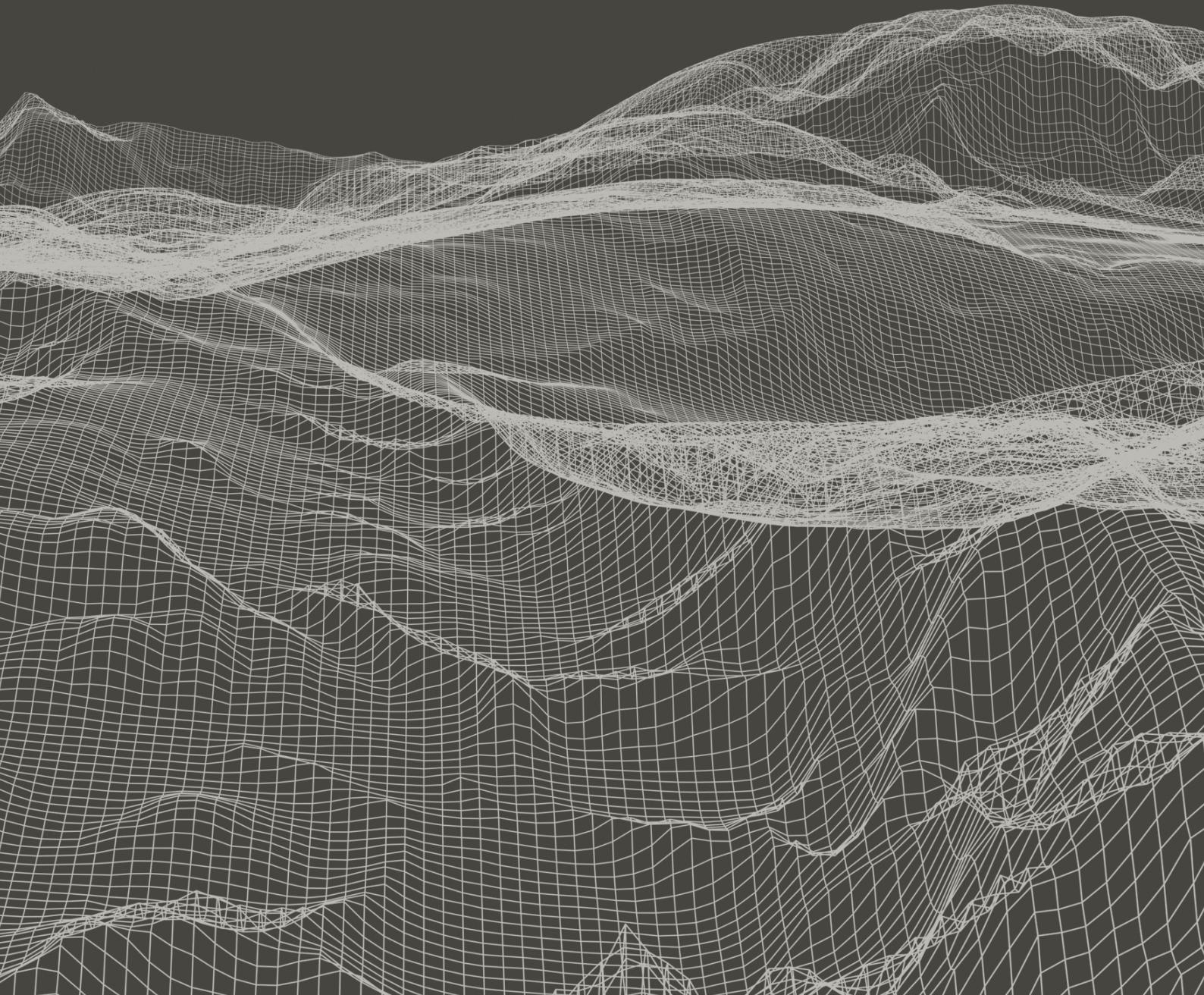


**Persecuting Faith:  
Documenting religious freedom  
violations in North Korea**

**Volume I**





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Korea Future Initiative

October 2020



### About Korea Future Initiative

Korea Future Initiative is a non-profit charitable organisation whose mission is to equip governments and international organisations with authoritative human rights information that can support strategies to effect tangible and positive change in North Korea.

