

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children

Ref.: AL PRK 3/2025
(Please use this reference in your reply)

6 November 2025

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences and Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 55/21, 60/8, 54/14, 51/15 and 53/9.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning a decree issued on 26 September 2025 to grant an amnesty to those who have been convicted of committing crimes against the country on the occasion of the 80th founding anniversary of the Workers' Party of Korea.

According to the information received:

On 29 September 2025, the State media of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reported that the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea decided to grant an amnesty to those who have been convicted of committing crimes against the country and the people on the occasion of the 80th founding anniversary of the glorious Workers' Party of Korea, and released a relevant decree on 26 September. According to the State media, the amnesty has been reportedly proclaimed from 1 October 2025. It further reported that the DPRK Cabinet and relevant organs will take practical measures to enable those freed under the terms of the amnesty to settle down in their work and life.

We would like to express our interest in this decree because the release of those who are charged against "crimes against the country" has been continuously recommended by the UN human rights mechanisms, including our mandates, and if implemented, this decree could be a positive step.

Further to our joint allegation letter AL PRK 2/2024 dated on 22 May 2024 and AL PRK 3/2024 dated on 6 November 2024, we note that this decree would appear to concern also forcibly repatriated individuals considered to have committed "a traitorous act" or "crimes against the country".

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned decision of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly.
2. Please provide detailed information on those who were granted amnesty, such as the number of people, their gender, the specific crimes they were charged with under the Criminal Code, and the number of years they were imprisoned.
3. Please provide information on whether subjects of opinions 37/2024 and 59/2024 of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention were part of the amnesty.
4. Please provide information on the selection criteria for granting an amnesty.
5. Among the people being granted an amnesty, were there individuals who were forcibly repatriated from China or other countries and then imprisoned? If so, how many were they and how many among them were women?
6. Please provide information on what kinds of practical measures the DPRK Cabinet and relevant organs will take to enable those freed under the terms of the amnesty to settle down in their work and life.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Elizabeth Salmón
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's
Republic of Korea

Matthew Gillett
Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Gabriella Citroni
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Tomoya Obokata
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and
consequences

Siobhán Mullally
Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government that the right to freedom of movement encompasses the right to leave the country of his or her own, as provided in article 12(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), acceded to by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 14 September 1981. The Human Rights Committee has consistently stressed that any restrictions permitted under article 12(3) must not nullify the principle of liberty of movement, and are governed by the requirement of necessity provided for in article 12, paragraph 3, and by the need for consistency with the other rights recognized in the Covenant (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.9).

Without expressing at this stage an opinion on the facts of the case and on whether the detention of the concerned individuals is arbitrary or not, we would like to appeal to your Excellency's Government to take all necessary measures to guarantee the right of the individuals concerned not to be deprived arbitrarily of their liberty and to fair proceedings before an independent and impartial tribunal, in accordance with article 9 of the ICCPR.

According to the Human Rights Committee, while the ICCPR does not explicitly use the term "enforced disappearance", it constitutes a unique and integrated series of acts and omissions representing a grave threat to life and a continuing violation of various rights recognized in the ICCPR. The deprivation of liberty, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate of the disappeared person, in effect removes that person from the protection of the law and places his or her life at serious and constant risk, for which the State is accountable. Enforced disappearance thus results in a violation of ICCPR article 6 (right to life), article 7 (prohibition of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment), article 9 (liberty and security of person) and article 16 (right to recognition as a person before the law).