between 2008 and 2009, and a high-security area was constructed between 2013 and 2014, coinciding with the execution of Jang Sung-taek and the reported imprisonment of associated colleagues and family members. HRNK imagery analysis confirms this camp is operational and has distinguishing features of a political prison camp.⁷
 - c. There is at least one instance of prison facility expansion directly tied to detaining additional female victims. HRNK found that there is a **disproportionate repression of women**, especially those who cross the border without permission and are forcibly repatriated from China. Out of 1,000 women prisoners at Camp

⁴ HRNK has published fifteen prison camp reports over the last five years as part of an ongoing effort to monitor the prison camps. These reports are available at <https://www.hrnk.org/publications/hrnk-publications.php?page=3>.

⁵ David Hawk with Amanda Mortwedt Oh, “The Parallel Gulag: North Korea’s ‘An-jeon-bu’ Prison Camps, (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2017), https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_The_Parallel_Gulag_Web.pdf.

⁶ This information comes from open source documents and commercial satellite imagery.

⁷ Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Andy Dinville, and Mike Eley, “North Korea: Ch’oma-bong Restricted Area,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2016), https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/ASA_HRNK_Chmbg_201603_FINAL.pdf.



No. 12 (a re-education forced labor camp) in Jonggo-ri, North Hamgyong, some 800 women and girls were forcibly returned from China and detained. Many had crossed the border to try to help their families but faced disproportionate repression, including **refoulement and human trafficking**, and **subsequent torture and imprisonment** inside Camp No. 12.⁸

- d. Camp 22 in Hoeryong, North Hamgyong ceased to function as a political prison camp. In the process of transferring the prisoners to other detention facilities, several thousand went unaccounted for.⁹ The precipitous decline in the number of persons detained at Camp No. 22 in 2012 requires an explanation and amounts to **enforced disappearance**.¹⁰
- e. A “revolutionizing processing zone,”¹¹ referred to as “Sorimchon” by former prisoners in Camp 15 (*kwan-li-so*) was razed between 2013 and 2014.¹² Several thousand people are unaccounted for or “doubly disappeared.” As such, the DPRK continues to carry out **enforced disappearances** based on perceived political “crimes” against the Kim regime. Based on former prisoner Jung Gwang-il’s memory, the names and additional identifying information of 181 persons missing from Sorimchon are now documented.¹³ See Annex.
- f. Several prisons **increased internal security measures** as determined by commercial satellite imagery analysis. These prisons include Choma-bong Restricted Area and Camp 25.

⁸ David Hawk, “North Korea’s Hidden Gulag: Interpreting Reports of Changes in the Prison Camps,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2013),

[https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/NKHiddenGulag_DavidHawk\(2\).pdf](https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/NKHiddenGulag_DavidHawk(2).pdf); see also

https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/ASA_HRNK_Camp12_201608_v10_LR.pdf.

⁹ David Hawk, “North Korea’s Hidden Gulag: Interpreting Reports of Changes in the Prison Camps,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2013),

[https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/NKHiddenGulag_DavidHawk\(2\).pdf](https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/NKHiddenGulag_DavidHawk(2).pdf).

¹⁰ *Id.* at 22.

¹¹ “Only two of the prison camps operating at the turn of the millennium—Camps No. 15 and 18—had “revolutionizing zones” or “cleared” areas from which, or in which, prisoners were returned to North Korean society. The other *kwan-li-so* prison camps incarcerated citizens deemed irremediably counter-revolutionary and consigned to forced labor until death.” *Id.* at 12, footnote 5.

¹² Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Andy Dinville, and Mike Eley, “Imagery Analysis of Camp 15 “Yodök:” Closure of the “Revolutionizing Zone,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2015),

https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/ASA_HRNK_Camp15_RevZone_HQ.pdf.

¹³ David Hawk, “The Hidden Gulag IV: Gender Repression and Prisoner Disappearances,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2015),

https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_HiddenGulag4_FINAL.pdf.



