



CASE 2-PRIVACY RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IN NORTH KOREA

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Introduction

In the world we live in today there are many different religions and ideologies that a country may go by which can be a good thing in the sense that there is diversity and people from different backgrounds that all have different ideas and contribute in different ways however this diversity can also be a source of conflict.

Communism Today

To this date there are only five remaining countries in the world that practice communism. Peoples Republic of China, Democratic People's Republic of North Korea, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Republic of Cuba ([Nina Porzucki, 2013, page 1](#)).

The whole ideology of communism is based on the elimination of private property thus achieving economic equality. The beliefs of communism were created by a fellow of the name of Karl Marx. Communists believe capitalism results in inequality and suffering because businesses and corporations own all the factories, equipment and other resources ([Michael Dhar, 2014, page 1](#)).

Juche Ideology

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is guided in its activities by the Juche ideology. The Juche ideology means that they are the motive force of the revolution and construction. Juche is based on the philosophical principle that man is the master of everything and decides everything. People that practice Juche ideology tend to believe in independence and self-reliance. There is also theory proving that people that practice the Juche ideology tend to be atheist ([Official Webpage of the DPR of Korea, 2011, page 1](#)).

Inside North Korea

Today, North Korea is a country that is run by family dictatorship with a population of roughly 24 million residents. They are also known to be a hermit country because of the isolation that they have

over the rest of the world. Even when they were going through a famine in the 1990s, North Korea maintained its independence. There is an awful truth about the country that is covered up by the media; however, 154,000 of their people are in prison camps which are surrounded by barb wire fences. Torture, malnutrition, slave labour and public execution are ways of life in these camps (Stephanie Pappas, 2013, page 1).

Given the secrecy that the country abides from, it is hard to really know exactly what is going on; however, the people are very isolated. The internet is pretty much inaccessible from within, with access only by permission from the government. People who have the privilege to own a computer can only access internet from “Kwangmyong” which is a closed domestic network. Tourists traveling to North Korea are required to turn in their phones before entering the country. Because of the limited access to the outside world, many who make it to the outside world struggle to adjust and are paranoid about being handed back to their home country (Stephanie Pappas, 2013, page 1).

North Korean Surveillance

The state has absolute control over all forms of telecommunications and spies on its own citizen through mass surveillance programs. All information that they get through propaganda and online media about their country and the outside world is filtered to comply with the “authorities’ propaganda”. Phone calls and internet activity is monitored by an organization called “Bureau 27”. This organization specializes in covert intelligence and uses sophisticated equipment to detect mobile phone frequencies. The government enforces harsh restrictions to disallow residents to communicate with the outside world. The only people allowed to buy SIM cards are foreigners. The most common way for a family member from abroad to reach a loved one in North Korea who does not own a ‘Chinese’ mobile phone is to pay someone who does to set up a call. The costs however are very high. Brokers involved in setting up a call will receive 30% commission on 700 cash in their currency. Also, because there are

agents trying to prevent this from happening, there is no guarantee that funds being sent abroad will reach the family member. Any resident caught making an international call could be sent to a political prison camp (Arnold Fang, 2017, page 1).

“Isolated North Korea is developing sophisticated tools to digitally spy on its citizens, who are increasingly using mobile devices to connect to each other, a U.S. government-funded report released. (James Pearson, 2017, page 1)”

“The authorities have found ingenious ways to turn those new technologies against the North Korean people who are adopting them,” said Kretchun, a researcher at Intermedia (James Pearson, 2017, page 1).

Absence of Rights and Freedoms

The constitution promises a right to faith and claims there are Buddhists, Shamanists and followers of Chondoism (a native Korean religion); however, the people have no freedom of religion and everyone is indoctrinated to treat the Kim family as something to worship. Kenneth Bae, a Korean-American evangelist who ran Christian tours to North Korea, was sentenced to 15 years at a labour camp in 2013 for apparently committing “anti-government” crimes. He was released in 2014 as the American people fought to have him released. It is said that North Korea has one of the worlds largest prison camps in the world and a citizen can be jailed for anything such as watching a South Korean DVD (BBC News, 2018, page 1).

Internet in North Korea

North Koreans do not have access to the outside world, and people from the outside cannot have access to their internet. However, a list of available websites was generated, and they found that the list shows fewer than 30 websites. This information was acquired through a hack which involved getting the information from one of their DNS servers. Many of their websites are said to be painfully

slow, very basic and not updated very often. The news websites are updated daily and contain only state propaganda (Saira Asher, 2016, page 1).

Citizens logging into their cybercafe in North Korea's capital, Pyongyang will find themselves on a computer that does not run windows but instead an operating system that is custom built called "Red Star". The OS runs a similar version of Firefox called "Naenara". The calendar on this computer does not read 2018 as it would in Canada but instead 101 which is the number of years since the birth of Kim Il-sung. The system called "Kwangmyong" is administered by a state-run internet service provider and was designed in a way to be easily shutdown. It was designed this way to be able to quickly remediate if propaganda against the state got out of hand resulting in a possible revolution and rebellion (Dave Lee, 2012, page 1).

China, another communist country called the people's republic of China does have some measures in place to restrict some outside information such as facebook and twitter. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's infrastructure is described as a mosquito net allowing only basic information in and out (Dave Lee, 2012, page 1).

Interview of a Citizen

There was a paper produced called "A Quiet Opening" and this paper involved interviewing 420 adults who were able to flee the country. Many of their stories would emphasize on how far they would have to go to be able to use an illegal mobile phone (Dave Lee, 2012, page 1).

"In order to make sure the mobile phone frequencies are not tracked, I would fill up a washbasin with water and put the lid of a rice cooker over my head while I made a phone call," Said a 28-year-old man who left the country in November 2010 (Dave Lee, 2012, page 1).

Rights and Freedoms

Other than the laws mentioned above there are many more that the country goes by. Television exists in North Korea however there are only three channels. If a man or a woman was to get a haircut, you are required to select one of 28 approved hairstyles. You need government approval to live in the capital. Parents who send their kids to school are required to provide desks, chairs and materials. Owning a bible is illegal in North Korea. Apple, Sony and Microsoft products are banned. It is also illegal to smuggle in foreign literature ([Neha Borkar, 2018, page 1](#)).

Tightening up the Regime

With many changes and conflict occurring in the world, North Korea's stance is to tighten up the current regime. Over 85,570 cameras have been purchased from China over the past few years with an attempt to have complete control over its society. The goal is to crackdown on people breaking the laws that the country abides by ([Julian Ryall, 2013, page 1](#)).

Conclusion

There are many countries in the world today that do not have the rights and freedoms we are so lucky to have today. The sad truth is that we can sometimes take it for granted and not really appreciate our luck. Countries like North Korea are an example of how difficult a way of life can be for some people. The fact that their regime enforces isolation, it is hard to give a helping hand and we can sometimes forget that they exist.

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