

# The Impact of Government on Personal and Economic Freedom

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Length of Time:** 120 Minutes. Could be extended based upon modifications as explained below.

## Objectives:

- Describe the functioning of a modern totalitarian communist state
- Compare and contrast the development of modern Korea under two differing systems of government
- Analyze the impact of government on society and economics
- Explain the importance of individual rights and freedoms

## Standards Reference:

### Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards for Civics and Government

5.1.12.A.: Analyze the sources, purposes, functions of law, and how the **rule of law** protects **individual rights** and promotes the **common good**.

5.1.12.E.: Analyze and assess the rights of people as written in the PA Constitution and the US Constitution.

5.2.12.A.: Evaluate an individual's **civil rights**, responsibilities and obligations in various contemporary **governments**.

5.2.C.A.: Contrast the rights and responsibilities of a **citizen** in a **democracy** with a **citizen** in an authoritarian system.

5.3.12.B.: Compare and contrast policymaking in various contemporary world **governments**.

### Pennsylvania Academic Content Standards for Economics

6.2.12.E.: Evaluate the health of an economy (local, regional, national, global) using economic indicators.

6.2.12.G.: Evaluate various **economic systems**.

## Teacher Background Information:

Political Scientists who study Comparative Government and Politics would be hard pressed to find a better case-study for the relative merits and problems of differing political systems than Korea. Korea is almost a perfect example of a “Most Different Systems Study” done for political analysis. United for centuries as one nation, with one culture, language, and outlook, Korea emerged from thirty-five years of Japanese colonial rule in 1945 to be divided at the end of World War II. Although the division was never meant to be permanent, today Korea remains split roughly along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, with the Demilitarized Zone, often referred to as the “World’s most heavily fortified border” standing in between North and South Korea.

Beginning in 1945, two different and distinct political systems were established in Korea. In the North, the USSR helped install a communist government under the control of Kim il-Sung, while the US backed Anti-communist

Syngman Rhee. After the inconclusive Korean War, the two sides remained divided and entrenched in their part of Korea.

As late as the 1970's North and South Korea bore striking similarities to one another. Still devastated by the Korean War, both nations' economies were weak and underdeveloped, despite support of the two superpowers. Per person GDP was roughly the same, at approximately \$2,000 per person. Due to wartime restrictions, freedoms were restricted and limited. However, the last forty years have seen a remarkable transformation in South Korea. Despite being the historic agricultural region of Korea, the Republic of Korea (the official name of South Korea) has transformed itself into an industrial giant that today makes it a part of the G-20 nations. Using the United States as a model and a strong aversion towards Communism as a catalyst for development, Koreans today enjoy a high ranking on the HDI scale, additionally, democratic reforms in the nation in the 1980's mean that South Koreans today enjoy many of the same rights as Americans are accustomed to having. This is in part because of the government investing heavily in infrastructure and education. To consider the success of South Korea consider this one fact alone: South Korea is the only nation in the history of the United Nations to go from a recipient to a donor of foreign aid.

Conversely, the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, the official name for North Korea) could not be more different. Due to mismanagement and lack of investment, with the collapse of USSR in 1991 the North Korean economy suffered a similar downturn. A famine in the nation in the 1990's resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, and today, the GDP per person is approximately \$1800 per person, with much of that wealth concentrated in the ruling class. Power outages are frequent. Outside the capital of Pyongyang, life has often been characterized by those who have left the nation as a daily struggle for survival. Although slightly larger in area than South Korea, today the North has only half the population of the South. Politically, North Korea is one of the most repressive regimes on Earth. People have no rights of any kind to freedom, and dissidents are placed in political prison camps where thousands die annually. Internet usage is heavily restricted, with less than one-tenth of one percent of North Koreans able to access the internet. In fact, the only thing that North Korea seems to lead the world in is its military. At a standing size of 1.2 million, it is one of the world's largest, while consuming 22% of the national GDP. Recently, the United Nations released a damning report on the conditions of these camps in North Korea.

### **Lesson Content:**

In this lesson, students will compare and contrast North and South Korea to see the impact of political systems on society and economics. Remembering that until 1945 North and South Korea were basically the same, this lesson will show how dramatically a decision on governmental system can impact people. This lesson could be used in a class looking at the current living conditions in North vs. South Korea. It could also be used in a Civics/Government class to look at the importance of fundamental rights and freedoms, and the impact of when those are missing.

### **Procedures:**

1. Give students the “Evils of Capitalism” sheet. Have them complete and discuss the problems that are shown through the activity with capitalism. Engage students in a discussion as to alternatives to capitalism and why some nations might wish to adopt them.
2. Give students the “Bill of Rights” person identifier and have them complete the activity in class by finding other students who can complete the sheet for them.
3. Engage students in a discuss of the rights that they have as citizens of the United States. Focus on the rights as listed in the Bill of Rights.
4. Discuss personal freedoms and why they are so important in the United States.
5. Ask students to imagine what life would be like if they did not have these rights.
6. Explain to students that often, political and economic freedoms are associated with each other, and that while capitalism does create economic imbalances, government control of an economy through systems such as communism that subjugate basic human rights in the name of economic equality have been tried and have failed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notably in the USSR.
7. Explain to students that by undergoing economic and political reforms in the 1970’s and 1980’s, South Korea emerged as a nation that is very similar to the United States, in terms of economics and politics. Use information from the CIA World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/>) to reinforce the similarities between things like GDP per person, HDI index, etc.
8. Explain to students that North Korea is the last remaining totalitarian communist state in the world from the Cold War, after the economies of China and Vietnam (and, to a lesser extent, Cuba) have been opened up. Compare the economic conditions in North vs. South Korea using the information on the “North Korea vs. South Korea: Differences in the Economy” handout to show the differences between the economic development of North and South Korea.
9. Discuss with students the current political situation in North Korea. Teacher can show and discuss PowerPoint on modern North Korea from History News Network at <http://historynewsnetwork.org/sites/default/files/3to6NorthKoreaPowerPoint.ppt> to show the impact of the dictatorship on the Korean people
10. Allow students to watch a documentary on life in North Korea today. Several documentaries are listed below, focusing on different aspects on life in North Korea. Depending upon the amount of time and focus of the lesson, the teacher can select the videos that are most appropriate for their students.
11. Give the students the “Excerpt from the United Nations Human Rights Commission Inquiry into North Korea” handout and questions, and allow students to read and discuss life in North Korea today.
12. Conclude by reminding students that today, over 25,000 US military personnel are stationed in South Korea to help defend it from the North. Discuss with the students whether they believe the US has a responsibility to protect nations similar to us, such as South Korea, from harm.

### **Enduring Understandings:**

At the conclusion of the lesson, students should have a better appreciation for the role that government plays in determining societal and economic outcomes, as well as being able to describe the impact of Communism on a nation, and the importance of political and economic freedom.

### **Modifications:**

Depending on the amount of time available, different recommended documentaries can be shown. Additionally, several of the activities listed in the above procedures could be eliminated or assigned for homework to reduce the amount of classtime spent on the lesson.

### **Extensions:**

The story of North Korea ties nicely into the George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, a similar story of the takeover of an oppressive regime along with the brainwashing of citizens through control and propaganda. A teacher could assign the reading of *Animal Farm* and use North Korea as a real life example to illustrate Orwell's fears of the rule of a totalitarian government.

### **Sources:**

#### Economic Conditions of North Korea:

NHK Documentary "Money & Power in North Korea." Focuses on how the North Korean economy functions. 48 minutes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEJqEuM5V68>

#### Life inside North Korea:

"National Geographic: Inside North Korea." Correspondent Lisa Ling travels inside North Korea for a look at the living conditions of citizens. 46 minutes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxLBywKrTf4>

BBC Documentary "Life inside North Korea." Includes interviews with North Korean officials discussing the problems in the nation. 16 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMfbohNGT1w>

TED Talk "What It's Like to Teach in North Korea by Suki Kim. In this talk, Kim discusses her time living and teaching in North Korea, working with students of the elite in the nation, and helping them learn about concepts like "critical thinking." 13 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6weGCM3sWKc>

Orphaned and homeless in North Korea from CNN. A video discussing orphans in North Korea, with footage from orphanages. 5 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72KHZguk-WE>

Hidden state: Inside North Korea. This Al Jazeera documentary goes inside North Korea to view the nation, while also showing the perspective of those who have fled the country. 25 minutes. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAsPtK\\_hiFg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAsPtK_hiFg)

VICE on HBO Season One: The Hermit Kingdom. In this video, VICE follows along with Dennis Rodman and the Harlem Globetrotters trip to North Korea. Includes video of the coverage of the deaths of Kim il-Sung and Kim Jong-il, as well as the official version of what life in North Korea is like. 31 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrCQh1usdzE>

"Secret State of North Korea" by PBS Frontline. A documentary regarding daily life in North Korea, using undercover footage shot in the nation. 54 minutes. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/secret-state-of-north-korea/>