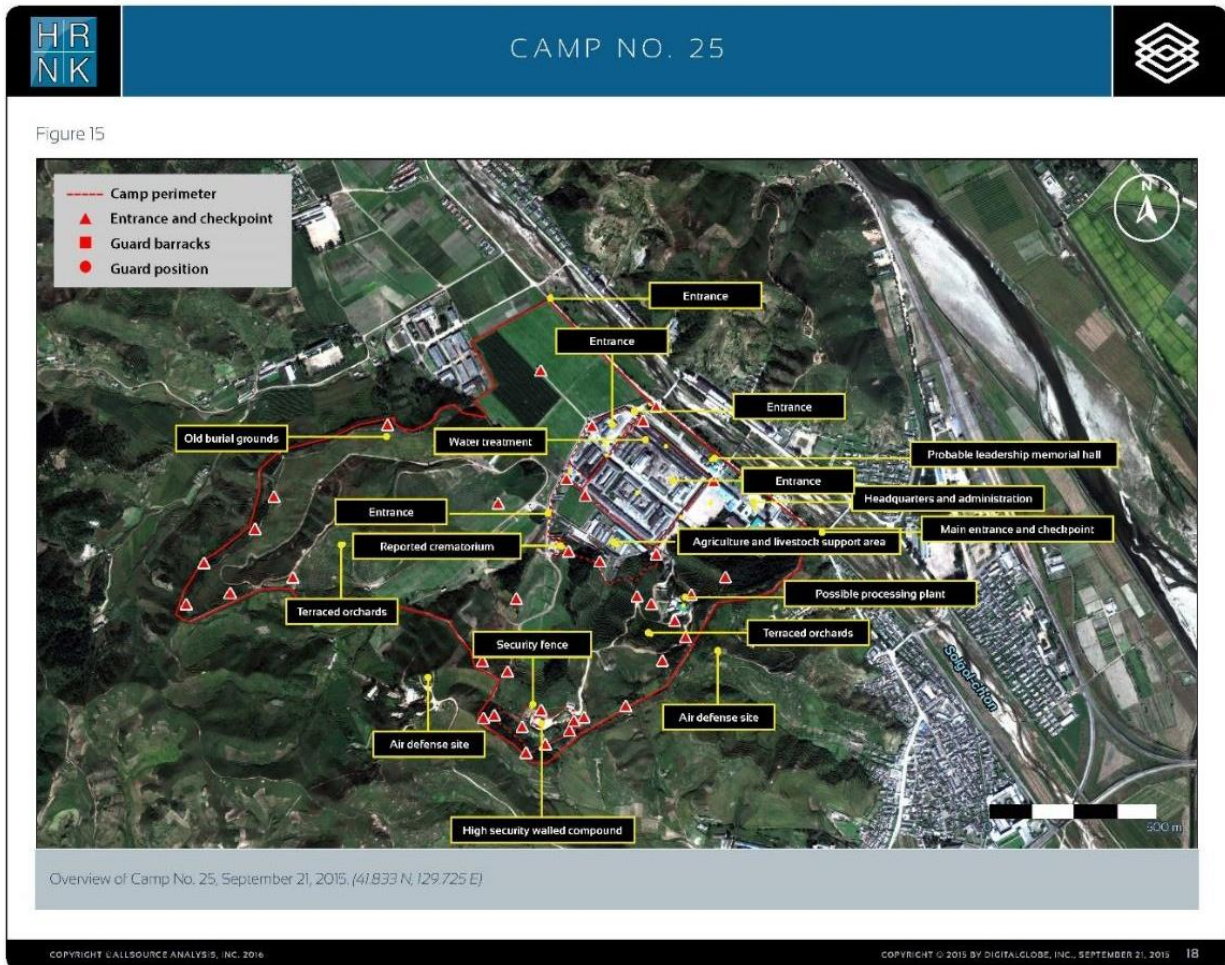
- i. **Choma-bong Restricted Area.** A new political prison camp was created between 2006 and 2007 near Camps No. 14 and No. 18.¹⁴ Between October 2013 and April 2014, two high-security internal compounds and double-fenced perimeters were built. The construction of these internal high-security perimeters coincides with the escalation of Chairman Kim Jong-un’s political purges of associates of his uncle, Jang Sung-taek, prior to and after his execution in December 2013.¹⁵
- ii. Although the length of the security fence is only 3 kilometers, almost seven times shorter than the 20.4 kilometer outer camp perimeter, the internal high security area is protected by nine guard positions, two more than those lined up along the outer camp perimeter.



