



**HOW CHINA AND RUSSIA
FACILITATE**
*North Korea's
Human Rights Abuses*

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The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the George W. Bush Institute, and the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK) convened a panel of government and nongovernmental experts to discuss China's and Russia's roles in North Korea's human rights abuses. The group identified specific areas where China's and Russia's facilitation of North Korean human rights violations are most apparent, the degree to which COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine have made the situation worse, and what the United States and its international partners should do to increase awareness of this issue and press for progress. The meeting took place on a not-for-attribution basis.

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BACKGROUND

North Korea: One of the world's most repressive regimes

The North Korean regime focuses all available resources on its top strategic objective: its own survival. While all political regimes strive to survive, North Korea's case is exceptional because of the extreme human rights violations it perpetrates in attempting to dominate all aspects of the lives of its citizens.

According to the 2014 [U.N. Report](#) of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter referred to as "the COI report"), the North Korean regime has committed, and continues to commit, "systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations," which, in many cases, "entailed crimes against humanity based on State policies."

Specific human rights violations detailed in the COI report include violations of the freedoms of thought, expression, and religion; discrimination; violations of the freedom of movement and residence; violations of the right to food and related aspects of the right to life; arbitrary detention, torture, executions, and prison camps; abductions and enforced disappearances from other countries; and crimes against humanity.

China's and Russia's roles in perpetuating North Korea's human rights abuses

China and Russia – both serious human rights violators in their own right – facilitate North Korea's human rights abuses in several ways. These include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- Continuing to trade with North Korea despite international sanctions, including funding through arms purchases for Russia's war in Ukraine;
- facilitating North Korea's transnational repression and slave labor;
- enabling human trafficking of North Koreans seeking escape, refuge, or work across the Chinese border;
- forcibly repatriating North Korean refugees; and
- co-opting entities within the United Nations to attempt to block progress on initiatives advocating for North Korean human rights.

China's and Russia's complicity in these abuses stems from a combination of political support for the regime in Pyongyang; nonenforcement of international human rights obligations and sanctions; economic profit; and general allegiance against the West. The nature and impact of China's and Russia's roles in these areas is detailed below.

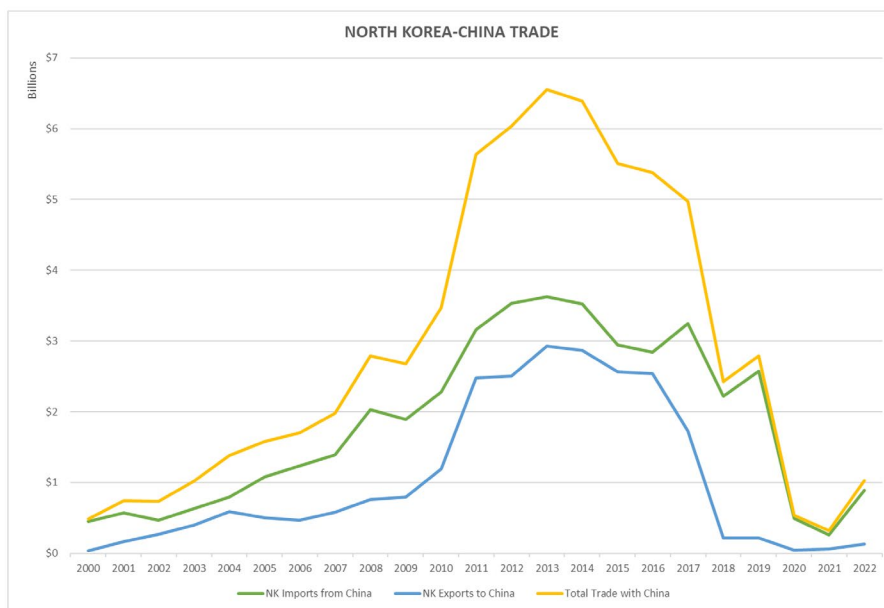
Continuing trade with North Korea and aiding sanctions evasion

Despite voting for 10 U.N. Security Council resolutions between 2006 and 2017 that impose sanctions on several forms of economic and financial engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), China and Russia continue to trade with North Korea and facilitate the regime's sanctions evasion. This practice continues today as Beijing and Moscow have since 2017 blocked additional U.N. Security Council resolutions in response to subsequent North Korean weapons testing.

