

## Twisted Reality -- On the DPRK's 2014 Human Rights Report

By Hannes Bublitz

In early September 2014 North Korea's Association of Human Rights Studies published an official report on its interior human rights status quo. This unarguably propagandistic human rights report is in stark contrast to literally every other available paper on the DPRK's human rights abuses. Making its report publicly accessible on the KCNA website presents a form of open interaction with the international community seldom seen by the North. In particular this report can be understood as a direct response to the latest condemning reports on human rights abuses and violations, issued by reliable and highly trustworthy human rights advocates such as the UN's OHCHR, Human Rights Watch, or Amnesty International. With its open and public counter offensive, the DPRK once and for all wants the international community to understand the "reality" of its interior affairs and human rights conditions. Not surprisingly, the authors of this report fail in doing so.

Following the argumentation and the "facts" of the regime's report, international institutions condemning North Korea in unison of human rights abuses have supposedly been wrong in doing so. North Korea confidently states, that it has the world's most developed human rights standards and that its citizens enjoy every imaginable luxury and freedom. We shall go into that later on.

But before going into detail and looking at the "realities" of North Korean human rights – dear reader, rest assured, it's as strange for me to write those four words, as it is for you to read them -- and the "expansive" and "encompassing" rights and "freedoms" the regimes' citizens seem to enjoy, we should examine the "scientific" background of the report being discussed here.

The scientific background and the tone of the paper are set by the authors declaring, that every publication on human rights in North Korea, not in favor of the regime and pointing out abuses and violations, are reflecting "distorted views" (*Juche 103*, 2014: p. 3) produced by "anti-DPRK hostile forces" (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the *Juche* ideology is being stated as the backdrop of the researches, rendering the findings scientifically superior to other presumed faulty international allegations. The researchers<sup>1</sup> behind the report make it very clear, that those "distorted views" would in fact be sponsored by the US and its allies. Opening their report with a rant about the US and claiming to be the victim of an international "anti-DPRK human rights campaign" (*ibid.*: p. 40) does not necessarily help convince the reader of the reports' trustworthiness. But then again, North Korea and its Human Rights Studies Center are not especially known for their frequent exchange of ideas and open communication with the international community.

Recently, distorted views are floated by anti-DPRK hostile forces about the realities of the DPRK, especially its human rights situation, causing serious misunderstanding thereof.

The United States and its followers are pursuing persistent anti-DPRK human

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<sup>1</sup> All the data and "facts" gathered for this report are said to be coming from the studies and analysis of "(...) a huge number of documentations such as official documents, human rights related laws and publications of the DPRK, international human rights instruments, documents and data of international human rights organizations and the current situation of the country as well." (*ibid.*: p. 4).

The report gets really creative when its authors start a lengthy discussion of human rights in general. They argue that there currently would be no unified definition or standards of human rights in the international arena (ibid: p. 9). Every country would in fact have its own code of human rights (cf. ibid.). According to the propagandistic tone and the anti-western – mostly anti-US – rants employed in this report, it is further stated that “certain countries and hegemonic forces are spreading their values and grossly distorted human rights views” (ibid.). International human rights as we know them are seen by the North Korean regime as “infringed upon” (ibid.) them.

But how then does the regime understand human rights? If US-sponsored international human rights are faulty, foul, and nothing more than a campaign to discredit North Korea, how then should human rights be understood? The answer the authors come up with is remarkable and enlightening – in the sense of getting to understand how life-long propaganda and indoctrination influence the human brain and creativity.

The authors are convinced of the idea that human rights are not of individual nature, but rather show collective characteristics (cf. ibid: p. 11). The individual could only demand its rights because it's part of a broader and wider collective, of the popular masses (ibid.). Following the socialist doctrine, human rights would therefore be collective rights. As stated in the report: “The demand of the popular masses, social collective, represents the demand of the community and coincides with the demands of each member of the social collective.” (ibid.). What those self-proclaimed human rights researchers fail to understand is the universal and, necessarily, individual character of human rights. Every human being, regardless of nationality, citizenship, age, or any other imaginable attributes can employ human rights. But then again, the North Korean Human Rights Association probably had heard those arguments before and have already discounted them as “distorted”, part of an international “anti-DPRK human rights campaign”, and, thus, regards such views as not applicable to North Korea.

What follows in the next 100-ish pages of the North's Human Rights report are misinformation, lies, and nothing but sarcastic, if not misanthropic, depictions of make-believe realities in North Korea. It is bluntly stated, that peoples' housing and medical care expenditures are covered by the government (cf. ibid.: 47). Contradictory to defectors testimonies, international human rights research findings, and UN reports, the North Korean report goes as far as reassuring its readers that “Man's life is fully protected from arbitrary arrest and execution by state institutions, organizations and individuals (...)” (ibid.: p. 88). PSCORE has gathered a multitude of defectors' testimonies that prove the DPRK's prior statement wrong. Moreover, fabrications about the death penalty being only “imposed on an extremely limited basis” (ibid.: p. 89) are to be deemed outright lies, that can easily be contradicted by numerous defectors' eye-witness testimonies.

Man's life is fully protected from arbitrary arrest and execution by state institutions, organizations and individuals as well as from diseases and natural disasters.

The report states further “North Korean Human Rights” that the DPRK’s citizens are said to enjoy. Some of those are: “the right to work” (ibid.: p. 95), right to a just and fair trial (cf. ibid.: p. 132), and the right to receive food supplies (cf. ibid.: 47). All of those rights are enjoyed by the popular masses – the collective. This picture of a functioning and perfect socialist utopia is unarguably false, and intentionally deceptive.

No one in the echelon of North Korea’s regime can seriously expect the international community to accept even one single sentence of this document to be true. What the DPRK actually wants the reader to understand is, that, as the authors are not getting tired of pointing out, North Korea’s human rights are part of its internal affairs (cf. ibid.:p. 3, 12, 117, 119, 120, 125, 130, 131). As it is tiringly proclaimed in the report, the regime’s sovereignty does not allow foreign actors to interfere with its domestic policies and interior affairs. Communicating this point, and accusing the US and its allies of conducting a human rights smear campaign against the DPRK, are the sole reasons for the North’s publishing of this shame of a report.

The U.S. and other Western countries capitalize on “human rights issue” to interfere in the internal affairs of the countries aspiring after independence and topple their regimes. They also instigate the reactionary forces to suppress the human rights of the people.

In sum, the North’s “scientific reply” to the latest international accusations of human rights abuses and violations is nothing more than a poorly crafted arrangement of misinformation, absurd and bizarre allegations, anti-western propaganda, and depictions of North Koreans lives of luxury, security, and freedom, that far exceed even the most rosy socialist utopian feverdream.