¹⁴ Analysts refer to this camp as “Ch’oma-bong,” but may also call it “Tonglim-ri.”

¹⁵ Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Andy Dinville, and Mike Eley, “North Korea: Ch’oma-bong Restricted Area,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2016), https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/ASA_HRNK_Chmbg_201603_FINAL.pdf.

- iii. **Camp 25, Chongjin/Susong.** Camp 25’s perimeter was dramatically expanded between 2009 and 2010. A high-security double-walled compound was built in 2010, and 17 additional guard positions were erected, predominately along the new perimeter line.¹⁶ Camp 25 also has a reported crematorium on site.¹⁷



¹⁶ Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Andy Dinville, and Mike Eley, “North Korea Camp No. 25 Update 2,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2016), 3-4, <https://www.hrnk.org/publications/hrnk-publications.php>.

¹⁷ Do Kyung-Ok et al., *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2015* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2015), 122, http://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/pub/pub_04_01.jsp.



- iv. In August 2018, HRNK released commercial imagery showing political prisoners tending to the field of Camp 25 on November 6, 2017, citing the use of **forced labor (or modern-day slavery)** by the DPRK.
- v. The September 19, 2018 report by the **Special Rapporteur on human rights situation in the DPRK** to the 73rd session of the UNGA noted HRNK's report as information on cases of **ill-treatment of prisoners**.¹⁸

¹⁸ A/73/45466, para. 24, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/KP/A_73_45466.pdf.



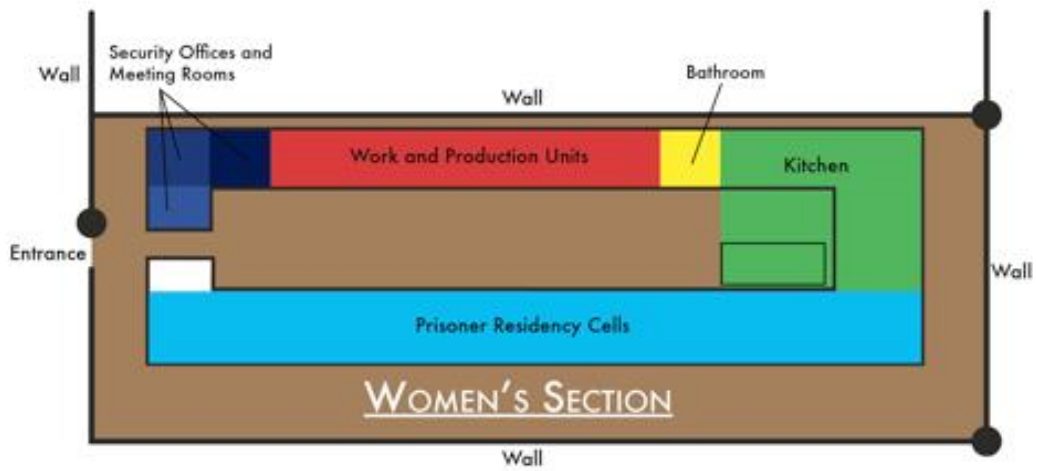
- g. **Camp No. 12.** Since 2008, a new women’s section has been added to Camp No. 12, Jongo-ri. The new women’s section holds more than 1,000 prisoners.¹⁹
- h. HRNK’s “Hidden Gulag IV” report documents the particular vulnerabilities of DPRK women incarcerated in a network of “political prison camps” (*kwan-li-so*) and “labor camps” (*kyo-hwa-so*). Increasingly, these facilities house women who have attempted to flee the country, and here, **rates of mortality, malnutrition, forced labor, and exploitation are high.**²⁰
- i. HRNK interviewed former prisoners finding evidence that the women’s section was built to imprison the influx of women arrested and forcibly repatriated by China. HRNK was able to confirm the presence of the new construction through satellite imagery acquisition and analysis.

