



Human Rights Watch

Oral Statement

March 11, 2012

Interactive Dialogue with Marzuki Darusman,  
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the  
Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Thank you Mr. President.

We welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur. As reflected in his report in North Korea human rights are denied as a matter of routine. The change in leadership has not prompted any signs of change on the human rights front - in fact all indications are that the situation has worsened. The North Korean government continues to systematically violate the rights of its citizens, including by depriving large sectors of its population of food, applying collective punishments, imposing forced labor and interning more than 200,000 people in sub-human conditions in political prison camps where they are denied their basic humanity.

North Korea has also violated the rights of thousands of foreigners who were abducted by the government or its agents and disappeared. North Korea has denied the vast majority of these abductions and refused to cooperate with foreign governments to return all its victims.

For years the North Korean government has refused to cooperate with the OHCHR and the mechanisms of the human rights council. They have rejected all allegations of violations presented to it by the UN mechanisms and refused to engage with the Special Rapporteur. The North Korean government also refused to state its response to any of the recommendations put to it during its UPR in 2010.

In his report to the Council the Special Rapporteur stated that the international community has the responsibility to launch an independent and impartial inquiry into the situation, where there are grounds to believe that crimes against humanity are being committed and the country concerned fails to carry out effective independent and impartial inquiries itself. The call for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry has been made by the High Commissioner and echoed by several thematic special procedures.

We welcome the decision of Japan and the EU to present a resolution calling for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry by the Council at this session and call on all delegations to support the resolution. Such a commission will help bring attention to decades of abuse and impunity. It will be instrumental in providing a detailed account of specific nature of the abuses in North Korea, the fate of victims, and the need for accountability.

As noted by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on 14 January "an in-depth inquiry into one of the worst - but least understood and reported - human rights situations in the world is not only fully justified, but long overdue".