### Escaping from North Korea:

TED Talk “My Escape from North Korea by Hyeonsoo Lee” In this talk, Lee discusses life in North Korea and her eventual escape from the country. 12 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdxPCeWw75k>

My Impossible Escape from North Korea by Ji Seong-ho. In this talk, Seong-ho recounts how he was able to escape from North Korea. 13 minutes [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1s7pq\\_U8yg4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1s7pq_U8yg4)

### Prison Camps in North Korea

“North Korea Through the Eyes of Witnesses” Using the accounts of defectors in the North, this video discusses both the living conditions of the country, as well as life in a North Korean prison camp. 21 minutes [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wM1sKwW\\_Ogk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wM1sKwW_Ogk)

The Defectors - Escapees From North Korea's Prison Camps by Sky News. This video also uses the accounts of defectors from North Korea while also showing the pathway that defectors often take to get to South Korea. This video also discusses how defectors are trained to fit into South Korean society. 23 minutes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbCo46dtki8>

North Korean prisoner escaped after 23 brutal years on 60 Minutes. In this interview, Anderson Cooper interviews a survivor of North Korea’s Camp 14. 14 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNxtMIL2Kek>.

“Hell Holes” and “North Korea: Life in the Camps” In these two short videos from Amnesty International, living conditions in North Korean prison camps are discussed. 5 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1y0yhV6IT7o> and 7 minutes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF4R6wwA4C4>

### United Nations investigation into North Korea:

Report of the United Nations on Human Rights abuses in North Korea:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14255&LangID=E>

The full report can be downloaded from:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIDPRK/Pages/ReportoftheCommissionofInquiryDPRK.aspx>



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pd. \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Read the “Evils of Capitalism” example below. Complete the chart at the bottom of the page and answer the questions on the back of this sheet. **You will need to calculate the answers.**

### “The Evils of Capitalism”

Mr. Jones owns a widget factory. He bought the factory for \$2,000 and the machinery to produce the widgets for \$1,000.

Mr. Jones pays 10 workers \$2.50 an hour during 10 hour work days in dangerous working conditions. Mr. Jones pays no benefits and allows no vacation time.

He pays one manager \$50 per day.

His daily overhead (maintenance and electricity) totals \$50 per day. The raw materials to make one day’s output cost Mr. Jones \$150.

His factory can produce 1,000 widgets per day. Mr. Jones sells each widget for \$1. Assume he sells 1,000 widgets for \$1 every day.

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#### Daily Expense and Profit Breakdown

List the daily expenses and daily profits. You should include the reason for the expense and the dollar amount.  
Ex: Manager - \$50.

Daily Costs

Daily Revenue

Total Costs \_\_\_\_\_

Total Revenue \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions

1. How much profit does Mr. Jones make per day?

$$\text{Profit} = \text{revenue} - \text{costs}$$

2. Where does this profit come from?

3. How many days of production are needed for Mr. Jones to gain back his initial investment?

4. a. Who is the winner in this system?

b. Who are the losers?

5. As a social reformer, what things about this society would you change if you could?

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### Famous Quotations Attributed to Karl Marx

*“Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains and only a world to gain.”*

*“Religion is the opiate of the masses!”*

“...from each according to his ability, to each according to his need.”

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pd. \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter X**  
**The Bill of Rights**

You must find someone in the room who can answer each question. They must sign their name within the box.

Find someone who likes to hunt.	Find someone who goes to church each Sunday.	Find someone who has gone to a political rally.	Find someone who knows a police officer in _____.
Find someone who has watched Judge Judy on television.	Find someone who knows the name of a lawyer. Write the name of the lawyer.	Find someone who can tell you what <i>capital punishment</i> is.	Find someone who can tell you what a <i>search warrant</i> is.
Find someone who can write the definition of double jeopardy.	Find someone who can write one of the powers you have as a US citizen.	Find someone who knows one of the powers reserved to the states.	Find someone who knows what a jury does.
Find someone who reads a newspaper or a magazine.	Find someone who is opposed to people owning guns.	Find someone who knows what amendment guarantees that the accused <i>does not</i> have to testify in court.	Find someone who knows what quartering troops refers to.
Find someone who can tell you what <i>bail</i> is.	Find someone who supports the death penalty.	Find someone who opposes the death penalty.	Find someone who knows what <i>eminent domain</i> is.



Now write the amendment associated with each scenario in the boxes.

