

## Trafficking in Persons Report

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### NORTH KOREA (Tier 3)

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K. or North Korea) is a source country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Many North Koreans seeking to escape the dire conditions in country attempt to leave by crossing the border into Northeast China, where tens of thousands of North Koreans may reside illegally, more than half of whom are women. The illegal status of North Koreans in the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) and other Southeast Asian countries increases their vulnerability to trafficking schemes and sexual and physical abuse. In the most common form of trafficking, North Korean women and children who voluntarily cross the border into P.R.C. are picked up by trafficking rings and sold as brides to P.R.C. nationals, usually of Korean ethnicity, or placed in forced labor. In a less common form of trafficking, North Korean women and girls are lured out of North Korea by the promise of food, jobs, and freedom, only to be forced into prostitution, marriage, or exploitative labor arrangements once in P.R.C. The D.P.R.K.'s system of political repression includes forced labor in a network of prison camps, where an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 persons are incarcerated and subjected to reeducation through labor by logging, mining, and tending crops. Critics of the regime and some North Koreans forcibly returned from abroad may be subjected to hard labor in prison camps operated by the government.

The D.P.R.K. regime recruits an unknown number of its citizens to fill highly sought-after jobs overseas for D.P.R.K. entities and foreign firms. While there is no evidence of force, fraud, or coercion in the recruiting process, some reports indicate that some North Koreans may be employed in harsh conditions, with their freedom of movement and communication restricted, and their salaries deposited into accounts controlled by the D.P.R.K. government. Countries in which North Koreans work through such arrangements reportedly included Russia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Libya, Bulgaria, Saudi Arabia, Angola, Mongolia, Kuwait, Yemen, Iraq, and the P.R.C. In January 2007, the Czech Ministry of Interior announced the elimination of its program for North Korean workers. All North Koreans will have left the Czech Republic by the end of 2007, when their work visas expire.

The Government of North Korea does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. The government does not acknowledge the existence of human rights abuses in the country or recognize trafficking, either within the country or transnationally. The D.P.R.K. does not differentiate between trafficking and other forms of illegal border crossing. The government directly contributes to the problem through the operation of forced labor prison camps, where thousands of North Koreans continued to live in slave-like conditions, receiving little food and no medical assistance. There are concerns that North Korea's contract labor arrangements may be exploitative, with the D.P.R.K. government keeping most or all of the foreign exchange paid and then paying workers in local, nonconvertible currency.

**Prosecution**

The D.P.R.K. made no discernable efforts to combat trafficking in persons through law enforcement efforts. Little information is available on North Korea's legal system, and there are no known laws that specifically address trafficking of adults. Article 50 of the Penal Code criminalizes the abduction, sale, or trafficking of children. However, there were no reported prosecutions or convictions during the reporting period. The Penal Code criminalizes crossing the border without permission and defections; these laws are used against both traffickers and trafficking victims. There are no known laws that specifically address trafficking for labor exploitation. The government sends political prisoners and criminals to detention camps where they are forced to engage in labor. Fair and transparent trials do not occur in the D.P.R.K. It is therefore unclear under what provisions of the law, if any, traffickers are prosecuted. Defector reports include instances of the government punishing traffickers; however, NGO reports indicate that these cases may include activists or "professional border crossers" who assist North Koreans voluntarily cross the border into the P.R.C. It appears that crackdowns on trafficking networks occur as a result of the government's desire to control all activity within its borders rather than to combat trafficking in persons.

**Protection**

The D.P.R.K. government does not recognize trafficking victims and made no efforts to provide protection or assistance to victims. There is no evidence that the government attempts to seek out evidence of trafficking, nor does the government appear to differentiate between trafficking, smuggling, illegal economic migration, or defection. North Koreans forcibly repatriated from P.R.C., some of whom may be trafficking victims, may be jailed and forced into prison labor camps. One of the government's top priorities is to control all activities within its borders and prevent people from leaving the country without permission; protecting individuals from mistreatment, exploitation, and retribution are not government priorities.

**Prevention**

The North Korean government does not acknowledge the existence of human rights problems, including trafficking in persons. There was no information available indicating that the government operated, administered, or promoted any public awareness campaigns related to trafficking in the country. Although a few international NGOs, staffed by both national and international employees, are permitted to operate in the country under close government scrutiny, there are no known indigenous NGOs in the country. North Korea has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.