

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

NORTH KOREA

21 FEBRUARY 2007

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1. Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Key Documents has been produced by Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 21 February 2007.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- iii For Home Office users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on North Korea is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the key documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional documents are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

Home Office
Apollo House
36 Wellesley Road
Croydon CR9 3RR
United Kingdom

Email: cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information was established under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the Home Office's country of origin information material. The Advisory Panel welcomes all feedback on the Home Office's country of origin information material. Information about the Panel's work can be found on its website at www.apci.org.uk.

It is not the function of the Advisory Panel to endorse any Home Office material or procedures. In the course of its work, the Advisory Panel directly

reviews the content of selected Home Office COI documents, but neither the fact that such a review has been undertaken, nor any comments made, should be taken to imply endorsement of the material. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

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2. Background Information about North Korea

Full Country Name: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Area: Total area 121,555 square kilometres.

Population: 22,000,000 (2003).

Capital City: Pyongyang.

People: Korean with a small number of Chinese and Japanese.

Languages: Korean.

Religion(s): Buddhism, Confucianism, Shamanism, Chongdogyo, Christianity.

Currency: (North Korean) Won, Euros (for foreigners). [4a]

Major Political Parties: Workers' Party of Korea (WPK).

(United States Department of State, Background Note: North Korea, last updated October 2006) [3c]

President: Kim Il Sung ('Great Leader') is the Eternal President under the 1998 Constitution even though he died in 1994. His son, Kim Jong Il ('Dear Leader') is the de facto President.

Head of State: Kim Yong Nam.

General Secretary of the WPK: Kim Jong Il.

Foreign Minister: Paek Nam Sun.

Membership of International Groupings/Organisations: Food and Agriculture Organisation, Group of 77, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Maritime Organisation, International Telecommunications Union, Non-Aligned Movement, United Nations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, Universal Postal Union, World Health Organisation, World Intellectual Property Organisation, World Meteorological Organisation. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: North Korea, last updated on 14 December 2006) [4a]

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GEOGRAPHY

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) is situated in the northern half of the Korean peninsula between the Republic of Korea (South Korea) to the South and the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the North. It also shares a much shorter border with Russia to the northeast. The Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), which cuts the Korean peninsula in half and separates the two nations, is 250 miles-long and heavily fortified. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: North Korea, last updated on 14 December 2006) [4a] The much longer (1,416 km.) border between North Korea and the PRC is primarily marked by the Yalu and Tumen Rivers, both of which can be crossed in some areas by wading across. The border between North Korea and Russia is only 17 km. long and difficult to cross due to the strong currents of the Tumen River. (International Crisis Group, Perilous Journeys: The Plight of North Koreans in China and Beyond, Asia Report No.122, 26 October 2006, See section II A.) [24a]

MAPS



Map courtesy of CIA World Fact Book



Map courtesy of Encarta (Microsoft Corp.)

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RECENT HISTORY

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) was founded on 9 September 1948. After the defeat of Japan during the Second World War the Korean peninsula was divided between the Soviet-backed North and the US-backed South (which was founded on 15 August 1948). Prior to her defeat Japan had ruled the whole of Korea as a colony. The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 and lasted until the cessation of hostilities on 27 July 1953. The North backed by China invaded the South and almost overran it before UN troops intervened and pushed them back. Over a million people on each side died during the fighting and while the South agreed to abide by the terms of the July armistice it never signed it. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: North Korea, last updated on 14 December 2006) [4a]r

RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

North Korea is a one party state governed by the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). It was founded on Marxist-Leninist principals by Kim Il Sung ('Great Leader'). The regime tightly controls every aspect of its citizen's lives and stresses the importance of self-reliance (juch'e or chuch'e in Korean). The late Kim Il Sung is universally known as the 'Great Leader' and his son and heir Kim Jong Il is known as the 'Dear Leader'. Both men are accorded almost messianic status due to a bizarre personality cult constructed around them. (Library of Congress, North Korea, updated 5 May 2005) [1a]

