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Urgent need for accountability and cooperation with the international community by North Korea

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Amnesty International notes the engagement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) with the UPR process on this occasion. Genuine engagement with the international community is imperative if the country's appalling human rights record is to be addressed. Amnesty International notes in particular that the DPRK has accepted a number of recommendations on food shortages and the provision of international humanitarian aid,¹ and hopes that this will lead to meaningful cooperation with the international community to alleviate the dire humanitarian problems in the country.

Nevertheless, Amnesty International is gravely concerned that the DPRK has refused to accept more than half of the recommendations addressed to it. This level of rejection demonstrates the systematic failure of the DPRK to uphold its human rights obligations.

The outright rejection of the many recommendations to close political prison camps is particularly alarming.² Amnesty International continues to have grave concerns over inhuman conditions in these camps and other detention facilities. Detainees are regularly subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, such as forced hard labour or deliberate starvation. Techniques of torture and other ill-treatment reported include the insertion of sharp bamboo under the fingernails, handcuffing and suspension by the wrists, and prolonged detention in solitary confinement. Amnesty International urges the DPRK to immediately close down all political prison camps.

Amnesty International is also deeply disappointed at the DPRK's rejection of recommendations to allow the victims of its policy of abduction and enforced disappearance of foreign nationals, as well as their descendants, to return freely to their country of origin.³

Equally disturbing is the government's rejection of recommendations to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms, particularly the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, or to act on the conclusions of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK. The Commission of Inquiry catalogued a list of human rights violations and articulated the international community's clear demand for accountability, including for violations which may amount to crimes against humanity.⁴

¹ See e.g. recommendations 124.45-47, 124.141-143, 124.145-149 (Ethiopia, New Zealand, Norway, Finland, Spain, Slovenia, Switzerland, Chile, Norway, and Mozambique). But see also rejected recommendations 125.25, 125.27, 125.68, 125.74, 125.82-83, 124.44, and noted recommendation 124.40 (Iceland, Portugal, Netherlands, Ireland, Czech Republic, Greece, and Finland).

² Recommendations 125.54-70 (Canada, Greece, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Republic of Korea, Austria, Sweden, Spain, France, USA, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, Netherlands, Argentina, and Japan).

³ Recommendations 125.15, 125.22, 125.25, 125.46-50 (Australia, Japan, Iceland, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Korea, Japan, and Slovakia).

⁴ Recommendations 125.12-39 (Italy, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Latvia, Estonia, Republic of Korea, Germany, USA, France, Japan, Portugal, Slovenia, Iceland, Czech Republic, Portugal, Uruguay, Ukraine, Greece, Switzerland, Lithuania, United Kingdom, Sweden, France, Austria, Romania, and Brazil). See also Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, A/HRC/25/63, paras 74-79.

Amnesty International once again urges the DPRK to take immediate measures to end the systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations documented by the Commission of Inquiry.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on 19 September 2014 during its 27th session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA24/009/2013/en/cb539712-bdad-4537-aocd-offdce3f5bd7/asa240092013en.pdf>

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