¹⁹ HRNK has also published two imagery reports on the DPRK’s labor camp, which also holds political prisoners, known as *Kyo-hwa-so* No. 12 Jongo-ri.

²⁰ David Hawk, “The Hidden Gulag IV: Gender Repression and Prisoner Disappearances,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2015), https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_HiddenGulag4_FINAL.pdf.



Composite based on hand-drawn sketches by the former prisoners:



Key

● : Guard Tower



Recommendations to the DPRK

Regarding Political Prisoners and Detention Facilities

9. **Accede to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.**
 - a. DPRK supported recommendations made by Kazakhstan (124.1), Bolivia (124.2), Chad (124.3), Estonia (124.17), and Singapore (124.18) in its 2nd cycle to join new international human rights treaties.
10. **Prohibit the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment as punishment for detainees and ratify CAT and its Optional Protocol.**
 - a. DPRK supported the recommendation by Argentina in its 2nd cycle to “Make efforts to achieve respect for all fundamental rights and freedoms of the entire population, especially women and children, and take all necessary measures to ensure the fight against impunity for the perpetrators of crimes, acts of violence and all human rights violations”(124.117).
 - b. Recommendations to accede to the CAT: 124.4-124.11.
11. **Account for all missing persons, prisoners, and deceased prisoners, and provide their names and locations to their families and their respective states.**
 - a. DPRK supported the recommendation by the Russian Federation in its 2nd cycle to “Create a national mechanism for the review of complaints of the populations concerning human rights violations” (124.116).
12. **Release the locations of detention facilities and implicitly acknowledge the existence of political prison camps (*kwan-li-so*) in the DPRK to the UN OHCHR Office in Seoul.**
 - a. DPRK supported recommendations from Tunisia (124.61), Poland (124.65), and Argentina (124.66) to cooperate with the UN.
 - b. Partially accepted: Sierra Leone (124.67)
13. **Dismantle all political prison camps and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience, including relatives being held on the basis of "guilt-by-association."**



14. Institute protections against arbitrary detention that guarantee due process and fair trial rights.

- a. DPRK supported the recommendation by Israel in its 2nd cycle to “Enshrine fully the right to fair trial and due process guarantees.” (124.114).
- b. Partially accepted: Australia (124.115).

15. Take immediate action to cease the practice of forced labor, including in detention facilities.

- a. DPRK supported the recommendation from Nicaragua in its 2nd cycle to “Take practical measures to provide safer working conditions, suitable for its citizens” (124.138).

16. Educate and train officials, including prison guards and political officers, on international human rights standards and instruments, and increase the number of women guards.

- a. DPRK supported 2nd cycle recommendations on human rights education from Sudan (124.41) and Bolivia (124.43).

Restrictions on Freedom of Movement

17. The DPRK’s restrictions on freedom of movement, in particular the denial to its citizens of the right to leave the country, have most severely affected women and children.

