

Media Advisory

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North Korea: Human rights under scrutiny at the UN

"During its session with the UN Human Rights Committee this week, the North Korean government should address continuing reports of grave human rights violations," Amnesty International said today. "While independent human rights monitors continue to be refused access to North Korea, the real picture remains unclear."

The UN Committee, which monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, will be considering North Korea's second periodic report, submitted after 16 years, on 19 and 20 July. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations will brief the Committee on 18 July.

The briefing will include concerns about North Korea's use of the death penalty, torture, trafficking and forced labour, freedom of movement, unfair trials and political prisoners.

Although the North Korean authorities have said the last execution took place in 1992, Amnesty International continues to receive reports of both public and secret executions of suspected criminals and political prisoners.

The North Korean government forbids its citizens from leaving the country without permission. Those caught crossing the border to China have reported being beaten by North Korean security officials. Those sent back from China reportedly face long interrogation sessions and torture by North Korean police. Some are sent to prison or labour camps immediately after being caught, without any judicial process.

Amnesty International is also concerned about reports that in some places of detention, prisoners are given little or no food, contract illnesses and are being denied access to medical care, and that many die of starvation and disease.

"Amnesty International hopes the North Korean government will engage the UN process fully and with a view to improving the human rights situation in the country and that it will take on board the Committee's recommendations when they are delivered," the organization said.

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