Committee: Security Council MS
Topic: Addressing reports of authoritarian rule and human rights violations under the government of Kim Jong Un in North Korea.
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Overview of the Problem

Human rights violations can become an international peace and security issue when repression, fear, and restrictions on freedom create instability and make cooperation between countries more difficult. North Korea, under Kim Jong Un's government, has been criticized for restricting basic rights and freedoms. The United Nations Commission of Inquiry reported serious human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, forced labor, and abuses in political prison camps (United Nations Commission of Inquiry, 2014). A historical UN-cited estimate suggested that between 80,000 and 120,000 people were held in political prison camps, including facilities known as Camp 14 and Camp 16. However, this is not a verified current figure (OHCHR, 2019). Restrictions on foreign media and freedom of expression have also raised concerns, particularly following the adoption of North Korea's 2020 Law on Rejecting Reactionary Thought and Culture (OHCHR, 2025). The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in North Korea has repeatedly requested access to the country, but the government has not allowed an official country visit. The Commission of Inquiry also concluded that some documented violations could constitute crimes against humanity under international law (United Nations Commission of Inquiry, 2014; United Nations, 1998). Countries disagree on how to respond. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, South Korea, and Japan have supported international attention to human rights concerns, while China and Russia have emphasized national sovereignty and dialogue. These differences make it difficult for the Security Council to agree on stronger measures. Delegates must discuss how to improve investigations, support accountability, protect humanitarian access, and encourage respect for human rights without causing further harm to ordinary people. They must also consider what

actions the international community can take while respecting national sovereignty and maintaining international peace and security.

Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Human rights violations are often addressed by organizations such as the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Security Council can also discuss these situations when they may affect international stability. The situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), commonly known as North Korea, presents an important challenge for the international community. Under Kim Jong Un's government, the country has maintained centralized state authority and limited the freedoms of its population. These conditions have created concerns about the protection of civilians and the relationships between human rights and regional security. The Security Council must consider this issue because North Korea's internal situation is connected to wider international concerns. Its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, relationships with other countries, and disagreements over international sanctions make diplomatic cooperation difficult. In addition, the government's restrictions on independent access make it challenging for international organizations to investigate reported violations and understand the needs of civilians. The council has different ways to respond to these challenges. Under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, it can encourage peaceful solutions through negotiations and diplomacy. Under Chapter VII, it can adopt binding measures, including sanctions, and authorize international missions when the necessary conditions are met. Binding measures are official decisions that UN member countries are required to follow under the UN Charter. The Council may also refer a situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) under Article 13(b) of the Rome Statute, which means asking the Court to investigate possible international crimes and consider holding those responsible accountable. The ICC is an international court that investigates and prosecutes individuals accused of serious international crimes. However, this requires a Security Council decision (United Nations, 1945; United Nations, 1998). This paper will help delegates understand the historical background, current conditions, and international

positions regarding North Korea. It will also encourage them to develop realistic solutions that protect civilians, support accountability, and consider regional stability.

Historical Background

The political situation on the Korean peninsula dates back to 1945, when Korea was divided following the end of World War II. The Soviet Union supported the North while the United States supported the South. In 1948, two separate governments were established, creating the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north and the Republic of Korea in the south (National Archives, n.d.). In 1950, the Korean War began when North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel and attacked South Korea. The conflict ended in 1953 with an armistice rather than a formal peace treaty. This left the peninsula divided and tensions between the two countries unresolved (National Archives, n.d.).An important event occurred as the Famine that affected North Korea during the 1990s,commonly known as the Arduous March. One of its main causes was the collapse of the Soviet trade subsidies in 1991,which affected North Korea's economy and reduced its access to important resources.Problems with food production and the Public Distribution System also contributed to the crisis because the government could not provide enough food to the population.These difficulties made ordinary citizens more vulnerable to food shortages and economic problems (Haggard &Noland,2007) .North Korea has experienced three generations of leadership within the Kim family. After the death of Kim Jong Il on December 17, 2011, his son Kim Jong Un became the country's new leader. He was officially named Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army in December 2011 (The times 2010,2011) .Since then, his government has continued the political system established by the previous leadership and strengthened government oversight of public life. Under Kim Jong Un, citizens have continued to face government surveillance, political discrimination, and restrictions on basic freedoms. Economic difficulties and food shortages have also affected the population. Because independent organizations have limited access to the country, international organizations and people who have left North Korea have played an important role in documenting reported human rights violations. Over the years, countries such as South Korea, the United States, Japan, China, and Russia have

attempted to influence North Korea through diplomatic negotiations, economic sanctions, and agreements related to nuclear security. However, these efforts have had limited success because of political disagreements, mistrust, and North Korea's continued development of nuclear weapons (Arms Control Association, 2009).