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# Acknowledgements

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Korea Future Initiative consulted the following experts and religious and belief organisations during research for this report. The opinions expressed in this report are those of Korea Future Initiative and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the experts and religious and belief organisations.

## Expert Interviewees

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Park Myung-su | Institute for the Study of Modern Christianity;  
Communion of Churches in Korea  
Park Ye-sung | Jongno Centre of Won Buddhism  
Ryu Sung-min | Hanshin University  
Se-Woong Koo | Writer and Journalist  
Sung Joo-hyun | Cheondogyo Central Headquarters  
Venerable Je hwan | Bongeunsa Temple  
Yoon Bub-dal | Centre for Cultural Unification Studies



*"I could hear the sound of torture from the cell where my husband was held [...] Until the end, my husband declared, 'Why is it a crime to believe in God?'"<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q13.

## Executive Summary

In 2018, a 38-year old male was detained in North Pyongan Provincial Ministry of State Security holding centre.

Peering into the prisoner's cell, a correctional officer asked, "Why did you do what the state forbids?".

The prisoner, whose crime was to possess a bible, responded, "I just wanted to know for myself".

The correctional officer replied, "You need to be sent to a world that we cannot see"<sup>2</sup>.

—

One year after this incident, Korea Future Initiative embarked on an investigation and documentation project. Its goal was to provide an accurate accounting of patterns of documented religious freedom violations perpetrated against North Korean citizens and to inform decision-making in the international community. This report presents findings from the first phase of the project.

Investigators conducted 117 interviews with survivors, witnesses, and perpetrators over a period of seven months. In total, 273 victims of religious freedom violations were identified by investigators. Of the 273 documented victims, 215 had adhered to Christianity and 56 had adhered to shamanism. Their ages ranged from 3-years old to over 80-years old. Women and girls accounted for nearly 60 percent of documented victims.

The documented criminal charges of victims included: religious practice; religious activities in China; possessing religious items; contact with religious persons; attending places of worship; and sharing religious beliefs.

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<sup>2</sup> Interview Response: W42D45Q16.

The resulting religious freedom violations included: arbitrary arrest; arbitrary detention; arbitrary imprisonment; arbitrary interrogation; refoulement; punishment of family members; torture and sustained physical assault; sexual violence; execution; and public trials and resident exposure meetings.

The investigation identified 54 individual perpetrators of religious freedom violations. The names of 34 of these perpetrators were retained alongside additional identifying information, such as rank, geolocation, physical description, and the associated organisations. These organisations included North Korea's Ministry of State Security, Ministry of People's Security,<sup>3</sup> Border Security Command, Korean People's Army, Workers' Party of Korea, and China's Ministry of Public Security.

Religious freedom violations were located in 85 named facilities and locations across North Korea and China. These included government offices, penal facilities, sites of executions, and sites of public trials. Based on received information, investigators documented 76 victims who are known or believed to remain in North Korea's penal system.

The investigation's factual findings span the years 1990-2019. Patterns of documented violations in this period reveal that a significant number of victims experienced similar forms of extreme violence. In each documented case, the religious adherence or association of the victim was not deemed incidental to the documented violations. It was considered by investigators to be fundamental.

Factual findings contained in this report will undoubtedly be of concern to the international community. The right to religious freedom is inalienable, universal, and fundamental. It is a human right to which all North Koreans are inherently entitled. Threats to this freedom pose a danger not just to North Korean citizens, but to the common principle that every human is born free and equal in dignity and rights.

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<sup>3</sup> The name of the Ministry of People's Security changed during research for this report. The revised name is now the Ministry of Social Security. To maintain documentation consistency and to avoid confusion with the acronym of a separate North Korean organisation, the Ministry of State Security, this report continues to use the earlier title, namely the Ministry of People's Security.

This report does not offer a legal analysis or legal determinations. The factual findings serve to inform the international community and to support specific and appropriate measures that may deter future religious freedom violations in North Korea and lead to measures of accountability.

Consequently, the authors of this report welcome recent initiatives to combat religious persecution, such as the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, and recently formed national mechanisms that may deter and can hold perpetrators of severe human rights violations to account, such as global Magnitsky Acts.