- a. The vast majority of those seeking to leave are women, who often become victims of **sexual trafficking, violence, and slavery, as well as arbitrary detention and torture** in DPRK detention facilities.
- b. Since the succession of Kim Jong-un, border security on the DPRK side has tightened considerably, and refugee flows to South Korea dropped to an average of 1,200 per year. The impact on women is significant. Seventy-two percent of the 31,500 North Koreans who fled to Korea from 2000 to mid-2018 are female.²¹
- c. In an interview conducted by HRNK researchers, a North Korean arrival in China aptly said, “*Since 2013, Kim Jong-un has implemented new policies and [border*

²¹ Ministry of Unification, “Policy on North Korean Defectors,” http://www.unikorea.go.kr/eng_unikorea/relations/statistics/defectors/. [Accessed September 5, 2018].



areas] are subject to special inspection. That is, he authorized the security department to arrest all North Koreans who try to go to China or South Korea. Moreover, he promised guards to enroll them as a member of the Korean Workers' Party if they arrest three or more North Korean defectors, so they are patrolling day and night."²²

- d. HRNK interviewed former female prisoners from Camp No. 12, Jongo-ri (see its report "Hidden Gulag IV").²³ Out of 1,000 women prisoners at Camp No. 12 in Jongo-ri, North Hamgyong Province, some 800 were repatriated from China and imprisoned in this camp, where they have been forced to undergo **hard labor and ideological training**.
- e. North Korean women who remain in China without travel authorization or valid personal identification often survive through marriage to, or informal union with, a Chinese man. With the rise in the proportion of North Korean women 'married' to Chinese men has come a corresponding rise in the number of children born to North Korean women and Chinese men. When women are deported to the DPRK, they are often separated from their children, violating **the right to family**. "Family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State."²⁴
- f. A North Korean escapee living in China said, "*I have thought about going to South Korea, but I was so afraid of being arrested. If arrested, I would be deported to North Korea and be detained in prison for my whole life. I had a friend who was deported to North Korea twice and came back to China again. She was arrested and deported in the last year. I heard she was shot to death after being deported this time.*"²⁵

Recommendations to the DPRK

Regarding Freedom of Movement and Associated Rights Violations

²² From W. Courtland Robinson et al. "Lost Generation: A Rights-Based Analysis of the Status of North Korean Children," Forthcoming in 2018 from the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, Washington, DC.

²³ David Hawk, "The Hidden Gulag IV: Gender Repression and Prisoner Disappearances," (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2015), https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/Hawk_HiddenGulag4_FINAL.pdf.

²⁴ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 23, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>.

²⁵ Robinson, "Lost Generation."



18. Acknowledge the right of all North Korean citizens to leave and return to their country without penalty, to freely move around within their own country and be able freely to choose their place of residence and employment.

- a. Supported: “That steps be taken to further facilitate the easy travel of its citizens abroad,” India (124.125)

19. Release from all detention facilities those who exercised their right to leave the DPRK and those who were forcibly repatriated, and waive all penalties against them.

- a. Supported: “Continue building the social structure of the country, focusing on the promotion and protection of the family as the vital unit of the society,” Uganda (124.121)

Social Discrimination (Songbun)

20. The DPRK’s policy of social and political discrimination, known as “songbun,” severely limits the right to health and life for vulnerable groups, particularly prisoners.²⁶ The UN COI found that the *songbun* social classification system has resulted in “discrimination” and “unequal access to basic human rights including food, education, health care and the right to work.” Further, the system “leads to structural discrimination whereby generations become locked into disadvantage and social mobility is not possible.” The discrimination has created many vulnerable groups.²⁷

- a. **Right to health.** The Kim Jong-un era has emphasized modernizing secondary and tertiary hospitals, even launching telemedicine initiatives, but priority has gone to urban populations and the political elite, particularly residents of Pyongyang.²⁸ The result has been rising inequalities and continued rural disadvantage and poverty as evidenced by persistent malnourishment and illness. Medicines, if available at all, must be purchased either in hospitals, markets, or across the border in China.

²⁶ See HRNK’s report on *songbun* by Robert Collins, “Marked for Life: Songbun, North Korea’s Social Classification System,” (Washington, DC: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2012) https://www.hrnk.org/uploads/pdfs/HRNK_Songbun_Web.pdf.