**Assignment:** List the first ten amendments of the U.S. Constitution **in order of importance to you.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (most important)
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_ (least important)

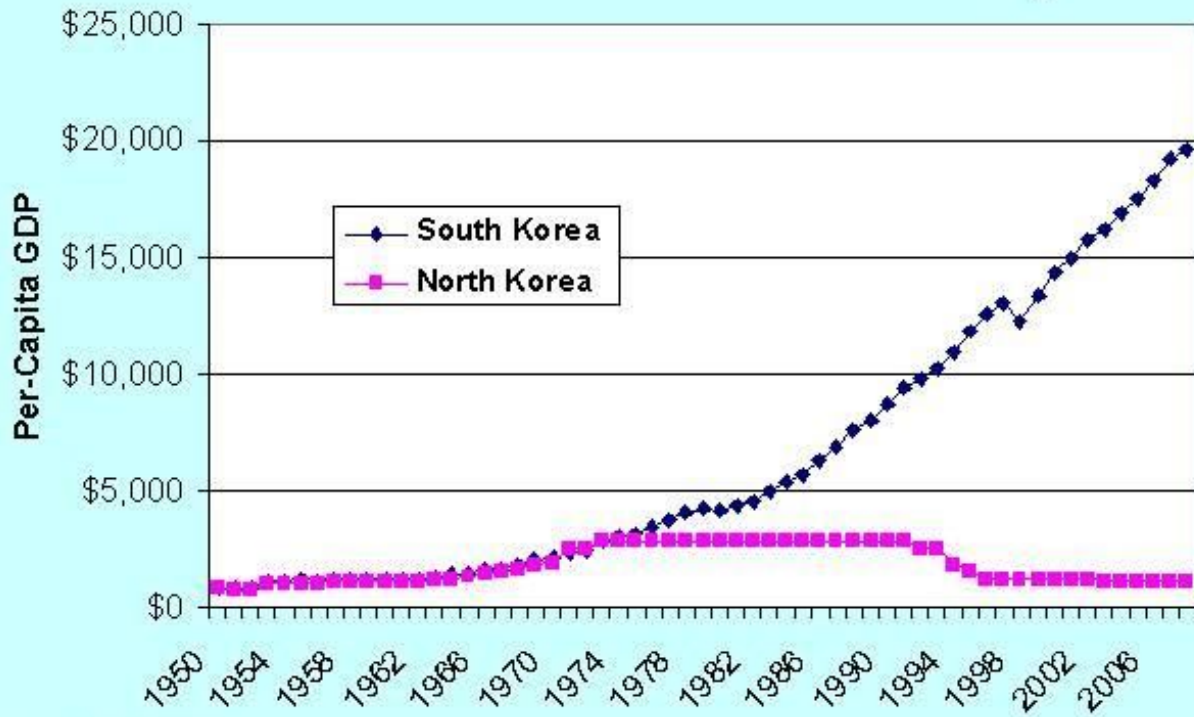
**Assignment:**

Below (or on a separate paper), write one or two paragraphs explaining why you chose the order you did. What makes certain rights more important to you than others?

## **South Korea vs. North Korea: Differences in the Economy**

## South Korea vs. North Korea: Differences in the Economy

### The Lesson of North Korea: Ultimate Statism = Ultimate Poverty



Source: Maddison

## Excerpt from the United Nations Human Rights Commission Inquiry into North Korea

Accessed from <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIDPRK/Report/A.HRC.25.63.doc>

### Violations of the freedoms of thought, expression and religion

1. Throughout the history of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, among the most striking features of the State has been its claim to an absolute monopoly over information and total control of organized social life. The commission finds that there is an almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, information and association.
2. The State operates an all-encompassing indoctrination machine that takes root from childhood to propagate an official personality cult and to manufacture absolute obedience to the Supreme Leader (*Suryong*), effectively to the exclusion of any thought independent of official ideology and State propaganda. Propaganda is further used by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to incite nationalistic hatred towards official enemies of the State, including Japan, the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, and their nationals.
3. Virtually all social activities undertaken by citizens of all ages are controlled by the Workers' Party of Korea. Through the associations that are run and overseen by the Party, and to which citizens are obliged to be members, the State is able to monitor its citizens and to dictate their daily activities. State surveillance permeates the private lives of all citizens to ensure that virtually no expression critical of the political system or of its leadership goes undetected. Citizens are punished for any "anti-State" activities or expressions of dissent. They are rewarded for reporting on fellow citizens suspected of committing such "crimes".
4. Citizens are denied the right to have access to information from independent sources; State-controlled media are the only permitted source of information in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Access to television and radio broadcasts, as well as to the Internet, is severely restricted, and all media content is heavily censored and must adhere to directives issued by the Workers' Party of Korea. Telephone calls are monitored and mostly confined to domestic connections for citizens. Citizens are punished for watching and listening to foreign broadcasts, including foreign films and soap operas.
5. The State considers the spread of Christianity a particularly serious threat, since it challenges ideologically the official personality cult and provides a platform for social and political organization and interaction outside the realm of the State. Apart from the few organized State-controlled churches, Christians are prohibited from practising their religion and are persecuted. People caught practising Christianity are subject to severe punishments in violation of the right to freedom of religion and the prohibition of religious discrimination.