On 9 November 2006, North Korea exploded a nuclear device prompting the UN Security Council to impose economic sanctions. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: North Korea, last updated on 14 December 2006) [4a] Resolution 1718 called on North Korea to eliminate its Nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and other weapons of mass destruction but stopped short of threatening military intervention. (BBC, 4 October 2006) [7g] on 13 February 2007, North Korea agreed to begin shutting down its main Nuclear reactor at Yongbyon within 60 days and to eventually dismantle its atomic weapons program in return for fuel aid. As part of the deal North Korea and the United States also agreed to begin talks about normalising relations between the two countries. (CNN, 13 February 2007) [36a]

FAMINE

Between 500,000 to 2 million North Koreans are thought to have died as the result of famine in the mid-1990s. Since May 2005, the World Food Programme (WFP) has been scaling back its activities in North Korea following the governments decision to no longer accept international food aid. During the next two years the WFP expects to distribute 150,000 tones of aid; aid peaked at 500,000 per year in the past. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: North Korea, last updated on 14 December 2006) [4a]

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ECONOMY

GDP: US\$bn 22.85.

GDP per head: US\$ 1007.

GDP Real Growth: 1% (2004 est.).

Inflation: Unknown.

Major Industries: steel, cement, machinery, mining, textile and IT (small but with high level backing). Agriculture still accounts for about one third of economic activity.

Major trading partners: China, South Korea, Japan, Thailand and India.

(Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profile: North Korea, last updated on 14 December 2006) [4a]

North Korea's economy is still largely welded to the old-Soviet model of heavy industries and collective farms. The withdrawal of Soviet aid in 1991 combined with a series of natural disasters led to a breakdown in the food distribution system. As a result North Korea has been forced to rely on international food aid since the mid-1990s. These traumas prompted the government to introduce limited economic reforms in July 2002 designed to liberalise the economy and stimulate growth. (Library of Congress, North Korea, updated 5 May 2005) [1a]

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HUMAN RIGHTS

The FCO country profile for North Korea stated, "The DPRK has partially and belatedly met its reporting obligations under the various conventions to which it is a party. A national Human Rights Committee was established in 1992, but appears to function only sporadically. It is not independent from government. Although a limited relaxation of economic controls has taken place in recent years, punishment can be severe for those who transgress established norms, regulations and laws." [4a]

In their Annual Report on Human Rights 2006 the FCO stated,

"The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), also known as North Korea, is widely considered to have one of the worst human rights records in the world. Much of the evidence for this record comes from North Korean defectors, also referred to as refugees or escapees, who provide shocking reports of serious and widespread violations of basic human rights in the DPRK. The alleged abuses include: abductions and disappearances; arbitrary detention and imprisonment for up to three generations of the same family; regular use of the death penalty (including political and extra-judicial and public executions); routine use of torture and inhuman treatment; forced abortions and infanticide; political prison camps and labour rehabilitation camps; extreme religious persecution; and chemical experimentation." [4b] (p 61)

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3. Index to key source documents

(KB users - click source number to access document directly)

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| <p>KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY</p> | <p>[1a] Library of Congress, North Korea, updated 5 May 2005 http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles.html</p> <p>[2a] USDS, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005, 8 March 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61612.htm</p> <p>[2c] USSD, Background Note: North Korea, last updated October 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm</p> <p>[4a] FCO, Country Profile: North Korea (last updated on 14 December 2006) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019041562185</p> <p>[7a] BBC, Country Profile: North Korea, Last updated 3 January 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1131421.stm</p> <p>[10a] CIA, The World Factbook, North Korea, last updated 23 January 2007 https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html</p> <p>[10b] CIA, Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments, North Korea, last updated 23 January 2007 https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/chiefs/chiefs94.html</p> |
| <p>MAPS</p> | <p>[10a] CIA, The World Factbook, North Korea, last updated 23 January 2007 https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html</p> <p>[21a] Encarta Encyclopedia, Map, North Korea (accessed 2 February 2007) http://encarta.msn.com/map_701515180/Korea_North.htm</p> |
| <p>HISTORY</p> | <p>[1a] Library of Congress, North Korea, updated 5 May 2005 http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles.html</p> <p>[2a] USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005, 8 March 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61612.htm</p> <p>[2c] USSD, Background Note: North Korea, last updated October 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm</p> <p>[4a] FCO, Country Profile: North Korea (last updated on 14 December 2006)</p> |