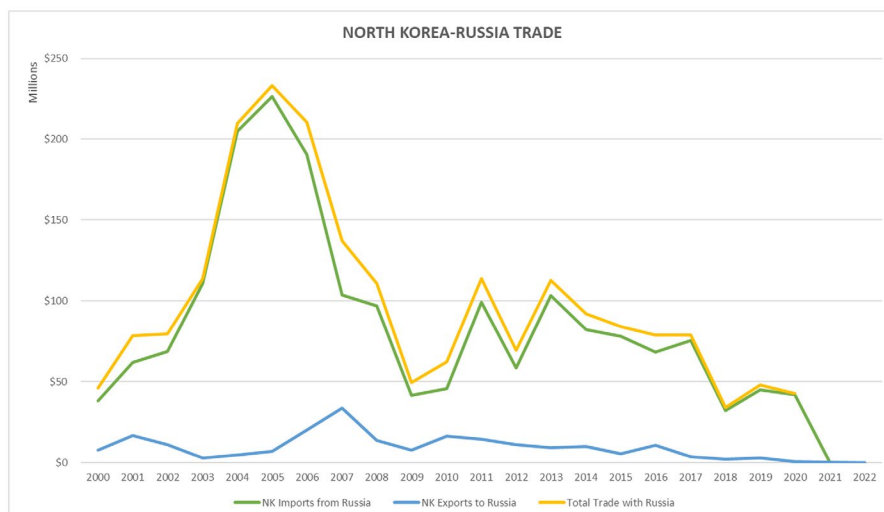
Reliable data on North Korean trade is limited. However, North Korea's official trade with China and Russia, already low because of sanctions, plummeted further in 2020 and the first half of 2021 after

the imposition of the strict COVID-19 border lockdown, according to a [September 2022 Congressional Research Service \(CRS\) report](#) that relied on “mirror statistics” – a compilation of all reporting countries’ exports and imports with North Korea to estimate DPRK trade levels.

As the report details, trade levels began to rise during the third quarter of 2021 as North Korea eased up on some of its COVID-19 border restrictions, but they later fell again following Pyongyang’s first public announcement of a COVID-19 outbreak in May 2022. North Korean exports to China reached the highest level in the past five years in April 2023, coupled with overall trade [totaling over \\$200 million](#), *NK News* reported in May 2023, citing Chinese customs data. It is important to note that customs data does not reflect illicit trade, like oil exports from China, or trade in services. Looking at the U.N. Comtrade database, Russia accounted for about 6% of North Korea’s total trade in 2020, an increase from an average of 1% to 2% between 2007 to 2019. Nonetheless, the data help to provide a general picture of trends in trade flows between North Korea and the outside world.



Source: U.N. [Comtrade](#), using “mirror statistics”



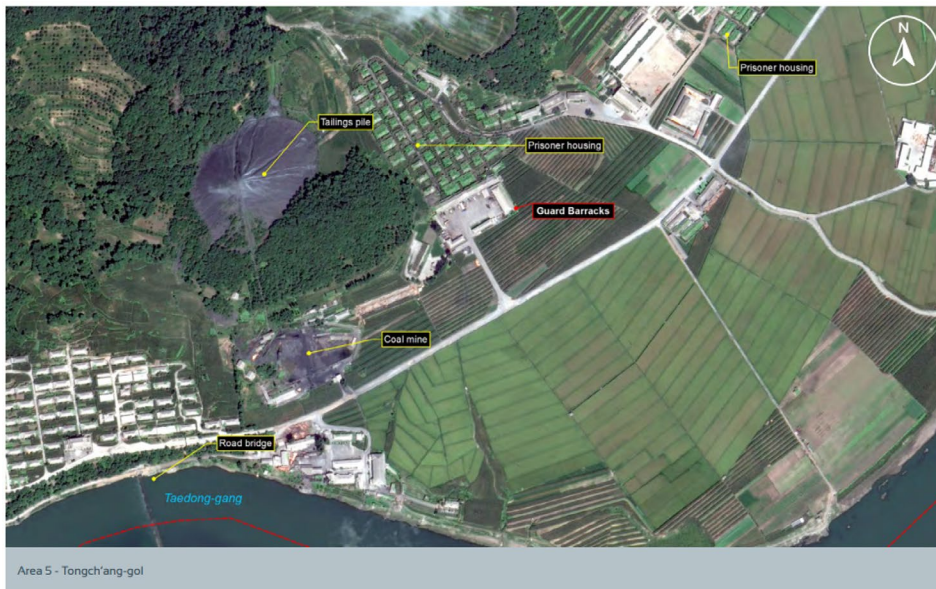
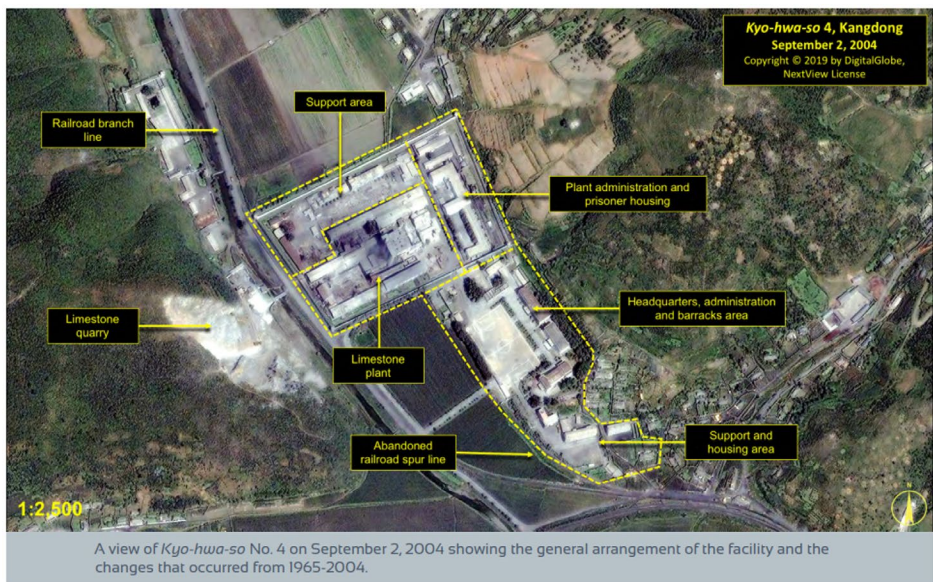
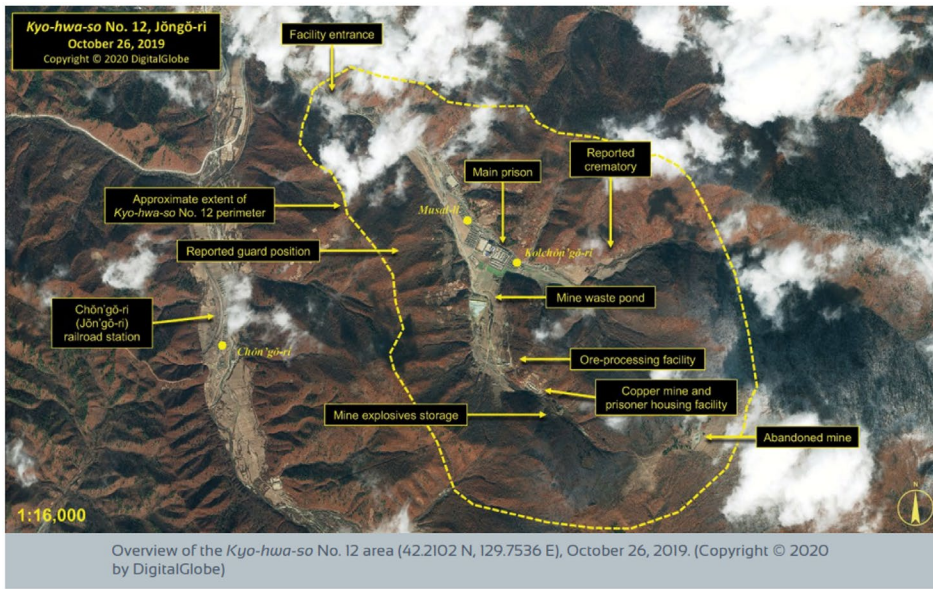
Source: U.N. [Comtrade](#), using “mirror statistics”

Ongoing trade is significant because North Korea relies on exports of commodities like coal, iron ore, and copper for hard currency, which it then uses to finance its nuclear and missile programs and keep its elites happy through purchasing luxury goods from the outside world. In addition to keeping the regime alive, North Korea's trade activities are directly linked to human rights violations insofar as the entire production chain for exported goods is tainted by forced labor.

One participant at the CSIS, Bush Institute, and HRNK meeting noted, "when the price of these commodities goes up, the regime's answer is more work, more forced labor, more public mobilization campaigns inside North Korea. When the price of these commodities goes down, the regime's answer is, again, more work, more forced labor, more public mobilization campaigns. Coal miners are relegated to working under very difficult conditions in coal mines across multiple generations because of ... the loyalty-based *songbun* social discrimination system." Furthermore, some of North Korea's six political prison camps (*kwan-li-so*) and over 20 prison labor camps (*kyo-hwa-so*) – where an estimated 120,000 men, women, and children are held pursuant to a system of guilt by association – are strategically located next to extractive facilities, indicating a clear intent to use prisoners as [forced labor](#). HRNK [research](#) has documented this at camps like Kaechon, Kangdong, Chungsan, and Jonggo-ri by using satellite imagery and interviews with former prisoners.



Source: [The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea](#)



Source: [The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea](#)

China and Russia also help North Korea evade sanctions through various illicit activities. The March 2022 U.N. Panel of Experts (POE) report, which monitors and informs the Security Council on North Korean sanctions implementation, indicates that China and Russia have aided North Korea's sanctions evasion through a number of activities.

China's and Russia's North Korea sanctions evasion activities include the following, according to a summary of the POE findings in the September 2022 [CRS report](#):

- Enabling prohibited procurement activities by taking advantage of imprecise definitions of sanctioned goods and services;
- aiding the importation into North Korea of refined petroleum;
- increasing North Korea's maritime export of coal (mostly to China); and
- changing the appearance of seagoing vessels so that North Korea's involvement in the transaction is obscured (particularly in Chinese ports).

All these activities feed into North Korea's weapons development financing, which, in turn, helps to bolster the regime in Pyongyang.

Facilitating transnational repression of North Korean citizens and slave labor

In addition to continuing trade with North Korea and aiding sanctions evasion, China and Russia are also active facilitators of the regime's transnational repression – i.e., when authoritarian governments take actions outside their borders to repress their citizens.

Specifically, China and Russia host North Korean workers under slave labor conditions, which [violates U.N. Security Council resolution](#) (UNSCR) 2397. This resolution passed unanimously after North Korea's November 2017 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launch. It requires member states to, among other things, "repatriate all DPRK nationals earning income and all DPRK government safety oversight attachés monitoring DPRK workers abroad within their jurisdiction within 24 months from 22 December 2017." The resolution "exempts the repatriation of North Korean defectors, refugees, asylum seekers, and trafficking victims who will face persecution and torture when repatriated by the North Korean regime," according to a [fact sheet](#) issued by the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

Before the passage of UNSCR 2397, the U.S. State Department estimated there were around 100,000 North Korean workers overseas. [Civilian expert](#) assessments indicate that these workers brought in about \$200 million to \$500 million per year in revenue for North Korea. Around one-third of the workers are believed to have been in China, one-third in Russia, and one-third in various countries in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa.

Even though the December 2019 deadline for the implementation of UNSCR 2397 has passed, experts believe that thousands of workers remain in China, Russia, and other countries. Up to 90% of their salaries are confiscated by the North Korean regime, with the workers estimated to take home only around \$100 to \$200 per month.

To evade detection, Russia and China are suspected to be issuing the workers visas that are not affected by UNSCR 2397, such as student and tourist visas. As one expert noted at the CSIS, Bush Institute, and HRNK meeting, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, around 7,000 North Korean citizens arrived in Russia during the first quarter of 2020, according to Russian official statistics.

Zooming in specifically on the numbers of workers, students, and tourists: seven hundred fifty-three North Koreans were registered as workers, 1,975 were registered as students, and approximately 3,000 as tourists. The latter two categories represented notable increases from 2019. A 2022 [Radio Free Asia report](#) cites even higher numbers – 20,000 North Korean workers in Vladivostok and 2,000 to 3,000 workers in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

A different aspect of the slave labor problem stems from workers involved in information technology (IT) focused on programming, coding, and designing games and websites. According to one recent North Korean escapee, more than 2,000 IT workers are estimated to be working in China. A single worker often earns around \$3,000 per month, with the highest paid workers earning up to \$10,000 per month. Even though these workers likely take home several hundred dollars per month – more than other types of workers – most of their earnings still go directly to the North Korean regime. Some portion of North Korean IT workers are also suspected to be posing as Chinese contractors, possibly so they can work for European or U.S. companies.

North Korean female laborers overseas are in a particularly precarious position. Since the period of the great famine in the 1990s, North Korea's women have assumed the primary responsibility for the survival of their families. They are the ones most often taking risks like shopping at informal markets, where they are regularly arrested, imprisoned, and turned into forced laborers inside North Korea's detention facilities. North Korean women also frequently cross the border into China in search of economic opportunity and freedom. Once in China, these women find themselves in dangerous situations with no legal protection. In addition to enduring harsh work conditions, many are forced into so-called marriages and are at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. Some of the products known to be produced by North Korean female laborers under exploitative conditions, including textiles and processed seafood, are believed to be later imported into Europe, the United States, and South Korea.

Detaining and repatriating North Korean refugees

The 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention, together with its 1967 Protocol, codifies the right of refugees not to be forcibly returned to countries where they are likely to be persecuted. China and Russia are both signatories to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and yet frequently detain and repatriate North Korean asylum seekers back to North Korea, where they face a credible fear of persecution.

According to [Hanna Song](#), a director of the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) based in Seoul, South Korea, an estimated 2,000 North Koreans are currently being held in Chinese detention centers, waiting to be forcibly repatriated and with no access to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) staff or foreign embassies in Beijing.

Russia's efforts to [thwart the attempted defections](#) of North Koreans include a high-profile case involving a top IT specialist in the North Korean People's Army, Major Choe Kim Chol. Choe was arrested in September 2021 by Russian police in Vladivostok after seeking asylum from Moscow's UNHCR office and was later turned over to North Korea's consulate general.

Co-opting U.N. initiatives to block progress on North Korean human rights

Chinese and Russian support of U.N. Security Council resolutions over North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile tests stopped in 2017. Their enforcement of the sanctions mandated in these

resolutions arguably stopped long before that. But, more recently, China's and Russia's complicity in protecting North Korea from criticisms of its human rights abuses has grown through their burgeoning influence in various U.N. bodies.

For instance, Beijing and Moscow dominate the U.N.'s Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, which is a standing committee of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that is responsible for granting consultative status with ECOSOC to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). One expert at the CSIS, Bush Institute, HRNK meeting noted that this body is the de facto gatekeeper for international civil society. Within it, Beijing and Moscow have successfully rejected consultative status for at least one organization focused on human rights in North Korea. While these types of actions can ultimately be overturned in larger ECOSOC meetings, they still create significant difficulties for North Korean human rights-focused NGOs. China and Russia also have been known to harass these NGOs at the logistical level within the U.N., through obstructing activities like scheduling and event planning to make the work of human rights advocates more difficult.

Experts have also called attention to the tendency for UNHCR to avoid confronting China over its forcible repatriations of North Korean refugees. North Koreans in China have not had access to UNHCR staff at the border since 1999 and have not had access to UNHCR's office in Beijing since 2008. In a recent instance, the U.N. secretary general chose to refer the matter of an estimated 2,000 North Korean defectors being held in Chinese detention centers to the U.N.'s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) instead of UNHCR, presumably because of China's sizeable pledges of funds for refugee programs worldwide. That made UNHCR hesitant to pressure Beijing. Experts at the roundtable reported that data is no longer available from the UNHCR regarding North Koreans in China.

In a separate case, China mobilized over 20 states to issue a statement at the Human Rights Council to pressure OHCHR against publishing a report assessing China's treatment of the Uyghur population in Xinjiang. The report ultimately came out hours before the then-High Commissioner, Michelle Bachelet, stepped down from her position. China submitted a lengthy response to the OHCHR report following its release. Many in the expert community expect that China could use the same tactic to block future reporting on North Korean human rights.

As noted above, China has increased its financial donations for large-scale global refugee programs, including a reported billion-dollar commitment from its global infrastructure project, the [Belt and Road Initiative](#), for development programs to help refugee-hosting countries. Beijing's aim is to gain influence over destination countries with regard to its own dissidents and refugee populations that are fleeing China, particularly the Uyghur population. But China is also seeking a stronger voice in international refugee bodies to shape how countries important to China's interests manage refugee populations. Beijing's financing efforts have had the effect of making entities within the U.N. and other organizations more hesitant to challenge China's refoulement practices toward North Korean refugees.

More broadly, in the U.N. and in its interactions with the developing world, China has promoted a new "China model" for framing human rights concerns along the lines of "rights to development." This has offered an alternative way to think about human rights that is increasingly appealing to developing countries and competes with the U.S. approach. The degree to which the China model human rights narrative takes hold has the potential to affect the way these issues unfold at the U.N. in the coming months and years.

The impact of recent global developments

The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have both presented North Korea with new incentives and opportunities to further repress its own people, both within and outside its borders.

COVID-19

The North Korean regime has taken advantage of the excuse that COVID-19 provided to tighten social control through its border lockdown (in place since January 2020 and only selectively reopening starting in August 2023) and strict quarantine measures, thereby making daily life for North Koreans inside the country even more difficult.

Conditions for North Korean workers dispatched overseas also got much worse during the pandemic. Due to North Korea's COVID-19-justified border closures, North Koreans in China and Russia were unable to return home, even after their contracts with local companies expired, until August 2023, when DPRK state media [announced](#) the reopening of North Korea's borders to citizens living abroad.

According to one expert who attended the CSIS, Bush Institute, and HRNK working group meeting, many North Korean workers have expressed their wish to return to North Korea – including many with children at home – but the regime has prevented their return because they continue to generate much-needed hard currency. The regime is also reportedly concerned that China will not renew these returning workers' visas because of guest worker sanctions. As such, these workers are essentially stuck in China against their will for the indefinite future.

The economic difficulties created by China's former "zero-COVID" policy, which Beijing abruptly abandoned in December 2022, further worsened the situation, as the stranded North Korean workers had an increasingly difficult time finding work. In 2021, these workers were reportedly reduced to eating only one meal per day.

Brokers in China also took advantage of this situation, selling North Korean workers to local companies on short-term assignments for a fee of 100 Chinese yuan (about \$14) per worker. The contracts in China sometimes involved 100 workers at a time, resulting in a yield of approximately 10,000 Chinese yuan for Chinese brokers for each short-term contract. Adding to the hardship for North Korean workers during China's zero-COVID policy, they were often moved between work sites and spent only a few days at a time at each place.

COVID-19-induced border closures in China also made it more difficult for NGOs to reach out to North Korean workers as they previously had, either to provide support or to disseminate information that may have made its way back into North Korea.

North Korea-Russia connections in the war in Ukraine

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, China and Russia have become more closely aligned against the United States and are no longer willing to impose new sanctions on North Korea following provocations. This was evident when China and Russia rejected taking any punitive measures against Pyongyang in the U.N. Security Council following North Korea's October 2021 launch of an intermediate-range ballistic missile that flew over Japan. As Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S.

Ambassador to the U.N., asserted [via X](#), formerly known as Twitter, at that time, “Make no mistake: the two Council members that are blocking us from taking action are enabling North Korea.”

North Korea has reciprocated Russia’s support by becoming one of the only countries in the world to formally [recognize](#) the independence of the two Russia-backed breakaway republics in Ukraine’s Donbas region, Luhansk and Donetsk. Pyongyang has also parroted Russia’s rationale for the war, stating that the “hegemonic policy” of the United States and other Western countries justified Putin’s invasion. The two countries put their solidifying ties on public display in late July when Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited Pyongyang to attend celebrations and military parades commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Korean War armistice.

North Korea’s support is not just rhetorical, but also in the form of arms supplies. While information is scarce, the two countries share mutual interests that are leading them to conspire together. Russia’s military is in dire need of weapons and munitions. North Korea is in dire need of hard currency because of its three years of COVID-19 lockdown. Pyongyang also looks for every opportunity to obtain Russian debt forgiveness for past assistance. Strategically, North Korea also seeks to tighten a Russia-China-DPRK axis to counterbalance U.S.-Japan-Republic of Korea trilateral cooperation, which has reached new heights following the historic [Camp David summit](#) on Aug. 18, 2023. The Biden Administration appears to be executing an information campaign to downgrade intelligence for release to the public:

- [Media reports](#) in September 2022 citing U.S. intelligence indicated that North Korea has been selling shells and rockets to Russia to support its military operations in Ukraine. Some experts, noting the length of the supply lines from North Korea to Ukraine, have said that further evidence will be needed to verify these reports.
- The White House in November 2022 confirmed that [North Korea secretly transferred “a significant number”](#) of artillery shells to Russia via shipments through the Middle East and North Africa.
- In December 2022, the White House confirmed another transaction in which North Korea received payment for the [sale and delivery of infantry rockets and missiles](#) to the Wagner Group, a private mercenary army that has fought for Russia on the frontlines of Ukraine and elsewhere but whose future is uncertain following the [death of its leader](#), Yevgeny Prigozhin, in a plane crash in August 2023.
- In January 2023, the White House released satellite imagery showing a [DPRK arms transfer](#) by rail across the Russia-North Korea border on Nov. 18 and Nov. 19, 2022.
- In late August 2023, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield [publicly cited](#) “new deeply troubling information” indicating that Russian Defense Minister Shoigu’s visit to North Korea was intended “to try to convince Pyongyang to sell artillery ammunition to Russia” and that the visit was followed by further Russia-North Korea discussions on potential bilateral arms deals.

Given the Russian military’s shortfall in munitions and North Korea’s willingness to sell its wares, there will be more purchases of artillery, drones, or missiles as Pyongyang sees the war as an opportunity for consolidating relations with Russia against the West. The impact of these arms in significantly improving Russia’s capacity to fight is not clear. The arms sales suggest a level of desperation by Moscow to rely on inferior North Korean equipment. They also suggest the trajectory of Moscow-Pyongyang relations warrants ongoing close attention, as it has the potential to further embolden North Korea in its weapons development and human rights violations.

Recent initiatives to advance North Korean human rights

Within the United States

The Biden Administration has stated that human rights and democracy are a central part of U.S. foreign policy. With this policy reorientation, the administration, after a delay of two years, has nominated and Congress has confirmed a special envoy for North Korean human rights issues, a congressionally mandated position that has been vacant since 2017. The [Biden Administration has expanded](#) upon the details of its North Korea policy more generally, and the [April 2023 Yoon-Biden state visit](#) and August 2023 U.S.-South Korea-Japan trilateral summit at Camp David produced new statements regarding North Korean human rights. The three allies for the first time announced joint human rights demands on North Korea. They included not just better treatment of North Koreans but also repatriation of South Korean prisoners of war and Japanese abductees. Specifics regarding how the human rights issue fits within the overall North Korea policy of these governments are likely to become clearer in the coming months.

At working levels within the U.S. government, officials within the State Department who cover the North Korean human rights issue have focused their efforts on amplifying voices, increasing information flow into and out of North Korea, pressing for accountability for North Korea's human rights abuses and violations, and countering North Korean transnational repression.