## B. Discrimination

6. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea presents itself as a State where equality, non-discrimination and equal rights in all sectors have been fully achieved and implemented. In reality, it is a rigidly stratified society with entrenched patterns of discrimination, although these are being modified to some extent by the transformative socioeconomic changes introduced by market forces and technological developments. State-sponsored discrimination in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is pervasive, but is also shifting. Discrimination is rooted in the *songbun* system, which classifies people on the basis of State-assigned social class and birth, and also includes consideration of political opinions and religion. *Songbun* intersects with gender-based discrimination, which is equally pervasive. Discrimination is also practised on the basis of disability, although there are signs that the State may have begun to address this particular issue.
7. The *songbun* system used to be the most important factor in determining where individuals were allowed to live; what sort of accommodation they had; what occupations they were assigned to; whether they were effectively able to attend school, in particular university; how much food they received; and even whom they might marry. This traditional discrimination under the *songbun* system was recently complicated by increasing marketization in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and by the influence of money, including foreign currency, on people's ability to have greater access their economic, social and cultural rights. At the same time, significant segments of the population who have neither the resources nor favourable *songbun* find themselves increasingly marginalized and subject to further patterns of discrimination, given that basic public services have collapsed or now effectively require payment.
8. Early reforms aimed at ensuring formal legal equality have not resulted in gender equality. Discrimination against women remains pervasive in all aspects of society. Indeed, it might even be increasing, as the male-dominated State preys on both economically advancing women and marginalized women. Many women, survival-driven during the famine of the 1990s, began operating private markets. The State imposed, however, many restrictions on female-dominated markets. Gender discrimination also takes the form of women being targeted to pay bribes or fines. There is recent evidence that women are beginning to object and to resist such impositions.
9. The economic advances of women have not been matched by advances in the social and political spheres. Entrenched traditional patriarchal attitudes and violence against women persist in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The State has imposed blatantly discriminatory restrictions on women in an attempt to maintain the gender stereotype of the pure and innocent Korean woman. Sexual and gender-based violence against women is prevalent throughout all areas of society. Victims are not afforded protection from the State, support services or recourse to justice. In the political sphere, women make up just 5 per cent of the top political cadre and 10 per cent of central government employees.
10. Discrimination against women also intersects with a number of other human rights violations, placing women in a position of vulnerability. Violations of the rights to food and to freedom of movement have resulted in women and girls becoming vulnerable to

trafficking and increased engagement in transactional sex and prostitution. The complete denial of the freedoms of expression and association has been a large contributing factor to the generally unequal status of women vis-à-vis men. These limitations have, inter alia, prevented women from collectively advocating for their rights as women have done elsewhere in the world.

11. While discrimination exists to some extent in all societies, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has practised a form of official discrimination that has had a very significant impact on individual enjoyment of human rights. Given the exceptional extent of State control, this official discrimination influences most aspects of people's lives. Discrimination remains a major means for the leadership to maintain control against perceived threats, both internal and external.

