



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Country Report: North Korea

March 2023

Beginning in 2017, President Moon Jae-in of South Korea pursued a new "[pathway to peace](#)" on the Korean Peninsula. It resulted in multiple inter-Korean summits over the following four years and two United States-North Korea summits. However, in 2019, then-President of the United States Donald Trump cut short a final, two-day summit with Kim Jong-un, Supreme Leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The US and North Korean leaders [failed to reach agreement](#) on sanctions relief and denuclearization programs.

In 2020, North Korea [closed its borders](#) at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This tightened border control had severe ramifications for the [survival of dissidents and defectors](#), who relied on lax border controls on the Chinese border to escape. China's own tightened border policy due to COVID-19 also had [dire implications for North Korean defectors](#) as China increased repatriations of North Korean escapees. Returnees are often arrested, imprisoned, and murdered by North Korea.

Reports by Korean civil society organizations (CSOs) that monitor the DPRK have highlighted the ongoing gross human rights violations in North Korea. A 2022 report on [crimes against humanity in North Korean detention centers](#) found that the human rights situation in North Korea has not improved since the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) report of systematic extermination and other crimes against humanity by a [Commission of Inquiry in 2014](#). The 2022 report highlighted an imprisonment system designed to deprive detainees of their right to life.

North Korea's racist rhetoric of maintaining racial purity remains its justification for forced abortion of pregnant repatriated defectors and infanticide of children of defector or Chinese parentage. Official state propaganda shows the genocidal intent of the North Korean regime's extermination of Chinese in North Korea.

The accommodation by the South Korean government of President Moon Jae-in minimized the severity of human rights abuses under the DPRK. Fewer North Koreans [successfully defected from North Korea](#). South Korea's Ministry for Unification [limited CSOs from carrying out interviews](#) with defectors to investigate North Korean human rights abuses and refused to publish its own findings. In 2019, South Korea even [repatriated two North Korean fishermen against their will](#).

The voters of South Korea rejected Moon's appeasement policies in the election of March 2022. On 10 May 2022, Yoon Suk-yeol was sworn in as South Korea's new president to succeed Moon Jae-in.

Given the DPRK's ongoing perpetration and denial of its systematic killings, deprivations of the right to survival of dissidents, and other grave human rights abuses, Genocide Watch considers North Korea to be at **Stage 9: Extermination** and **Stage 10: Denial**. **Genocide Watch recommends that:**

- The United Nations Human Rights Council should continue to condemn the DPRK in its regular Universal Periodic Reviews, and strongly support the UN Special Rapporteur on North Korea.
- UN member states should support the South Korean government's commitment to guaranteeing the protection of the rights of North Korean escapees.
- U.N. member states should demand that North Korea submit reports on the measures it has taken to comply with the human rights treaties to which the DPRK is a party.
- U.N. members should strongly support South Korean efforts to undermine the legitimacy of the Kim monarchy in the DPRK, to bring about the peaceful overthrow from within of its communist regime.