Selected primary data that was documented by investigators has been anonymised and included in a freely-accessible public database operated by Korea Future Initiative. This database can be accessed through [koreafuture.org](http://koreafuture.org). The resource, which will continue to be updated on a rolling basis, is intended to support policymakers, journalists, research organisations, academics, and the public. It is envisioned that the database be accessed as a companion to this report.

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## Key Findings

- The report includes documented information from 117 interviews with exiled North Koreans that were conducted over a period of seven months in 2019-2020.
- The investigation documented 273 victims of religious freedom violations.
- Of the 273 identified victims, 215 had adhered to Christianity and 56 had adhered to shamanism. Two victims had adhered to other religions or beliefs.
- The investigation identified 54 individual perpetrators of religious freedom violations.
- The names of 34 of these perpetrators were retained alongside additional identifying information, such as rank, location, physical description, and associated organisation.
- Documented organisations associated with religious freedom violations included: Ministry of State Security; Ministry of People's Security; Ministry of Public Security (China); and Border Security Command.
- Documented criminal charges included: 149 charges of religious practice; 110 charges of religious activities in China; 78 charges of possessing religious items; 77 charges of contact with religious persons; 72 charges of attending places of worship; and 22 charges of sharing religious beliefs. Users of this report should pay close attention to the documented number of victims and take care not to overcount the documented charges. In some cases, a single victim experienced multiple criminal charges.
- Documented violations included: 244 incidents of arbitrary arrest; 195 incidents of arbitrary detention; 125 incidents of arbitrary imprisonment; 111 incidents of arbitrary interrogation; 79 incidents of refoulement; 36 incidents of punishment of family members; 36

incidents of torture or sustained physical assault; 32 incidents of sexual violence; 20 incidents of execution; and 19 incidents of public trial or resident exposure meetings. Users of this report should pay close attention to the documented number of victims (273) and take care not to overcount the documented violations. In many cases, a single victim experienced multiple violations.

- Documented violations were located to 85 named facilities in North Korea and China, including: 25 North Korean government offices; 21 North Korean pre-trial detention centres; 10 Chinese penal facilities; 8 North Korean holding centres; 7 North Korean sites of execution, public trial, and resident exposure meetings; 6 North Korean long-term re-education camps; 5 North Korean labour training camps; 2 North Korean political prison camps; and 1 North Korean internment camp.
- Facilities where multiple victims were documented included: North Pyongan Provincial Ministry of State Security pre-trial detention centre (64); North Hamgyong Provincial Ministry of State Security pre-trial detention centre (42); Dandong border detention centre (34); Onsong County Ministry of State Security pre-trial detention centre (26); and Chongjin Susong political prison camp (22).
- The investigation's factual findings span the years 1990-2019.
- The ages of documented victims range from 3-years old to over 80-years old.
- Women and girls account for nearly 60 percent of documented victims.
- Data contained in this report is representative of the experiences of documented North Korean victims, witnesses, and perpetrators. Victims of religious freedom violations who were not interviewed for this project may have undergone fundamentally different experiences.

## Foreword

Religious freedom is a fundamental freedom for all humanity. Living in North Korea meant that I could never experience this freedom.

We, the people of North Korea, instead experience two systems of violations that disable our humanity. First, we experience physical human rights violations. These strip us of agency over our own bodies. Second, we experience mental human rights violations. These force us to relinquish our inner-thoughts and beliefs. Those of us who do not yield to our persecutors must face the consequences, including the suffering of three-generations of our families.

For this reason alone, religious freedom is a benchmark for all other freedoms in North Korea. Without religious freedom, there can be no other rights that allow us, the people of North Korea, to reclaim our humanity.

I was familiar with two stories when growing up in North Korea. The first story told me about a missionary from the United States who was sent to the Korean peninsula. During a walk, the missionary discovered a child picking an apple from a tree in his orchard. In retaliation, the missionary detained the child and etched the word '*Thief*' into the child's forehead with acid.

The second story told me of a father whose house was on fire. He ran into his burning house, not to rescue his daughter but to save the portraits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. The father had sacrificed his daughter's life for the images of the Supreme Leaders.