### **C. Violations of the freedom of movement and residence**

12. The systems of indoctrination and discrimination on the basis of social class are reinforced and safeguarded by a policy of isolating citizens from contact with each other and with the outside world, violating all aspects of the right to freedom of movement.
13. In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the State imposes on citizens where they must live and work, violating their freedom of choice. Moreover, the forced assignment to a State-designated place of residence and employment is heavily driven by discrimination based on *songbun*. This has created a socioeconomically and physically segregated society, where people considered politically loyal to the leadership can live and work in favourable locations, whereas families of persons who are considered politically suspect are relegated to marginalized areas. The special status of Pyongyang, reserved only for those most loyal to the State, exemplifies this system of segregation.
14. Citizens are not even allowed to leave their province temporarily or to travel within the country without official authorization. This policy is driven by the desire to maintain disparate living conditions, to limit the flow of information and to maximize State control, at the expense of social and familial ties.
15. In an attempt to keep Pyongyang's "pure" and untainted image, the State systematically banishes entire families from the capital city if one family member commits what is deemed to be a serious crime or political wrong. For the same reason, the large number of street children migrating clandestinely to Pyongyang and other cities – principally in search of food – are subject to arrest and forcible transfer back to their home provinces, experiencing neglect and forced institutionalization on their return.
16. The State imposes a virtually absolute ban on ordinary citizens travelling abroad, thereby violating their human right to leave the country. Despite the enforcement of this ban through strict border controls, nationals still take the risk of fleeing, mainly to China. When they are apprehended or forcibly repatriated, officials from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea systematically subject them to persecution, torture, prolonged arbitrary detention and, in some cases, sexual violence, including during invasive body searches. Repatriated women who are pregnant are regularly subjected to forced abortions, and babies born to repatriated women are often killed. These practices are driven by racist attitudes towards interracial children of Koreans, and the intent to punish further women who have left the country and their assumed

contact with Chinese men. Persons found to have been in contact with officials or nationals from the Republic of Korea or with Christian churches may be forcibly “disappeared” into political prison camps, imprisoned in ordinary prisons or even summarily executed.

17. Discrimination against women and their vulnerable status in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, as well as the prospect of refoulement [the expulsion of persons who have the right to be recognised as refugees], make women extremely vulnerable to trafficking in persons. Many women are trafficked by force or deception from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea into or within China for the purposes of exploitation in forced marriage or concubinage, or prostitution under coercive circumstances. An estimated 20,000 children born to women from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea are currently in China. These children are deprived of their rights to birth registration, nationality, education and health care because their birth cannot be registered without exposing the mother to the risk of refoulement by China.
18. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has repeatedly breached its obligations to respect the rights of its nationals who have special ties to, or claims in relation to, another country, in this case the Republic of Korea, to return there or otherwise to enjoy a facility to meet long separated families. The severe impediments put in place by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to prevent contact and communication with family members in the Republic of Korea are a breach of the State’s obligations under international human rights law. The restrictions are arbitrary, cruel and inhuman. This is particularly the case when previously agreed temporary reunions of separated families are cancelled for wholly unpersuasive reasons, especially given the advanced age of the persons concerned.

#### **D. Violations of the right to food and related aspects of the right to life**

19. The rights to food, freedom from hunger and to life in the context of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea cannot be reduced to a narrow discussion of food shortages and access to a commodity. The State has used food as a means of control over the population. It has prioritized those whom the authorities believe to be crucial in maintaining the regime over those deemed expendable.
20. Confiscation and dispossession of food from those in need, and the provision of food to other groups, follows this logic. The State has practised discrimination with regard to access to and distribution of food based on the *songbun* system. In addition, it privileges certain parts of the country, such as Pyongyang, over others. The State has also failed to take into account the needs of the most vulnerable. The commission is particularly concerned about ongoing chronic malnutrition in children and its long-term effects.
21. The State was aware of the deteriorating food situation in the country well before the first appeal for international aid in 1995. State-controlled production and distribution of food had not been able to provide the population with adequate food since the end of the 1980s. The lack of transparency, accountability and democratic institutions, as well as restrictions on freedom of expression, information and association, prevented the adoption of optimal economic solutions over those in accordance with Party directives.

The State has evaded structural reforms to the economy and agriculture for fear of losing its control over the population.

