

## Ministry of Foreign Affairs

North Korea Strategy Center

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<http://www.government.nl>

Date 18 November 2015  
Re Human rights violations in North Korea

Dear Mr G.,

Thank you for your email of 23 September 2015 in which you share your personal history as a North Korean defector and stress the severity of the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). You also ask whether the Netherlands has taken any action or practical measures to improve the human rights situation in the DPRK.

In response to your questions, here is some information about the Dutch government's position regarding the DPRK government's responsibility for human rights violations.

The government of the Netherlands remains deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in the DPRK and about systematic and widespread violations of human rights by the DPRK government. It is the responsibility of the DPRK government to protect its population and prevent these violations. The Netherlands stresses the importance of ensuring that those responsible for serious human rights violations are held to account.

In all of its diplomatic contacts with the DPRK, the Dutch government insists that human rights violations must end immediately and that the DPRK government must implement far-reaching institutional reforms to safeguard the protection of human rights in the DPRK. Alongside our bilateral policy, the Netherlands actively contributes to discussions in the European Union (EU) and other multilateral forums on the human rights situation in the DPRK.

In your email, you ask specifically whether the Netherlands has taken any practical measures against the DPRK government like those adopted by the US Congress, namely the North Korea Sanctions Enforcement Act (H.R. 757) and the North Korea Sanctions and Diplomatic Nonrecognition Act (H.R. 757).

To start with the question of nonrecognition, the Netherlands and the EU established diplomatic relations with the DPRK in May 2001. The EU is committed to a policy of critical engagement with North Korea and aims to help achieve peace and stability on the Korean peninsula while improving the human rights situation.

During the 14th session of the EU-DPRK Political Dialogue held in June 2015, for instance, the two sides held a frank and comprehensive discussion which covered the humanitarian situation in the country and respect for human rights.

**Our reference**

Like the US North Korea Sanctions Enforcement Act (H.R. 757), which largely aims to curb the DPRK nuclear weapons programme, the European Union's autonomous sanctions against the DPRK are intended to prevent further nuclear armament by the DPRK regime. These sanctions are part of an integrated and comprehensive policy strategy involving political dialogue, complementary efforts and other instruments.

Another important element of our efforts to stop human rights violations by the DPRK regime is our contribution to United Nations (UN) human rights policies concerning the DPRK. In September 2015, at the historic country-specific panel in the Human Rights Council, the Netherlands stressed that the international community cannot ignore the suffering of the people of the DPRK and that the time has come to take action. At the same session, the Netherlands urged the DPRK government to cooperate and grant full access to the country by UN human rights mechanisms and the Special Rapporteur. Our support for the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations, including its recommendation that the UN Security Council refer the situation in the DPRK to the International Criminal Court, remains undiminished.

Your email urges ongoing international pressure on the DPRK to improve the human rights situation. I can assure you that the Netherlands and the EU will continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in the DPRK and will remain resolute in calling for the cessation of human rights violations.

Yours sincerely,

Bert Koenders  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands