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## **NORTH KOREA | UN General Assembly Vote Recommending North Korea Referral Welcomed**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes the vote on Nov. 18 by the UN General Assembly, recommending the Security Council refer North Korea to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The UN General Assembly's human rights committee approved a resolution that acknowledges the findings of the UN Commission of Inquiry into human rights in North Korea and encourages the Security Council to consider taking appropriate action to ensure accountability for these crimes, including through referral to the International Criminal Court.

The Commission of Inquiry, established by the UN Human Rights Council in March 2013, concluded that "unspeakable atrocities" continue to be perpetrated against the North Korean people, and that "the gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world."

In its February report, the Commission outlined strong grounds for charges of crimes against humanity, "These crimes against humanity entail extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation." It concluded that "a number of long-standing and ongoing patterns of systematic and widespread violations in [North Korea] met the high threshold required for crimes against humanity in international law" and that these crimes "clearly merit a criminal investigation."

On Nov. 10, CSW and nine organizations including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, signed a joint letter to all UN member countries urging them to support the resolution on North Korea, which was sponsored by the European Union and Japan.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "This vote is truly historic. It comes seven years after the publication of CSW's ground-breaking report *North Korea: A Case to Answer, A Call to Act*, which was one of the first reports to call for an international inquiry. It comes three years after we co-founded the International Coalition to Stop Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea. And it comes a year and a half after the establishment of the UN Commission of Inquiry and just nine months after the release of their report. We pay particular tribute to the work of the Commission of Inquiry, and its chair, Justice Michael Kirby, who has been such a powerful advocate. There is still a lot more to do – next month the full General Assembly will vote on the resolution, and then the task of ensuring that the UN Security Council acts upon the General Assembly resolution will begin. The campaign to hold the perpetrators of crimes against

humanity in North Korea and to end impunity took a significant step forward yesterday, and we now urge the Security Council to take action by referring North Korea to the International Criminal Court.”