Regardless of whether these stories are true or not, they do have meaning. They demonstrate how we are indoctrinated to despise religion from an early age and how we are trained to deify the Supreme Leader.

This ideology of hate and fear has consequences. My grandfather was imprisoned in a political prison camp for discussing the faults of the Supreme Leader's ideology. My aunt's entire family was sentenced to a political prison camp because her father in-law was Christian. Her status is still unknown. And when it was discovered that my cousin's family had encountered a bible

in China, the parents were executed and my cousin went missing. They had only touched religion, but they still lost their lives.

The cruel actions of the privileged few in North Korea who take our lives and control our thoughts must be prevented. North Korean officials, whose crimes evoke thoughts of Auschwitz, must be identified and held accountable. And we must not forget the testimonies of the survivors in this report who have overpowered death in North Korea. This is the least that we, the free North Koreans, and you, the reader who has been granted freedom at birth, can do as our collective act of humanity.

We have freedom. The North Korean people do not.

주 일룡

Il-lyong Ju, exiled human rights advocate.

## Purpose and methodology

In November 2019, Korea Future Initiative began investigations to document the status of religion and belief in North Korea, including its manifestation in theistic, non-theistic, and atheistic forms, and to record patterns of human rights violations associated with religion and belief that could support deterrence and accountability.

The methodology for this investigation consisted of five fundamental components. 1) To conduct primary interviews from a random sample of North Koreans and experts on religion and belief on the Korean peninsula, and to consult with Buddhist, Cheondogyo, Christian, and non-religious organisations in South Korea to ensure that the project, its methodology, and its output was evidence-based and not biased or designed to focus on, or be limited to, one religious belief or non-belief. 2) To develop an appropriate and uniform approach to gathering evidence. 3) To establish a standardised coding for interview responses. 4) To interview persons of interest. 5) To compile received information into a dedicated human rights software for analysis and reporting.

Investigators worked alongside a partner organisation to identify interviewees. The use of a convenience sample provided a feasible means of collecting primary data. Ensuring the wellbeing and dignity of interviewees was a priority for investigators who explained the interview process to each respondent and sought consent. Interviews were held in-person and at locations that supported the wellbeing of each individual respondent.

All interviews used a questionnaire that was created for the project. Interview responses were recorded verbatim and manually coded to support analysis. For example, the code ‘X50’ related to ‘Arbitrary Arrest’ and ‘X01’ to a ‘Named Perpetrator’. All sources of information were anonymised and assigned unique reference numbers by investigators. The sourcing used in this report refers to these unique reference numbers (W: Witness Number; D: Document Number; Q: Question Number).

In establishing a necessary standard of proof, investigators developed a ‘reasonable grounds standard’. This standard was based on investigator

assessments of witness and account credibility and the coherence and consistency of responses alongside established exiled knowledge and other verifiable, credible respondent accounts.

For the purposes of this investigation, investigators considered information provided by survivors; perpetrators; witnesses; family members, friends, or other persons who were associated with a victim, perpetrator, or event who were deemed credible; former public officials with direct knowledge of stated incidents; and internally sourced documents received from reliable sources with credible chains of custody.

The definition of a ‘religious adherent’ that is used in this report refers to a follower or an advocate for a religion who is known to possess inner-convictions or who outwardly displays their religion or belief, either alone or as part of a community, through teaching, worship, practice, or other forms of private or public observance. The definition of ‘religious freedom violations’ refers to violations of the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

The definition of ‘criminal charge’ and ‘crime’ refers to an act that the state or a public official proposes as a reason for a sanction or violation. These criminal charges are often documented in writing or in public trials for shamanistic adherents, but are rarely documented in writing when it comes to Christian adherents. Instead, ‘substitute’ charges may include treason or espionage, even on private and official charge sheets. The designation of a criminal charge in this report does not imply guilt under national or international law.

The term ‘organisation’ refers to an administrative or functional structure and institution of a government or non-state actor that has defined purposes, defined resources, and defined personnel.

It should not be inferred that the data contained in this report is representative of the experiences of every North Korean. The factual findings are based solely on documented violations that were recorded during interviews. Victims of religious freedom violations who were not interviewed for this project may have undergone fundamentally different experiences.

