

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 10 March 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the pleasure to inform you that the Permanent Mission of Albania to the United Nations, with the United States Mission to the United Nations, will organize an Arria-formula meeting on the theme “The situation of human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”.

The meeting will be held on Friday, 17 March, from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. in the Trusteeship Council Chamber at United Nations Headquarters and is co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Japan and the Republic of Korea to the United Nations.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, we have prepared a concept note, which is contained in the annex to the present letter.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ferit Hoxha
Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 10 March 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Concept note for the Arria-formula meeting on the theme “Situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, to be held on 17 March 2023

The United States Mission to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of Albania to the United Nations, with co-sponsors the Permanent Missions of Japan and the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, will hold an Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council to shed light on the human rights abuses and violations by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and their intrinsic link to international peace and security.

Background

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has one of the world’s most egregious human rights records. The July 2022 report of the Secretary-General on human rights in that country describes significant concerns, including the “widespread and systematic use of torture”, a lack of meaningful public participation in the political process, severe penalties for distributing foreign media content and the “absolute denial of freedom to express views or criticism of the Government”, as well as of the “right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”. In her first report, in October 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Elizabeth Salmón, drew attention to hundreds of unresolved cases of reported international abductions and enforced disappearances by the country’s Government from outside its territory, including from Japan and the Republic of Korea, as well as prisoners of war and detainees. The Special Rapporteur committed to advocating for mechanisms of accountability while actively expanding space for dialogue and cooperation with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to address the human rights situation.

These human rights abuses are unfortunately not new. The first mandate holder, Vitit Muntarbhorn (2004–2010), made clear that no attempt to understand the human rights situation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea could be separated from the challenges of: (a) democratization in the country; (b) peace and security in the region; (c) demilitarization and disarmament in the region; and (d) sustainable development and the need for broad-based popular participation, with attention paid to the protection of vulnerable groups. In addition, the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, in its 2014 report ([A/HRC/25/63](#)), found that the country’s human rights practices amounted to crimes against humanity. In that report, the Commission also found that, rather than using its maximum available resources to feed those who were hungry, the Government had prioritized military spending – predominantly on hardware and the development of weapons systems and its nuclear [weapons] programme – even during periods of mass starvation. The Commission also found that the State had even failed to feed all of the soldiers of its army, and that it had committed systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations. The Commission identified the main perpetrators as officials from security institutions, the army and the judiciary, among others, who were acting under the effective control of the central organs of the Workers’ Party of Korea, the National Defence Commission and the Supreme Leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

In 2017, the last time the Security Council met for an open briefing on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs stated that “the international community has a

collective responsibility to protect the population of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea if the State does not protect its own citizens" and that it must also "consider the wider implications of the reported grave human rights situation for the stability of the region".

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea responded to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic with further isolation and repression, including shoot-to-kill orders. It has increased efforts to suppress fundamental freedoms and the free flow of information, with reports of thousands of new arrests and harsh imprisonments. Today, a total between 80,000 and 120,000 political prisoners are reported to be in prison in the country.

The human rights violations and abuses by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea threaten international peace and security and are directly linked to the country's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes. It is the repressive political climate that allows the Government to exert near total control of the information environment to spew false propaganda and lies to keep its own population misinformed about the diversion of such a large share of resources and to divert a large share of resources to weapons development without comment from the population, which suffers from severe economic hardship and malnutrition. Forced labour – domestic and overseas – plays a key role in sustaining the Government and generating revenue for its weapons programmes; and mass mobilizations, including of school children, are a key component of the State-run economy. The country's systematic human rights violations and abuse remain on the list of items of which the Council is seized.

Objectives

The meeting will highlight the ongoing violation and abuses of human rights by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and identify opportunities for the international community to promote accountability for them. The meeting will underscore how the country's human rights violations and abuses are inextricably linked with the threats to peace and security posed by the its unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes.

Briefers

The Security Council will hear from the following briefers:

- Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Elizabeth Salmón
- A refugee from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Interventions

Co-sponsors, and representatives of Member States or observer offices speaking on behalf of groups of two or more delegations, will be invited to deliver statements after the briefers and members of the Security Council have spoken. Delegations are asked to speak for no more than four minutes in order to allow more time to hear from the briefers and to let the briefers respond to comments from Member States. Translation will be provided in all six official languages of the United Nations. Attendees are requested to register for the list of speakers by emailing Alana Garellek (garelleka@state.gov) and Ingrid Prizreni (Ingrid.Prizreni@mfa.gov.al) by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, 15 March, with the subject line "Arria list of speakers".