The Situation Today

North Korea has an estimated population of around 26 million people. The information on the economy and living conditions are hard to find because of the government´s control of independent oversight (Freedom House, 2026). More or less 10.7 million people, representing more than 40% of North Korea's people, were undernourished (World Food Programme,2022) .North Korea's economy remains isolated from much of the international community.South Korea's central bank has an estimation that North Korea's annual income per person was approximately 1.72 million South Korean won in 2024,or more or less US$1,246. This is an estimate because North Korea does not publish complete independent verified economic information (Human Rights Watch, 2026). North Korea has also strengthened military cooperation with Russia,including and giving military support for Russia's war against Ukraine. This problem has increased concerns about regional security and the enforcements of international sanctions (Curtis, 2026). These challenges affected both North Korean citizens and the international community. Food shortages and restrictions on basic freedoms create humanitarian concerns, while nuclear development and military cooperation contribute to international tension. Addressing the situation needs diplomatic cooperation,humanitarian assistance, and the efforts to protect human rights. Today, North Korean citizens continue to face strict government control over all their daily lives. The government limits access to foreign news and the internet monitors public behavior, and restricts freedom of expression and movement (Human Rights Watch, 2026; Freedom House, 2026). These controls make it difficult for citizens to share data about their experiences or challenge policies (Human Rights Watch, 2026).

Food insecurity remains a serious problem.United Nations reporting estimates that more than 40% of North Korea's population is undernourished (United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe 2026). Children are especially vulnerable

because of the limited access to reliable information and humanitarian assistance makes it harder for communities to identify their needs and receive support. Restrictions on independent monitoring also make it difficult to confirm whether food and other aid reach the people who need it the most, they suffer the side effects of malnutrition,and limited access to vulnerable communities and reliable information about their needs (World Food Programme, n.d.;Human Rights Watch,2026).

North Korea´s nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs are a major concern for regional security (Curtis, 2026). South Korea, Japan, and the United States monitor these developments because they could increase tensions and threaten regional stability (Curtis, 2026). The situation also makes diplomatic negotiations more difficult .

Key Stakeholders and Their Positions

Many countries and international organizations are involved in addressing human rights violations in North Korea. Each stakeholder has different priorities, including the protection of human rights, national sovereignty, and regional security. Understanding these positions can help delegates identify allies and develop possible solutions.

North Korea prioritizes national sovereignty and rejects international criticism, arguing that human rights investigations interfere in its domestic affairs (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 2024). The United States, South Korea, and Japan support international investigations, accountability, and cooperation to address human rights concerns. They also prioritize regional security and have supported international pressure on North Korea, although they may have differences regarding how sanctions are applied and how diplomacy is conducted (Security Council Report, 2024). China and Russia emphasize sovereignty, regional stability, and diplomatic dialogue. These countries oppose measures they believe could increase tensions and interfere in a country's domestic affairs. In June 2024, they voted against adding a briefing on North Korea's human rights situation to the Security Council's agenda (United Nations, 2024).

The United Kingdom and France, two permanent members of the Security Council, also support international attention to human rights violations in North Korea. The United Kingdom prioritizes accountability, diplomatic negotiations, and allowing UN human rights organizations to access the country. It has also called on North Korea to

cooperate with international investigations and improve conditions for its population (United Kingdom, 2024; United Kingdom, 2025). France emphasizes respect for international law, the protection of North Korean refugees from forced return, and renewed cooperation with the United Nations. It has also called on North Korea to end human rights violations and return to diplomatic negotiations (United Nations, 2024).

The United Nations system also plays an important role. The Commission of Inquiry was established in 2013 and completed its investigation in 2014, publishing a report documenting serious human rights violations. It is important to understand that this commission was a temporary investigation, not a permanent organization. Today the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), including its office in Seoul, and the Special Rapporteur continue monitoring the situation, documenting reported violations, and supporting accountability efforts (OHCHR, 2014; OHCHR, 2025). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, also document abuses and publish research that helps guide international discussions (United Nations Commission of Inquiry, 2014; Amnesty International, 2025).

Affected communities are also important stakeholders. North Korean refugees need protection from forced return because they may face serious human rights violations if sent back to the country. Families separated between North Korea and other countries need opportunities to communicate, reunite, and receive information about missing relatives. Civilians inside North Korea also need access to food, medicine, and humanitarian assistance (OHCHR, 2024; United Nations, 2025).

