

North Korea: Human Rights Violations

European Parliament resolution on North Korea

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on North Korea,
 - having regard to the guidelines on EU policy towards third countries on the death penalty (1998) and on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (2001), and EU guidelines on human rights dialogues (2001) and on human rights defenders (2004),
 - having regard to the resolution of 16 April 2003 adopted by the UN Commission on Human Rights,
 - having regard to the statement issued by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the UN Special Rapporteur on the question of torture and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) of 31 May 2006,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights expresses deep concern at the existence in the DPRK of 'torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, [and] public executions', as well as 'all-pervasive and severe restrictions on the freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression',
- B. whereas the government of the DPRK continues to deny access to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, as well as to non-governmental human rights organisations, which hampers investigation of the human rights situation; whereas, however, multiple reports, notably by victims who have managed to flee the country, suggest a most serious pattern of violations, including executions, torture, detention of political prisoners and inhumane prison conditions,
- C. whereas opposition of any kind is not tolerated and any person who expresses an opinion contrary to the position of the ruling Korean Workers' Party faces severe punishment, as in many cases do their families,
- D. whereas Mr Son Jong Nam, who has lived in China, where he attended church and became a Christian, was reportedly tortured by the National Security Agency, and was then sentenced to death for alleged treason without a trial, and without the benefit of any of the procedural safeguards required by international human rights law,
- E. whereas four United Nations human rights experts, including the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, who have called upon the government of the DPRK to postpone the execution and review the conviction, are dismayed by the response of the government, which described the experts' letter as 'a product of conspiracy

undertaken in pursuit of the ill-minded aim of spreading fabricated information while following the attempts of those hostile forces to defame, disintegrate and overthrow the state and social system of the DPRK on the pretext of human rights’,

- F. whereas the DPRK has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - G. whereas, since 2001, the government of the DPRK has reduced the number of grounds for imposing the death penalty from 33 to 5, but whereas 4 of those grounds are essentially political in nature,
 - H. whereas the domestic news media are strictly censored, and access to international media broadcasts is restricted; whereas radio and television sets are tuned to receive only state broadcasts and those who listen to foreign radio stations risk being punished,
 - I. whereas any unauthorised assembly or association is regarded as a ‘collective disturbance’, liable to punishment; whereas religious freedom, although guaranteed by the constitution, is in practice sharply curtailed; whereas there are reports of severe repression of people involved in public and private religious activities in the form of imprisonment, torture and execution,
 - J. whereas witnesses estimate the number of people confined in ‘re-education (labour) camps’, ‘detention camps’ and prisons at up to 200 000, and reports, notably by those released from camps such as Kang Chol Hwan, suggest that torture and ill-treatment are widespread and conditions very harsh,
 - K. whereas many people in the DPRK are short of food and are dependent on the humanitarian aid the country receives from donors such as the EU, which decided to allocate the sum of EUR 13 715 000 to the DPRK in 2005, and the UN World Food Programme, which reached an agreement with the government on 10 May 2006 to provide 150 000 tons of commodities to 1.9 million North Koreans over two years,
 - L. whereas tens of thousands of North Koreans have fled to China, leaving the DPRK because of repression and widespread hunger,
1. Deplores the lack of cooperation of the DPRK with the international human rights institutions, and particularly its refusal to follow the procedures of the UN Commission on Human Rights;
 2. Calls on the government of North Korea to:
 - comply with the principles set out in the international human rights treaties it has ratified (such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) and incorporate these principles into domestic law;
 - abolish the death penalty;
 - release all people detained or imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights;
 - guarantee freedom of expression and freedom of movement for all North Koreans; and

- review existing legislation to ensure that it conforms with international human rights standards, and introduce safeguards to provide citizens with protections and remedies against human rights violations;
3. Urges the government of the DPRK to provide information on the case of Mr Son Jong Nam and not to proceed with his execution;
 4. Calls on the Commission and the Council to urge the government of the DPRK to end these human rights violations and to provide information on the case of Mr Son Jong Nam and not to proceed with his execution;
 5. Calls on the government of the DPRK to review carefully the situation of all those condemned to death and to grant them a stay of execution, and calls for the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in North Korea, Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn, to be allowed to visit them;
 6. Urges the government of the DPRK to end the severe human rights violations, including imprisonment and execution on account of religion or belief, against citizens not affiliated to the state-sponsored religious federations, and to allow religious believers to meet freely for worship, build and maintain places of worship and freely publish religious literature;
 7. Recognises that the EU was the first and only party to engage in human rights dialogues with the DPRK after the Troika visit in 2001, led by Swedish Prime Minister and President of the European Council Göran Persson, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union Javier Solana, and External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten, and that the dialogue was discontinued as of 2003, when the Council of Ministers sponsored a Human Rights resolution at the UNCHR without informing the North Koreans; urges both sides, therefore, to endeavour to restart the human rights dialogue between the EU and the DPRK;
 8. Calls on the government of the DPRK to fulfil its obligations under human rights instruments to which it is a party and to ensure that humanitarian organisations, independent human rights monitors, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK and the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief have free access to the country;
 9. Welcomes the agreement between the World Food Programme and the government of the DPRK to support 1.9 million of the most vulnerable people, especially women and young children; deplores the ongoing and unnecessary suffering of the North Korean people as a consequence of their government's policies; stresses that there should always be a targeted and fair distribution of food in the country; urges the government of the DPRK to end discrimination in its distribution of food in favour of high-ranking Workers' Party officials and military, intelligence and police officers;
 10. Calls on the government of the DPRK to hand over finally and completely all information on the citizens of South Korea and Japan who were abducted during recent decades, and to release immediately those abductees still being held in the country;
 11. Calls on the government of the People's Republic of China to stop repatriating North Korean citizens to the DPRK, where, regardless of their reasons for leaving, they face

harsh treatment, ranging from detention to torture, long prison terms and even executions; calls on the Republic of Korea (ROK) to assume its responsibility for North Korean refugees in China and calls on the government of the ROK to allow them to travel to South Korea;

12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the government of the DPRK, the government of the ROK, the government of the People's Republic of China, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK.