



NORTH KOREA: TORTURE, DEATH PENALTY AND ABDUCTIONS

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Approximately 200,000 people are held in detention facilities and prison camps in North Korea. Many are subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Conditions vary from one facility to another but in general conditions are harsher in political prison camps (*kwanliso*) than in prison camps for non-political “crimes” (*kyohwaso* or *nodong danryundae*).

Prisoners are subjected to forced hard labour in all camps. Typical types of labour include mountain logging and stone quarrying, often for 10 hours or more per day with no rest days.

Prisoners are punished if suspected of lying, not working fast enough or forgetting prison rules or the words to patriotic songs. Forms of punishment include beatings, forced exercise, sitting still for prolonged periods of time and humiliating public criticism. The combination of forced hard labour, inadequate food, beatings, lack of medical care and unhygienic living conditions, result in prisoners falling ill. Some have died in custody or soon after release.

DEATH PENALTY

In North Korea, the death penalty is typically carried out by firing squad or hanging. The death penalty is often imposed even though the alleged crime is not subject to a death sentence under domestic law. Executions are usually carried out in secret, but there are reports of executions being held in public to serve as an example to others.

In February 2008, North Korea publicly executed 15 people, 13 women and two men, for attempting to flee to China, apparently as an example to deter others. In February 2007, two North Korean soldiers were sentenced to death for helping North Koreans to make unauthorized visits to China. It is not known if the executions ever took place.

ABDUCTIONS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

North Korea has followed a policy of abduction and enforced disappearance since the Korean War (1950-53). Tens of thousands of North Koreans, as well as nationals from other countries, including South Korea and Japan, have been abducted by the

North Korean government. In the majority of cases, the North Korean authorities have refused to acknowledge that these individuals are being detained or to provide information on their fate or whereabouts.

■ In 2001, Chinese police arrested Son Jong-nam and forcibly returned him to North Korea. Son Jong-nam was detained by the National Security Agency (NSA) in North Korea until February 2004. In January 2006, he was arrested again in Pyongyang, North Korea on charges of treason. The charges are based on Son Jong-nam's visit to China from May to June 2004 during which time he met his brother, Son Jong-hun, who had become

a South Korean national. Son Jong-nam was sentenced to death, taken to an undisclosed facility and has not been seen or heard of since.

■ North Korean agents abducted 13-year-old Megumi Yokota from Niigata, Japan on 15 November 1977. She was taken by boat to North Korea. In 1997, information emerged including testimony from a former North Korean spy that confirmed Megumi Yokota's abduction to North Korea. The North Korean government has stated that she committed suicide in 1994 however, DNA tests conducted in Japan confirmed that the remains returned by the North Korean government belonged to someone else.

RECOMMENDATIONS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTH KOREA TO:

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

■ Act immediately to stop forced labour, torture and other ill-treatment of prisoners and ensure that international standards are applied in the treatment of prisoners.

■ Improve conditions in prison camps and detention facilities to meet international minimum standards.

THE DEATH PENALTY

■ Immediately end public and secret executions.

■ Introduce a formal moratorium on all executions as a first step towards abolition of the death penalty.

ABDUCTIONS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

■ Publicly condemn and immediately stop all abductions and enforced disappearances.

■ Thoroughly, independently and impartially investigate past and current allegations of abductions and enforced disappearances.

■ Make public official, accurate and conclusive information on the fate and whereabouts of all persons who have been subjected to abduction or enforced disappearance.

■ Ensure that all those who have been subjected to abduction or enforced disappearance can, if they wish, leave North Korea unless they are charged with a recognizable criminal offence consistent with international law.

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Amnesty International
International Secretariat
Peter Benenson House
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom
www.amnesty.org