

North Korea

The so-called “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea” or “DPRK” is often recognised as the world’s most isolated state; a fascistic, total suppressor of basic human rights and freedoms, subverting all social, civic and political life to the maintenance of pervasive (but ultimately fragile) illusions of grandeur.

Constitution and government	Education and children’s rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
<u>Complete tyranny precludes all freedoms of expression and thought, religion or belief</u> <u>Quasi-divine veneration of a ruling elite is enforced, or a single-party regime holds uncontested power, subject to severe punishment</u>	<u>Religious or ideological indoctrination is utterly pervasive in schools</u>	<u>It is illegal to register an explicitly Humanist, atheist, secularist or other non-religious NGO or other human rights organization, or such groups are persecuted by authorities</u>	<u>Expression of core Humanist principles on democracy, freedom and human rights is brutally repressed</u>
			<u>Concerns that secular or religious authorities interfere in specifically religious freedoms</u>

Legend

Constitution and government

There is no freedom of religion or belief in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (“North Korea”). All freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief is systematically and severely violated by the North Korean government.

The complete denial of freedom of thought is enforced through the regime’s totalitarian control of almost every aspect of life.

National fantasy

The state imposes a compulsory veneration of the ruling Kim family and its ideology of nationalist self-reliance (*Juche*). The state largely suppresses mainstream global religions, at least their proselytization or mass celebration in public. However, a mythology or ‘cult of personality’ which might be described as quasi-religious attaches to the hereditary Kim rulers. In 2011 the state news agency KCNA reported that strange phenomena were witnessed and that “nature is in mourning”, following the death of former leader Kim Jong-il. The supposed reports included unusual snow storms, a mysterious glow on a revered mountain top, and the cracking of ice on a famous lake “so loud, it seemed to shake the Heavens and the Earth”. The regime had previously declared Kim Jong-il a “genius”. Similar myths are propagated by the government about his successor King Jong-un.

Submission to the state and its ideology is enforced through an extensive government network of control, including secret surveillance and informants, which intrudes upon virtually every aspect of life in North Korea. Any hint of independent thought—including lack of enthusiasm for the state ideology, complaints, or “wrong thoughts”—is liable to be severely punished. Punishments include life imprisonment in labour camps, torture and death.

Education and children’s rights

To summarize as clearly as possible: the North Korean regime brainwashes children from an early age to believe in the Kims as godlike leaders, to instill loyalty and commitment to the leader, and hatred towards “enemies” of the nation.

The misuse of educational institutions to promote the national ideology is a key component in sustaining the national ideology. From 1977, in “Theses on Socialist Education”, these words are attributed to Kim Il Sung:

“political and ideological education is the most important part of socialist education. Only through a proper political and ideological education is it possible to rear students as revolutionaries [...] And only on the basis of sound political and ideological education will the people’s scientific and technological education and physical culture be successful.”
<countrystudies.us/north-korea/42.htm>

Students are required to attend classes such as The Childhood of Our Supreme Leader Kim Il-Sung, Revolutionary History of Our Great Leader Kim Jong Il, Socialist Morality and Law and Current Government Policy. The distortion of history, along with idolization of the leadership, constitutes a kind of ideological indoctrination, designed to maintain the dictatorship.
<foreignpolicynews.org/2017/02/23/inside-north-koreas-education-system/>

Although children receive most of their education through the North Korean school system, it is also mandatory for them to join the Young Pioneer Corps at age 9 and then move on to the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League between the age of 14 and 16.
<nknews.org/2014/11/we-grow-as-we-learn-youth-indoctrination-in-north-korea/>

Family, community and society

North Korea has claimed to be home to several “civil society” organizations and “NGOs”. These include the Korean Christian Federation (KCF), the Korean Federation for the Protection of the Disabled (KFPD), the Korea Education Fund (KEF), and the Korean Buddhist League (KBL). However, the tolerance of religious groups is strictly limited, and overt proselytization is actively discouraged. Some overseas NGOs have been permitted to operate in the country, usually on short-term humanitarian grounds. However the space for civil society, in particular any homegrown efforts that are truly independent of the government, is in reality severely restricted and centrally controlled.
<nknews.org/2017/10/illusion-of-independence-north-koreas-civil-organisations-and-ngos/>

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

With no freedom of expression, and no independent press or access to the internet, ordinary North Koreans are denied any opportunity to explore ideas or news from outside government sources, while the outside world is largely (apart from the reports of occasional “defectors”) denied access to opinions and news from any individuals or non-government sources in North Korea. Every home,

office and classroom features portraits of the first two leaders that are meant to be cleaned with a special cloth every day. Television sets and radios are fixed to run state channels and the state has almost complete control over the flow of information across the entire country.

In 2014, a U.N. General Assembly committee approved a resolution condemning the North Korean leadership for decades for crimes against humanity, which paved the way for Kim Jong Un to be referred to the international criminal court. This referral stems from numerous human rights abuses that include brainwashing, torture, deliberate starvation, executions and infanticide.

As freedom of assembly is not respected, associations or organizations other than those created by the state are illicit or extremely limited in their independence. Strikes, and other labor activities are illegal.

<freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/north-korea>