Businesses, including shipping companies and banks, also have responsibilities when humanitarian assistance is sent to North Korea. Shipping companies need clear information about which goods can be transported, which shipments require approval, and which routes are permitted. Banks need clear sanctions rules so they can prevent prohibited financial transactions without unnecessarily blocking payments for humanitarian assistance. These businesses are important because their services help

humanitarian organizations deliver supplies to civilians (United Nations Security Council, 2026).

These different priorities can complicate negotiations. Delegates must consider how to promote accountability and protect human rights while respecting international law, addressing security concerns, and encouraging diplomatic cooperation.

Past Attempts and Existing Frameworks

Addressing human rights violations in North Korea requires cooperation between countries and long-term efforts. Understanding previous actions helps delegates recognize what has worked, what has not worked, and what challenges still need attention. At the international level, the United Nations established the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2013. In 2014, the Commission published a report documenting serious abuses, including torture, forced labor, and political prison camps. It also called for those responsible to be held accountable for their actions (United Nations Commission of Inquiry, 2014). One result was that more than 80 victims and witnesses shared their experiences during public hearings. However, the Commission could not investigate directly inside North Korea because the government denied access (OHCHR, 2014).

In 2015, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights opened an office in Seoul, South Korea. One result was the collection and preservation of thousands of pieces of information about reported violations. Nevertheless, the office still cannot access North Korea directly and depending on interviews and other sources (OHCHR, 2024). At the international and regional levels, the countries have taken different strategies to this situation. The United States, South Korea, and Japan have supported investigations and efforts to make those responsible answer for their actions. China and Russia have generally emphasized dialogue, national sovereignty, and regional stability. These different positions have made it difficult for the Security Council to agree on stricter measures (Security Council Report, 2023).

The UN has continued to examine human rights conditions, including through reports. These efforts have helped raise international awareness and preserve information that could support future investigations. However, their results have been limited because North Korea restricts independent access to the country, making it difficult to verify reports directly. The Security Council has also not referred the situation to the International Criminal Court.

Delegates should build on these previous efforts by proposing realistic measures to improve human rights monitoring, ensure humanitarian aid reaches civilians, and encourage international cooperation. They should also consider how to protect civilians while addressing security concerns and respecting international law when developing solutions that strengthen monitoring, support humanitarian assistance, and encourage international cooperation while respecting international law.

Challenges and Complications

One major challenge is that countries disagree about how to respond to North Korea. Some prioritize international pressure and sanctions, while others support diplomacy and humanitarian assistance. These differences make it difficult for the international community to agree on a common strategy. (Curtis, 2026). Another obstacle is the limited access to information and resources. Food shortages and economic difficulties create a need for humanitarian assistance,but delivering supplies can be difficult because access to the country is restricted (World Food Programme, n,d.). Another obstacle is the lack of reliable communication systems and independent data. Because international organizations cannot freely access the country, they may struggle to collect accurate information, monitor conditions, and confirm whether humanitarian aid reaches civilians ,(Human Rights Watch, 2026). Legal complications also exist because countries and organizations must follow United Nations sanctions while trying to provide food, medicine and other essential supplies to civilians, although humanitarian exemptions are available, organizations must submit a formal request to the UN Security Council´s 1718 Committee.The request must describe the aid, its intended recipients, the items and shipment plans, and how the organization will monitor the aid

to prevent it from being diverted for prohibited purposes (United Nations Security Council,n.d.). Political and cultural differences can also make cooperation difficult. North Korea emphasizes national sovereignty and often rejects outside criticism, while many countries and international organizations call for greater access and stronger human rights protections. Another challenge is ensuring that humanitarian assistance reaches the people who need it most. Restrictions on access and limited independent monitoring make it difficult for international organizations to verify whether food and medical supplies are distributed fairly (Human Rights Watch, 2026). Countries need to balance pressure on the North Korean government with the need to protect civilians from worsening living conditions (World Food Programme,n,d.) Another difficulty is maintaining trust by North Korea and the international community. North Korea may view outside pressure as a threat to its sovereignty, while other countries believe international action is necessary to protect human rights and regional security. This lack of trust makes negotiations slower and reduces the changes of reaching agreements that all parties will accept (Curtis, 2026)

The Committee's Role and Powers

The United Nations Security Council has an important role in maintaining international peace and security. Unlike organizations that mainly investigate human right conditions or make recommendations, the security council has the authority to adopt binding decisions when the requirements of the UN charter are met. Under chapter VI of the UN Charter, the Council can encourage peaceful solutions through negotiations, mediation,and diplomatic discussions. Under chapter VII, it can determine whether the situation represents a threat to international peace and security and adopt stronger measures. These measures can include economic and diplomatic sanctions under Article 41. The council can also authorize international missions ,including peacekeeping operations, when it considers them necessary and appropriate.However,these decisions depend on the situation and the approval of the (Council United Nations,1945). The council can also establish monitoring mechanisms,request reports,a nd encourage member states to share information about human rights conditions . It can work with organizations such as the OHCHR and other

UN agencies to improve investigations and support humanitarian programs.(United Nations Human Rights Council, 2016; United Nations, n.d.).