22. During the period of famine, ideological indoctrination was used in order to maintain the regime, at the cost of seriously aggravating hunger and starvation. The concealment of information prevented the population from finding alternatives to the collapsing public distribution system. It also delayed international assistance that, provided earlier, could have saved many lives. Despite the State's inability to provide its people with adequate food, it maintained laws and controls effectively criminalizing people's use of key coping mechanisms, particularly moving within or outside the country in search of food and trading or working in informal markets.
23. Even during the worst period of mass starvation, the State impeded the delivery of food aid by imposing conditions that were not based on humanitarian considerations. International humanitarian agencies were subject to restrictions contravening humanitarian principles. Aid organizations were prevented from properly assessing humanitarian needs and monitoring the distribution of aid. The State denied humanitarian access to some of the most affected regions and groups, including homeless children.
24. The State has consistently failed in its obligation to use the maximum of its available resources to feed those who are hungry. Military spending – predominantly on hardware and the development of weapons systems and the nuclear programme – has always been prioritized, even during periods of mass starvation. Nevertheless, the State still failed to feed the ordinary soldiers of its disproportionately large army. Large amounts of State resources, including parallel funds directly controlled by the Supreme Leader, have been spent on luxury goods and the advancement of his personality cult instead of providing food to the starving general population.
25. The State has also used deliberate starvation as a means of control and punishment in detention facilities. This has resulted in the deaths of many political and ordinary prisoners.
26. The commission found evidence of systematic, widespread and grave violations of the right to food in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. While acknowledging the impact of factors beyond State control over the food situation, the commission finds that decisions, actions and omissions by the State and its leadership caused the death of at least hundreds of thousands of people and inflicted permanent physical and psychological injuries on those who survived.
27. In the highly centralized system of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, decisions relating to food, including its production and distribution, State budget allocation, decisions relating to humanitarian assistance and the use of international aid, are ultimately made by a small group of officials, who are not accountable to those affected by their decisions.
28. While conditions have changed since the 1990s, hunger and malnutrition continue to be widespread. Deaths from starvation continue to be reported. The commission is concerned that structural issues, including laws and policies that violate the right to adequate food and freedom from hunger, remain in place, which could lead to the recurrence of mass starvation.



## **E. Arbitrary detention, torture, executions and prison camps**

29. The police and security forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea systematically employ violence and punishments that amount to gross human rights violations in order to create a climate of fear that pre-empts any challenge to the current system of government and to the ideology underpinning it. The institutions and officials involved are not held accountable. Impunity reigns.
30. Gross human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea involving detention, executions and disappearances are characterized by a high degree of centralized coordination between different parts of the extensive security apparatus. The State Security Department, the Ministry of People's Security and the Korean People's Army Military Security Command regularly subject persons accused of political crimes to arbitrary arrest and subsequent incommunicado detention for prolonged periods of time. Their families are not informed of their fate or whereabouts. Persons accused of political crimes therefore become victims of enforced disappearance. Making the suspect disappear is a deliberate feature of the system that serves to instil fear in the population.
31. The use of torture is an established feature of the interrogation process in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, especially in cases involving political crimes. Starvation and other inhumane conditions of detention are deliberately imposed on suspects to increase the pressure on them to confess and to incriminate other persons.
32. Persons who are found to have engaged in major political crimes are "disappeared", without trial or judicial order, to political prison camps (*kwanliso*). There, they are incarcerated and held incommunicado. Their families are not even informed of their fate if they die. In the past, it was common that the authorities sent entire families to political prison camps for political crimes committed by close relatives (including forebears, to the third generation) on the basis of the principle of guilt by association. Such cases still occur, but appear to be less frequent now than in past decades.
33. In the political prison camps of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the inmate population has been gradually eliminated through deliberate starvation, forced labour, executions, torture, rape and the denial of reproductive rights enforced through punishment, forced abortion and infanticide. The commission estimates that hundreds of thousands of political prisoners have perished in these camps over the past five decades. The unspeakable atrocities that are being committed against inmates of the *kwanliso* political prison camps resemble the horrors of camps that totalitarian States established during the twentieth century.
34. Although the authorities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea deny the existence of the camps, this claim was shown to be false by the testimonies of former guards, inmates and neighbours. Satellite imagery proves that the camp system continues to be in operation. While the number of political prison camps and inmates has decreased owing to deaths and some releases, it is estimated that between 80,000 and 120,000 political prisoners are currently detained in four large political prison camps.

35. Gross violations are also being committed in the ordinary prison system, which consists of ordinary prison camps (*kyohwaso*) and various types of short-term forced labour detention facilities. The vast majority of inmates are victims of arbitrary detention, since they are imprisoned without trial or on the basis of a trial that fails to respect the due process and fair trial guarantees set out in international law. Furthermore, many ordinary prisoners are, in fact, political prisoners, who are detained without a substantive reason compatible with international law. Prisoners in the ordinary prison system are systematically subjected to deliberate starvation and illegal forced labour. Torture, rape and other arbitrary cruelties at the hands of guards and fellow prisoners are widespread and committed with impunity.
36. As a matter of State policy, the authorities carry out executions, with or without trial, publicly or secretly, in response to political and other crimes that are often not among the most serious crimes. The policy of regularly carrying out public executions serves to instil fear in the general population. Public executions were most common in the 1990s. However, they continue to be carried out today. In late 2013, there appeared to be a spike in the number of politically motivated public executions.

