



Genocide Watch
Alliance Against Genocide

North Korea Country Report
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For over seven decades, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has been governed by three generations of the Kim dynasty. Under current Supreme Leader [Kim Jong-un](#), North Korea continues to be an isolated totalitarian regime. The government tightly controls the media as well as all citizens' speech, movement, and religious expression. State-sponsored surveillance of citizens is pervasive.

The country abides by the *songun* or military-first policy. The state prioritizes the allocation of resources to the Korean People's Army, the fourth largest in the world, while half of its citizens grapple with [extreme poverty](#).

North Korea is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal in pursuance of Kim's [military modernization program](#). In 2023, it conducted a record number of nuclear weapon and ballistic missile tests, in violation of [United Nations sanctions](#). The country's parliament [enshrined its nuclear program](#) in the constitution, making nuclear proliferation the "basic law of the state." The United States claims that North Korea supplies arms to Russia to sustain its invasion of Ukraine in exchange for Russian satellite technology.

In November 2023, Pyongyang launched North Korea's first military spy satellite, [Malligyong-1](#), to monitor South Korean and US military activity. South Korea responded by partially withdrawing from the [2018 Comprehensive Military Agreement](#), which the North then [completely suspended](#). Kim ordered his Army to "prepare for war."

Human rights are systematically denied. The discriminatory [songbun](#) system classifies people according to their perceived political loyalty. Any perceived threat to the communist regime is met with brutal suppression and even execution. Police and Army officials have full impunity. Civil society organizations are barred from operating.

North Korea sends thousands of workers to China and Russia where they are forced to work sixteen-hour days in food processing and construction. Their wages are confiscated by the Kim regime. They are treated as slaves.

Leaving the country without permission remains a crime punished by death or imprisonment in North Korea's prison gulag. North Korea has tightened security along its border with China to curb unauthorized escapes.

Chinese authorities regard North Korean refugees as illegal economic migrants. China [forcibly repatriated](#) over 500 defectors in 2023, in violation of the [UN Refugee Conventions](#) and the [Convention Against Torture](#). Repatriated women experienced [infanticide and forced abortions](#) in detention in North Korea. The Kim regime justifies these crimes as necessary to maintain "racial purity."

Political dissidents, religious practitioners, and defectors are regarded as enemies of the state. They face arbitrary detention in [abusive political prison camps](#). In 2022, the UN Human Rights Council passed a [resolution](#) reaffirming the findings of its [2014 Commission of Inquiry \(COI\)](#) regarding evidence of [crimes against humanity](#) in the DPRK. These include torture, extermination, enforced disappearances, starvation, enslavement, sexual and gender-based violence. The regime denies the existence of prison camps or any human rights violations.

Genocide Watch considers the DPRK to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination, Stage 7: Preparation. Stage 8: Persecution, Stage 9: Extermination** and **Stage 10: Denial**.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- The UN Security Council should refer the situation in the DPRK to the International Criminal Court.
- The UNSC, US, and EU should adopt targeted sanctions against DPRK officials and companies that do business with North Korea.
- South Korea, the US, and other nations should grant asylum to North Korean defectors.
- The UN Human Rights Council should continue to collect evidence of crimes by DPRK officials for prosecutions when the Kim regime falls.
- The US and South Korea should actively support North Korean churches and resistance groups.