

North Korea

N.Korean Slave Laborers Still Working Overseas

By Roh Suk-jo

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North Korea is still sending slave labor abroad in the form of IT technicians, medical workers and football players despite global sanctions.

The regime extorts billions of U.S. dollars from them, with an estimated 70 to 90 percent going with into the private coffers of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un or development of nuclear weapons and missiles.



Han Kwang-song

According to a report by a UN Security Council panel, "In multiple cases, workers were not repatriated to [North Korea] but third country," and at least three North Korean footballers are in Europe and the Middle East where they earn high salaries

Han Kwang-song, also known as the "Ronaldo of North Korea," was transferred from Italy's Juventus to Qatari club al-Duhail reported 5 million euros, while Pak Kwang-ryong and Choe Song-hyok play in the Austrian and Italian leagues.

At least 70 percent of their earnings are reportedly paid straight to North Korea while the rest is given to the North Korean the host countries, leaving players just enough money to feed themselves.

"All these players reportedly had contract terms extending beyond the due date for repatriation," last December, according report. "Austria replied that its competent authorities had initiated the procedures necessary to revoke [Pak's] residence a permit... The panel has yet to receive a reply from Italy and Qatar."



North Koreans wait for departure at Beijing Capital International Airport, in this December 2019 file photo.
/AFP-Yonhap

There are also North Korean IT technicians disguised as freelancers in Vietnam and Nepal. According to the UN, the North has sent at least a thousand IT technicians overseas, and they are estimated to be earning around US\$20.4 million a year.

Meanwhile, the UN confirmed a report in the New York Times that a bullet-proof Mercedes-Benz owned by Kim Jong-un was smuggled to the North via six countries South Korea's Busan.

The export of luxury cars and other products to the North is banned under UNSC resolutions.

The report said North Korea "continued to flout Security Council resolutions through illicit maritime exports of commodities, notably coal and sand." It exported 3.7 coal worth \$370 million between January and August 2019, while at least 1 million tons of sand worth \$22 million was illicitly shipped to China since last May.

The North also "continued to import refined petroleum through illicit ship-to-ship transfers and through illicit direct deliveries," totaling eight times more than the 50 cap set by the UNSC.