## **F. Abductions and enforced disappearances from other countries**

37. Since 1950, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has engaged in the systematic abduction, denial of repatriation and subsequent enforced disappearance of persons from other countries on a large scale and as a matter of State policy. Well over 200,000 persons, including children, who were brought from other countries to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea may have become victims of enforced disappearance, as defined in the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. More information would have to emerge from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to provide a more precise estimate of the number of victims.
38. The vast majority of abductions and enforced disappearances are linked to the Korean War and the organized movement of ethnic Koreans from Japan that started in 1959. However, hundreds of nationals of the Republic of Korea, Japan and other States were also abducted and disappeared between the 1960s and 1980s. In more recent years, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea abducted a number of its own nationals and nationals of the Republic of Korea from China.
39. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea used its land, naval and intelligence forces to conduct abductions and arrests. Operations were approved at the level of the Supreme Leader. The vast majority of victims were forcibly disappeared to gain labour and other skills for the State. Some victims were used to further espionage and terrorist activities. Women abducted from Europe, the Middle East and Asia were subjected to forced marriages with men from other countries to prevent liaisons on their part with ethnic Korean women that could result in interracial children. Some of the abducted women have also been subject to sexual exploitation.
40. A number of the forcibly disappeared travelled to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea voluntarily. Others were abducted through physical force or fraudulent persuasion. Subsequently, they were all denied the right to leave the country. They have also been subject to severe deprivation of their liberty and freedom of movement within

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, denied the right to recognition as a person before the law, and the right not to be subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. All of the forcibly disappeared have been placed under strict surveillance. They have been denied education and employment opportunities.

41. Ethnic Koreans from the Republic of Korea and Japan, forcibly disappeared by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, have been discriminated against for their origins and background. They were categorized as "hostile" and forced to work in mines and farms in remote marginalized areas of the country. Many of them were likely to have been the first victims of the famine in the 1990s because of their lower social status.
42. Non-Korean abductees were not able to integrate into social and economic life in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as they were detained in tightly controlled compounds. They were denied the right to work, to leave their place of residence or to move freely in society, and they were unable to choose educational opportunities for themselves and their children.
43. Family members abroad and foreign States wishing to exercise their right to provide diplomatic protection have been consistently denied information necessary to establish the fate and whereabouts of the victims. Family members of the disappeared have been subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. They have been denied the right to effective remedies for human rights violations, including the right to the truth. Parents and disappeared children have been denied the right to family life.
44. Despite admitting to the abduction of 13 Japanese nationals by agents of the State, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has never adequately disavowed the practice of international abductions. Since the 1990s, its agents have abducted a number of persons from Chinese territory, including nationals of China, the Republic of Korea and, in at least one case, a former Japanese national.
45. The commission finds that almost all of the foregoing victims remain disappeared. Human rights violations continue against them and their families. The shock and pain caused by such actions is indescribable.

#### **IV. Crimes against humanity**

46. The commission finds that the body of testimony and other information it received establishes that crimes against humanity have been committed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State.<sup>1</sup>
47. These crimes against humanity entail extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation. The commission further finds that crimes against humanity are ongoing in

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<sup>1</sup> See also A/HRC/25/CRP.1, sect. V.

the Democratic People's Republic of Korea because the policies, institutions and patterns of impunity that lie at their heart remain in place.

48. Persons detained in political and other prison camps, those who try to flee the State, Christians and others considered to introduce subversive influences are the primary targets of a systematic and widespread attack against all populations that are considered to pose a threat to the political system and leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This attack is embedded in the larger patterns of politically motivated human rights violations experienced by the general population, including the discriminatory system of classification of persons based on *songbun*.
49. In addition, the commission finds that crimes against humanity have been committed against starving populations, particularly during the 1990s. These crimes arose from decisions and policies violating the right to food, which were applied for the purposes of sustaining the present political system, in full awareness that such decisions would exacerbate starvation and related deaths of much of the population.
50. Lastly, the commission finds that crimes against humanity are being committed against persons from other countries who were systematically abducted or denied repatriation, in order to gain labour and other skills for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

After reading the excerpt from the United Nations report into North Korea, answer the following questions:

1. List five rights that appear not to exist in North Korea, that people living in Democracies expect
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did you find most shocking in the report? Why was it so surprising to you?

3. What do you think the United States should do to respond to these problems?

4. Many people have made the decision to flee North Korea. Yet many others have decided to stay. Pick one option (A or B) and

A. If someone decided to stay, how would they fight? How could you operate within the system – a system that has been engineered to deny your rights – to get your message across?

B. If you flee, where would you go? What would your life be like there? What would you sacrifice by leaving?