Moving forward, the U.S. reentry onto the U.N. Human Rights Council (which remains unpopular with some on Capitol Hill) provides an opportunity to play an increased role in countering China's and Russia's support for North Korea within the U.N. context.

Biden administration officials have also worked on reinvigorating Security Council sessions focused on North Korean human rights. Following the 2014 COI Report, the United States started what was at that time an annual U.N. Security Council session on North Korea's human rights abuses. In many cases, that involved the United States working with like-minded partners to decrease China's and Russia's influence on the Security Council.

In March 2023, the United States, Albania, Japan, and South Korea called an informal meeting of the Security Council (called an Arria meeting) on North Korean human rights when China blocked the council from attaining the required eight votes for a formal session on the issue. China subsequently blocked the U.N. webcast of the meeting which featured testimony from two North Korean escapees, Joseph Kim and Seohyun Lee. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield [called out Beijing publicly](#) for its obstruction, "Even for today, a Permanent Member blocked this meeting from being publicly broadcast through U.N. Web TV – breaking what has always been, an agreement between Council Members. It was yet another attempt to hide the DPRK's atrocities from the world." On Aug. 17, 2023, the U.N. Security Council held an [open session](#) focused on North Korean human rights for the first time since 2017 due to efforts led by the United States.

Within the United Nations and other countries

The appointments of Dr. Shin-wha Lee as South Korea's ambassador-at-large for North Korean human rights, Elizabeth Salmón as the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, Tomoya Obokata as the U.N. Special Rapporteur for contemporary forms of slavery, and

State Department official Julie Turner as the U.S. Special Envoy for North Korean human rights issues are expected to increase the visibility and energy surrounding these issues on the international stage. Ambassador Lee's April 2023 trip to Washington, where she met with officials in the White House and spoke at a conference sponsored by CSIS, [served as a reminder](#) of the degree to which special envoys can raise the profile of the North Korean human rights issue.

Within the United Nations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is working on a DPRK accountability project that will report annually in March at the Human Rights Council. The project aims to establish the central evidence and information repository in Geneva, where information will be collected using the highest standards of criminal accountability from civil society organizations (CSOs), escapees, defectors, satellite imagery, and other sources. This repository could be used someday in criminal accountability processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is difficult to get the world's attention focused on the issue of North Korean human rights for an extended period of time. In recent months, many urgent matters have been taking the attention of global leaders – from the war in Ukraine to the China-Taiwan situation to global food and energy crises. Even the Trump-Kim summits in 2018 paid little attention to the human rights problems in North Korea. At the CSIS, Bush Institute, and HRNK meeting, one expert commented that this issue seems to be plagued by an on-off switch, and the switch has been in the “off” mode for a while. Another expert at the meeting noted, with some puzzlement and frustration, that as the world has learned more about North Korean human rights abuses, the movement seems to have lost its energy and momentum.

Despite this disappointing state of affairs, there are a number of opportunities on the horizon to advocate for North Korean human rights by reinvigorating existing initiatives, starting new ones, and connecting this issue with others that have been more in the spotlight. Recommendations in these areas are summarized below.

For the United States

Integrate human rights into a clarified North Korea policy.

- The details of the Biden administration's North Korea policy will need to be further fleshed out as tensions rise on the peninsula.
- Consistent with its stated aim of prioritizing democracy and human rights in its foreign policy agenda, the Biden Administration must ensure that the promotion of North Korean human rights features prominently within this general North Korea policy.
- This will require devising ways to put pressure on the North Korean regime to improve its human rights record alongside making progress on security issues.

Step up enforcement of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

- CAATSA was signed into law by President Donald Trump in August 2017 and imposed new sanctions on Russia, Iran, and North Korea.
- Title III Section 321(b) of CAATSA amended the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016 by creating a [“rebuttable presumption”](#) that “any significant goods, wares, articles,

and merchandise mined, produced, or manufactured wholly or in part by the labor of North Korean nationals or citizens shall be deemed to be prohibited” from importation into the United States. This section essentially codified the presumption that all North Korean labor, both within North Korea and overseas, is forced labor.

- So far, only a few shipments have been stopped under CAATSA. Enforcement of CAATSA's rebuttable presumption could be increased in the following ways:
 - Through devoting resources to the universal mapping of production chains, including in IT areas, to see where North Korean labor is employed in China and Russia as well as where North Korean-produced goods are actually going.
 - Through encouraging the use of tip-lines to alert the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to the possible importation of goods into the United States that are believed to be produced by North Koreans in China and Russia. Individuals could submit factual evidence to the tip line to flag specific regions and sectors.

Draw linkages between CAATSA and the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA).