During the debate,delegates will work together to draft a United Nations Security Council resolution addressing human rights violations in North Korea. The resolution will include recommendations and proposed actions to improve the situation. For a substantive resolution to be adopted, it must receive at least nine votes in favor and must not be opposed by any of the five permanent members:China,France,Russia,the United Kingdom, and the United States.

A negative vote from any permanent member can block the resolution, while an abstention does not count as a veto (United Nations, 1945).

Guiding Questions for Debate

1. How can we hold Kim Jong-un's government accountable for breaches of human rights whilst respecting the sovereignty of the country?
2. What can be done to investigate the accusations of torture, slavery and arbitrary imprisonment and abuse within political prision camps by the United Nations considering the difficulty of acquiring independent sources from North Korea?
3. How can we provide aid to vulnerable people such as children and those with food insecurity whilst not causing more problems with the government?
4. How much should the economy be sanctioned in order to put pressure on the country? It may cause issues for those living in the country.
5. How can the Security Council work together to overcome the conflict between countries like the United States, South Korea, Japan, China and Russia?
6. How can China and Russia participate in international efforts to address human rights violations while respecting North Korea's sovereignty and maintaining regional stability? This must consider maintaining diplomatic and stable relationships.
7. How can investigators protect witnesses and their families from possible risks while collecting evidence of human rights violations in North Korea?

8. How can new methods be used to increase effectiveness in international action after previous investigations, resolutions and diplomacy have had little success?
9. How can we handle the link between the North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile programme, military alliance with Russia and issues with security in the region?
10. When could international law, potentially referring to the international Criminal Court, help hold those responsible for serious human rights violations accountable?
11. How can we promote improvement in freedom of speech, movement and religion without putting citizens of North Korea at greater risk?
12. Bearing in mind the powers and limitations of the committee, what realistic recommendations can the delegates suggest to improve the situation regarding human rights, aid and cooperation with North Korea?

Conclusion and Call to Action

North Korea's human rights situation is an important international theme that need to be threatened because of the restriction of basic freedoms, food insecurity, and limited access to reliable information continue to affect millions of people.These problems can also create challenges for regional peace and international security (Human Rights Watch, 2026; United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, 2026). The international community must act carefully to protect civilians while giving respect for human rights and peaceful dialogue.

Delegates can make a difference by working together on realistic situations, supporting human assistance, and recommending ways to improve accountability. Although the committee couldn't solve the entire crisis, a strong resolution can help maintain international attention and encourage coordinated action.By asking and giving cooperation over division and putting civilians first,delegates can help build a safer and more just future for people of North Korea by finding one solution, such as distributing money,information and having freedom of speech in North Korea. In fact, delegates should recognize that protecting human rights and addressing security concerns are connected.Long-term stability will require efforts to reduce tensions,prevent suffering,and create opportunities . The committee should encourage member states to

support humanitarian programs,share reliable information,and work with relevant United Nations agencies. Any action should include clear goals,responsible organizations,and a way to evaluate the progress. Delegates should also take into consideration the possible consequences for ordinary North Korean people and avoid measures that could make their living conditions worse.(Human Rights Watch,2026;United Nations Human Rights Council,2016). Delegates should also consider how the committee can measure the results of its recommendations. Progress could be evaluated through regular reports from relevant United Nations agencies, and information about whether assistance is reaching vulnerable civilians. These steps would help member states identify problems and adjust their approach when necessary. By focusing on practical actions,cooperation, and the protection of civilians, delegates can work toward a resolution that responds to North Korea's human rights concerns while supporting long-term peace and stability. Furthermore, delegates should emphasize the importance of education, access to reliable information,and the protection of fundamental freedoms. Supporting educational programs and promoting access to accurate information can help people understand their rights and improve their quality of life.The committee should also encourage member states to continue discussing North Korea's human rights situation through peaceful diplomatic channels. By maintaining international cooperation and evaluating the effectiveness of proposed solutions, the international community can make meaningful progress toward protecting human rights.Ultimately, the success of the committee will depend on its ability to turn recommendations into practical actions that improve the lives of North Korean civilians and promote lasting peace.

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