

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/north-korea-a-leading-press-freedom-predator-19-12-2011,41570.html>

Asia - North Korea

Death of a tyrant

A leading press freedom predator dies

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The death of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-il, who was on the Reporters Without Borders list of "Predators of Press Freedom," raises many questions about the future of freedom of the media and information in North Korea. Kim died during a train trip on 17 December, state TV announced today.

"After this [press freedom predator's](#) death, our attention turns to his third son and declared successor, Kim Jong-un," Reporters Without Borders said. "It is very hard to predict what his policies on basic freedoms will be. Neither the years he spent in a school in Switzerland nor his very young age, which could mean he is easily influenced, offer any clues. We are very worried by the reports circulating about him, including reports of his severity towards those who smuggle foreign electronic media content into North Korea.

"A lot will depend on his legitimacy with the People's Army and Workers' Party, the regime's two pillars. Kim Jong-un has not had the benefit of the same national propaganda and prior experience as his father, who had been prepared from the 1970s onwards to take over. Refugees who fled North Korea before 2009 say they were unaware of his existence prior to their departure. It is therefore not inconceivable that the regime could adopt forceful and even radical political measures in a bid to legitimize him in the eyes of senior officials and the North Korean population."

After Kim Jong-il's health was undermined by a stroke in August 2008, he cut back on his activities and his public appearance became more infrequent. In September 2010, Kim Jong-un was promoted to the rank of four-star army general and named as vice chairman of the Party's Central Military Commission, paving the way for a transfer of power.

An "[Enemy of the Internet](#)", North Korea continues to be the world's most closed country and for the past 10 years has ranked last or second from last in the Reporters Without Borders world [press freedom index](#). The news media are all state-owned and exclusively serve the anachronistic and paranoid regime's propaganda needs.

After visiting the South Korean capital of Seoul last July to investigate the situation of the media and freedom of information in North Korea, Reporters Without Borders issued a report entitled "[North Korea: Frontiers of censorship](#)." It found that there had been an increase in the flow of news and information into North Korea thanks both to foreign radio stations and NGOs that send multimedia content across the border.

Since 2009, Reporters Without Borders has been [supporting Seoul-based radio stations](#) such as *Free North Korea Radio*, *Radio Free Chosun* and *Open Radio for North Korea*, which are the main sources of independent news and information available to the North Korean population. Operating since the mid-2000s, they are the first radio stations run by North Korean refugees to broadcast to the population in the north.

As part of a [campaign](#) against Kim Jong-il as a Predator of Press Freedom, Reporters Without Borders and several independent media gave a [news conference](#) in Seoul on 16 February, his last birthday. The aim of the campaign was to urge the South Korean authorities and civil

society to increase their support for the North Korean refugee radio stations that try to break through the wall of propaganda and political control.