- President Biden signed the UFLPA into law in December 2021. Like the North Korean rebuttable presumption under CAATSA, this act prohibits the importation into the United States of goods made through forced labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.
- Drawing connections between the UFLPA and North Korean rebuttable presumption under CAATSA would help to raise awareness of North Korean forced labor and increase enforcement of CAATSA, insofar as the legal framework for both acts is similar. To date, Congress has pushed CBP to enforce the UFLPA much harder than it has for the North Korea rebuttable presumption.
 - In general, Congress and the executive branch have been more focused on Xinjiang than North Korea since the start of the Biden Administration.
- Linkages between CAATSA and the UFLPA could also be highlighted by hosting survivors from both the camps in Xinjiang and in North Korea together at the same workshops and events.
 - Survivors might be able to learn from each other's experiences while elevating the visibility of North Korean human rights issues in the process.
 - These initiatives could also involve efforts to identify whether there are any lessons learned from the high level of UFLPA enforcement that can apply to the North Korean context.

Work with U.S. tech companies to audit Chinese contract workers for North Korean human rights abuses.

- North Koreans may be posing as Chinese contractors to work for U.S. and European firms. The U.S. government should cooperate with U.S. tech companies to verify this and put an end to this practice, if it is occurring, and seek help for these workers.

Impose additional sanctions on Chinese and Russian companies and individuals that employ North Korean forced labor.

- The above three recommendations could provide the information needed to justify these new sanctions.

Devote resources to verifying North Korean military support to Russia and enacting sanctions to impede the transfers bilaterally and through third countries.

- Further information is needed to confirm the existence and nature of North Korea's military support to Russia, which would constitute violations of sanctions on Russia and North Korea.
- Information generated through this research could help to raise the profile of the North Korean human rights issue, given the level of global attention devoted to Russia since the start of the war in Ukraine and the degree to which Russia-North Korea cooperation facilitates Pyongyang's ongoing weapons development and human rights abuses.

Utilize the North Korean Sanctions and Policy Enforcement Act (NKSPEA) to designate Russian and Chinese entities involved in human rights violations.

- The Biden Administration should build on the precedent set by the Obama Administration to use the NKSPEA tools and presidential executive orders to designate Chinese and Russian individuals and entities involved in or complicit with practices related to North Korean human rights abuses.
- This should include designations for North Korean entities involved in cyber and cryptocurrency theft as well as for Chinese entities that support such activities.

Working with the United Nations and with like-minded international partners

Take advantage of special envoys as a platform to reinvigorate energy and progress on North Korean human rights.

- South Korean Ambassador Shin-wha Lee, U.N. Special Envoys Elizabeth Salmón and Tomoya Obokata, and U.S. Special Envoy Julie Turner could co-sponsor events, cooperate in rallying support for new initiatives or resolutions, and collaborate on thematic reports to amplify the impact of their efforts.
- The envoys could also play a key role in launching a campaign to get North Korean human rights back on the U.N. Security Council agenda and drawing attention to China's and Russia's roles in shielding North Korean human rights abuses.

Work with CSOs to embed North Korean labor issues with other high-profile issues with a larger scope, such as crimes against children, criminal accountability, and sexual and gender-based crimes.

- This would help to generate support for North Korean human rights across a wider range of organizations and entities within the U.N.

Use the 10th anniversary of the 2014 COI report as an opportunity to call attention to areas of progress over the past decade as well as work that remains incomplete.

- Calling attention to the successes of the past 10 years – including the rebuttable presumption on North Korea and the North Korean Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act, both of which followed the 2014 COI – will boost confidence in these efforts and generate energy around next steps.

Join with other member states and CSOs in using the March 2023 renewal of the DPRK resolution in the Human Rights Council as a platform for further action.

- Michele Taylor, the U.S. Ambassador to the Human Rights Council, could work with CSOs and other Member States to organize side events and rally political and financial support for the resolution.
- Like-minded partners should consider organizing special sessions and statements on Chinese and Russian complicity with North Korean human rights abuses in other global governance bodies outside the U.N. such as the G7 and NATO summits, given the attendance of South Korea, Australia, and other Indo-Pacific countries at these gatherings.

Place pressure on UNHCR to do more throughout Asia to address the North Korean refugee population.

- Specifically, press China for access to detained workers and to the North Korea-China border.
- Assist the estimated 2,000 North Korean defectors detained in China with safe passage to third countries. This is a UNHCR task that the United States should support.

Take advantage of bilateral U.S.-South Korea and trilateral U.S.-South Korea-Japan alignment on the North Korean human rights issue to pursue new initiatives.

- South Korean President Yoon, who came into office in May 2022, has placed heavy emphasis on universal human rights, freedom, and democracy and should create a permanent foundation for the promotion of such values, similar to the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy.
- The United States, South Korea, and Japan under the Biden, Yoon, and Kishida administrations should seek new opportunities to collaborate bilaterally and trilaterally and within the U.N. and other international organizations to make progress on North Korean human rights and fulfill commitments from the Camp David summit.



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