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| HISTORY CONT'D | <p>http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019041562185</p> <p>[7a] BBC, Country Profile: North Korea, Last updated 3 January 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1131421.stm</p> <p>[7b] BBC, Timeline: North Korea, last updated 9 October 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1132268.stm</p> <p>[26a] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: North Korea http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6993</p> |
| POLITICS AND RECENT EVENTS | <p>[1a] Library of Congress, North Korea, updated 5 May 2005 http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles.html</p> <p>[2a] USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005, 8 March 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61612.htm</p> <p>[2c] USSD, Background Note: North Korea, last updated October 2006 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2792.htm</p> <p>[4a] FCO, Country Profile: North Korea (last updated on 14 December 2006) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019041562185</p> <p>[5a] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2007: North Korea, January 2007 http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/nkorea14755.htm</p> <p>[7a] BBC, Country Profile: North Korea, Last updated 3 January 2007 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1131421.stm</p> <p>[7b] BBC, Timeline: North Korea, last updated 9 October 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1132268.stm</p> <p>[7d] BBC, Profile: Kim Jong-il, 9 October 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1907197.stm</p> <p>[7g] BBC, UN slaps sanctions on North Korea, 14 October 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/6051704.stm</p> <p>[11a] Amnesty International, Annual Report 2005 (covering events from January - December 2005) http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/prk-summary-eng</p> <p>[26a] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: North Korea</p> |

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| <p>HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL:</p> | <p>[2a] USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005, 8 March 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61612.htm</p> <p>[3a] UNHCR, Socialist Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 1998 http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/rsddocview.html?tbl=RSDLEGAL&id=3ae6b56d0</p> <p>[4a] FCO, Country Profile: North Korea (last updated on 14 December 2006) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019041562185</p> <p>[4b] FCO, Annual Report on Human Rights 2006, published 12 October 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1159199103169</p> <p>[5a] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2007: North Korea, January 2007 http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/nkorea14755.htm</p> <p>[11a] Amnesty International, Annual Report 2005 (covering events from January - December 2005) http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/prk-summary-eng</p> <p>[11b] Amnesty International, North Korea: Human rights concerns, 24 November 2006 http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA240022006?open&of=ENG-PRK</p> <p>[26a] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: North Korea http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6993</p> <p>[26c] Freedom House, Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies 2006</p> |

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| | http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/WoW/2006/NorthKorea2006.pdf |
| <p>HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES:</p> <p>(IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)</p> | |
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| CORRUPTION | <p>[1a] Library of Congress, North Korea, updated 5 May 2005 http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles.html</p> <p>[2a] USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005, 8 March 2006</p> |

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| FOREIGN REFUGEES | <p>[2a] USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005, 8 March 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61612.htm</p> |
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| <p>FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE MEDIA</p> | <p>[1a] Library of Congress, North Korea, updated 5 May 2005 http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles.html</p> <p>[2a] USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005, 8 March 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61612.htm</p> <p>[4b] FCO, Annual Report on Human Rights 2006, published 12 October 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/ServletFront?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1159199103169</p> <p>[5a] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2007: North Korea, January 2007 http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/nkorea14755.htm</p> <p>[26a] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: North Korea http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6993</p> <p>[26b] Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 2006: North Korea http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2006</p> <p>[26c] Freedom House, Worst of the Worst: The World's Most Repressive Societies 2006 http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/WoW/2006/NorthKorea2006.pdf</p> <p>[30a] CPJ, Attacks on Press 2005, North Korea http://www.cpj.org/cases05/asia_cases05/north_korea.html</p> <p>[31a] Reporters without Borders, Press Freedom Index 2006 (accessed 30 January 2007) http://www.rsf.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=639</p> <p>[31b] Reporters without Borders, Annual Report 2007 – North Korea http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=20793</p> |
| <p>HUMANITARIAN ISSUES</p> | <p>[5b] Human Rights Watch, A Matter of Survival The North Korean Government's Control of Food and the Risk of Hunger, 4 May 2006</p> |

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