



AI Index: ASA 24/3763/2021
9-10 March 2021

ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

THE TRUTH LOCKED DOWN IN DPRK: NO IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS DURING COVID-19

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-sixth session
22 February – 23 March 2021

Madame President,

The year 2020 was unusual for many countries, but for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it was one that saw its isolation from the world even more intensified.

As measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, DPRK banned all movement of people and goods in and out of the country, and border guards were reportedly authorized to shoot people approaching its borders.

Last September, the military shot dead a civilian official from the Republic of Korea found in DPRK waters. We would urge DPRK authorities to promptly carry out an independent and thorough investigation into the killing, and communicate its findings to the international community.

While the internet held the rest of the world together, DPRK remained closed to communications with the outside world, with severe restrictions on people trying to access the internet and foreign media.¹

The shut-off from information exchange obscured the true situation of COVID-19, including in detention facilities where tens of thousands of people were held, some at risk of torture, forced labour or other ill-treatment. There was no news on foreign nationals who were victims of alleged enforced disappearance.²

Madame President,

We urge the DPRK to provide unimpeded access to international human rights monitors, including all UN special procedures, as well as NGOs. We also urge this Council to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK.

Thank you.

¹ Amnesty International, Connection Denied: Restrictions on Mobile Phones and Outside Information in North Korea (Index: ASA-24/3373/2016, available [here](#))

² Amnesty International, South Korea: TV Producer held In North Korea for 50 years: Hwang Won (Index: ASA-25/9751/2019, available [here](#))