

# HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

---

**This presentation is based on information from various sources - personal experiences, interviews of the defectors conducted/published and from the UN reports.**

**KOREA CENTER FOR UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY (KOCUN),  
In collaboration with 9 NGOs**



# Situation in the DPRK:

## Issue 1. **Right to Food**

### Implementation of previous recommendation

17 recommendations: to ensure food security and equal distribution of food, free of discrimination including to the most vulnerable groups, in cooperation with international organizations.

### New developments

- The DPRK has closed its borders and refused international assistance during COVID-19. People in rural areas outside of Pyongyang faced severe food shortages and logistical difficulties, resulting in many deaths.

# Recommendations:

## Issue 1. **Right to Food**

We recommend that the DPRK government:

- Ensure that all people, in particular children, women, people with disabilities and older persons, receive adequate food necessary for survival, without discrimination based on region, occupation, or institution, in cooperation with international community.

# Situation in the DPRK:

## Issue 2. Right to Health

### Implementation of previous recommendations

23 recommendations in the following three categories:

- Improvement of the national health system and implementation:
  - modernization of national health system, improvement of public health service, universal health care, redirect its public spending, increase budget allocation, effective implementation of its national strategy;
  
- Attention on specific groups and reduction of inequalities:
  - child mortality and malnutrition, priorities to vulnerable groups, equal health care for persons with disabilities, equal access in rural areas;
  
- Cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations

# Situation in the DPRK

## Issue 2. Right to Health

### New developments

- Despite the Constitutional (art. 56) guarantees for “free medical treatment, household doctor system and preventive medicine“, the system has collapsed completely.
- In October 2021, the Emergency Epidemic Prevention Law was enacted. Only citizens of the capital city of Pyongyang were vaccinated three times, while people in rural areas did not receive even the first vaccination, resulting in a spate of deaths, especially among vulnerable populations.
- Despite the People's Health Law stipulates preventive medical services free of charge (article 10), no one has actually received a free comprehensive health checkup due to the lack of a policy and budget.
- Unsafe drinking water, due to lack of purification chemicals, led to increased outbreaks of infectious diseases.

# Recommendations

## Issue 2. Right to Health

We recommend that the DPRK government:

- Ensure that all health clinics are provided with the necessary medical equipment.
- Ensure that doctors are paid an adequate monthly salary to live on.
- Provide free, comprehensive health check-ups for all citizens every two years.
- Ensure access to safe drinking water for all.
- Accept international cooperation and assistance.

# Situation in the DPRK

## Issue 3. Labor Rights and Social Security Rights

### Implementation of previous recommendation

- 13 recommendations: stop forced labor and exploitation of children, women, in prisons; improve inadequate wage; join the International Labor Organization and comply with its obligations.

### New developments

- No free choice of work. Every worker is forcibly placed to a designated workplace.
- At most workplaces, people were not properly paid and had to find ways to earn a living by informal income-generating activities.
- Forced labor of women and children, and in detention centers.
- Overseas workers in China and Russia are forced to work under the worst working conditions without rest, freedom of movement or health care.

# Recommendations

## Issue 3. Labor Rights and Social Security Rights

We recommend that the DPRK government:

- Ensure everyone's right to freely choose one's work, and with adequate pay.
- Stop mobilizing children and women for forced labor, or military training, and stop the forced labor in detention centers.
- End forced labor, exploitation and confinement of overseas workers, guarantee freedom of movement, and ensure adequate health care for overseas workers.



# Situation in the DPRK

## Issue 4. International Instruments and the National Human Rights Institution

### Implementation of previous recommendation

- 51 recommendation on international instruments, including ratification of the Convention against Torture and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- 4 recommendations on establishing a national human rights institution in compliance with the Paris Principles.

### New developments

- The DPRK submitted its first report on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Dec. 2018 and continue engaging with the system on the rights of persons with disabilities.
- No additional new ratification of international human rights treaties.
- The reports on two Covenants, ICCPR and ICESCR, are long overdue.
- No National Human Rights Institution was established yet.

## Situation in the DPRK

### Issue 4. **International Instruments and the National Human Rights Institution**

We recommend that the DPRK government:

- Ratify the Convention against Torture and other core international human rights treaties it is not yet a party.
- Submit as soon as possible the long overdue reports on the implementation of the two Covenants – ICCPR and ICESCR.
- Establish an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles.

# Thank you!

From KOCUN,  
together with 9 NGOs in our coalition:

- Free to Move (F2M)
- Improving North Korean Human Rights Center (INKHR)
- International Democracy Hub (IDH)
- Justice for North Korea (JFNK)
- Korea Peninsula Future Women Institute (KPFWI)
- Korea of All (KOA)
- Korean War Abductees' Family Union (KWAFU)
- Mulmangcho (MMC, meaning Forget-Me-Not)
- NK Imprisonment Victims' Family Association (NKIVFA)