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NORTH KOREA | UN Expert Wants Regime Held Accountable

In his last report to the UN Human Rights Council on March 14, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Marzuki Darusman, said repression in the country continues "unabated" and said efforts to hold the ruling regime to account must continue.

"The totalitarian governing structure in North Korea absolutely denies rights to its people and its unchecked power appears as strongly entrenched as ever throughout the whole country," he said.

"In this extremely centralized and hierarchical ruling structure, where tight control is extended to the smallest unit of the society, the principle of command and superior responsibility should offer a plausible theory to hold the 'Supreme Leader' Mr. Kim Jong Un and most of the past and present senior leaders individually culpable," he added.

The Special Rapporteur stressed the international community must ensure that accountability for crimes against humanity must be part of any peace plan for the Korean peninsula. "As the term implies, crimes against humanity are a concern for all of humanity. Ensuring accountability for such crimes justly requires the international community to play a role," he said.

The UN Commission of Inquiry on human rights in North Korea found "the gravity, scale and nature" of human rights violations in North Korea "reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world."

Recommendations included targeted sanctions against the perpetrators of crimes against humanity, an extension of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in North Korea and the establishment of an UN-mandated structure and database "to help to ensure accountability for human rights violations," building on "the collection of evidence and documentation work of the commission."

In his address to the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur called for the establishment of a group of experts to study possible accountability measures and highlighted the possible role of the International Criminal Court.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide's East Asia Team Leader, Benedict Rogers, said, "We applaud the Special Rapporteur's continuous efforts to draw attention to the crimes against humanity in North Korea, we welcome his repeated calls for accountability, and we strongly support the recommendations in his final report. We wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Marzuki Darusman for his dedication to his mandate and the thorough, persistent and expert way in which he has fulfilled his responsibilities. We hope that the United Nations will act upon the Special Rapporteur's findings and recommendations and the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry, and will also ensure that the new Special Rapporteur will be someone who will be well-positioned to build on the excellent work of Mr. Darusman. The time for action to address North Korea's human rights crisis is long overdue."