²⁷ *Id.* at para. 330.

²⁸ Heeyoung Shin, Haewon Lee, Kyeongsoo An and Jieun Jeon. (2016). “North Korea’s Trends on Healthcare System in the Kim Jong Un Era: Concentrated on Healthcare Delivery and Organizational System.” *Journal of peace and unification studies*, 8(2): 181-211.



- i. As one escapee interviewed in South Korea in 2016 said, “*Father became sick and there [in the DPRK] you have to buy medicine from the hospitals. But we couldn’t buy it from the hospital, so we bought from other people, through markets or some kind of ‘other route’ [meaning China]; that cost a lot of money, and it began to become hard to live.*”
- b. **Vulnerable groups: prisoners.** In the aftermath of Typhoon Lionrock in August-September 2016, Camp No. 12, Jongo-ri became flooded, as confirmed by satellite imagery. On September 16, 2016, HRNK published *North Korea: Flooding at Kyo-hwa-so No. 12, Jongo-ri*, highlighting the vulnerability of prisoners in the flooded camp and called upon the DPRK to allow humanitarian aid to be delivered to those inside as well as access for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
 - i. In September 2016, the **Special Rapporteur on human rights in the DPRK**, Tomás Ojea Quintana supported this appeal and stated: “I call on the Government of North Korea to ensure full access to those in need, including persons in detentions facilities and prisons, by humanitarian workers.” His September 2018 report to the UNGA repeated this call.²⁹
 - ii. **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** cited HRNK’s report in his August 2017 report on the situation of human rights in North Korea.³⁰

Recommendations to the DPRK

Regarding the Policy of Songbun, Contributing to Violations of the Right to Health and Impacting Vulnerable Groups

21. End state-sponsored discrimination based on the "songbun" system.

- a. Supported: Indonesia (124.68), Spain (124.141), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (124.152)

22. Revise the Ten Principles of Monolithic Ideology to conform to international human rights laws acceded to by the DPRK.

- a. Supported: “Continue its efforts to fulfil the economic, social and cultural rights of all,” Bangladesh (124.151).

²⁹ A/73/45466, para. 30, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/KP/A_73_45466.pdf.

³⁰ A/72/279, August 3, 2017, <http://undocs.org/A/72/279>.



23. Commit greater resources to rebuilding the public health and primary healthcare infrastructure (including the health workforce) throughout the country.

- a. Supported: “Take immediate steps to allocate proper budgetary resources to ensure protection of the rights to food, health, water and sanitation,” Ukraine (124.147). *See also* Cuba (124.148), Namibia (124.161), India (124.162), Belarus (124.164)
- b. *See also* 124.166-124.172. E.g. “Provide the necessary resources to the health system, in order to strengthen it, and especially in order to lower child and maternal mortality rates,” Uruguay (124.170).

24. Increase investment in agricultural development and reforms, giving priority to marginalized populations, including the poor, people living with disabilities, people in detention, mothers, children (including children living outside of family care) and older adults.

- a. Supported: “Continue with the cooperation programs, in line with the World Food Programme, with priority given to the most vulnerable groups, such as elderly persons, women and children, and ensure they are implemented transparently,” Uruguay (124.55).

25. Grant access to the International Committee of the Red Cross and UN humanitarian agencies to provide humanitarian assistance to the DPRK’s most vulnerable groups, including prisoners.

- a. DPRK supported recommendations from Ethiopia (124.45) and New Zealand (124.46) in its 2nd cycle to work with humanitarian organizations to deliver aid to the most vulnerable. Ethiopia recommended the DPRK “Take measures to ensure international humanitarian aid reaches the most vulnerable and needy.”

ANNEX

“181 Prisoners in the Sorimchon. *Kwan-li-so* No. 15, Yodok”





THE COMMITTEE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH KOREA
북한인권위원회

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