Users of this report and the associated database should pay close attention to the documented number of victims and take care not to overcount the documented number of incidents or violations. Single respondents could have experienced multiple incidents or violations within a single event.

Information on the presence of religious adherents in North Korea is both an important and a challenging undertaking. This report does provide evidence about religious communities and persons in North Korea. What this report does not provide is an estimate of the number of religious adherents in North Korea. This would require either a complete sample of relevant data obtained from a census of the North Korean population or a random non-probability sample that would need to be representative of all North Korean citizens. An estimate of the number of religious adherents in North Korea is statistically problematic without either of these samples.

## Chapter 1: Background and context

This chapter of the report provides a brief outline of recent events for religions and beliefs in northern Korea. It identifies the international legal framework governing freedom of religion or belief. It moves on to document specific legal interpretations of religious practice that are used by North Korean organisations. The chapter ends with a summary of significant organisations that are documented as being associated with religious freedom violations. The chapter is not intended to provide a comprehensive historical or legal summary. Its purpose is to outline the context within which religion exists in North Korea.

## Part 1: Background on religion and belief in North Korea

### A history of suppression

Upon the establishment of the Soviet Civil Administration in 1945, significant political influence on the Korean peninsula rested in Buddhist, Cheondogyo, and Christian institutions. All had played a role in the struggle for Korean independence from Japanese colonial rule and many religious leaders had been active in nationalist movements.

Offering alternative visions of a future Korean state, each religious institution experienced suppression from the Soviet Civil Administration and the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea (succeeded by the People's Committee of North Korea in 1947 and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948). This included legislation that eroded many of the material abilities of religious communities to organise, the confiscation of both land and currency from religious institutions, and a 'Period of Eradicating Superstition' that undermined indigenous Korean belief.<sup>4</sup>

The Korean War marked a watershed for religion in North Korea. Cheondogyo had been hollowed and reformed as the Chongu Party that was loyal to the state. Places of Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant religious worship were repurposed and destroyed. And Buddhist and Christian leaders and congregations were arrested, imprisoned, murdered, or fled to South Korea. At the war's end, independent religious institutions were almost entirely absent from North Korean society.

In the proceeding decades, the North Korean government systematically introduced measures that targeted remaining religious adherents. For example, the establishment of political prison camps and the introduction of the *songbun* class system.

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<sup>4</sup> Kim, P. (2018). Protestants Households in North Korea after the Korean War: Discrimination, Repression and Resurgence. *Korea Observer*, 49(1), 25-50.

Since the 1970s, the North Korean government has exploited religion through state-run organisations. Led by the United Front Department of the Korean Workers' Party, the construction of buildings, such as Chilgol Church, Changchung Cathedral, and Kwangbop Temple, and the use of organisations, such as the Korean Christian Federation and the Korea Buddhist Federation, have created new opportunities and networks, particularly in South Korea. These networks allow ideological demands linked to a North Korean unification of the peninsula to be articulated. Numerous respondents told investigators that North Korean citizens are forbidden from religious practice at these sites.<sup>5</sup>

## Protestantism

Withstanding policies of suppression under both Korean monarchical and Japanese colonial rule, a period of revivals across Korea established a Protestant community of an estimated 200,000 by 1945.<sup>6</sup> Under the Soviet Civil Administration and later the North Korean government, the Protestant community was targeted through persecution, discriminatory legislation, arbitrary arrest, exile, and murder.<sup>7</sup> The implementation of the *songbun* class system in the 1950s and a concerted nationwide anti-religious education campaign, which still exists to this day, severed the social institutions that bound Protestant communities and created 'islands' of isolated adherents.

Forced underground in the late-1950s and the early-1960s,<sup>8</sup> it is not clear how many adherents formed dissident religious groups in North Korea during this period or whether any of the groups existed for any length of time. An important figure in the creation of present-day underground churches explained to investigators that they encountered no such institutions in the late-1980s and early-1990s. Yet while Protestantism may not have survived

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W8D12Q11; W44D47Q12; W45D48Q13; W74D86Q11; W91D105Q12; W96D109Q11.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: EI119; EI219; EI719.

<sup>7</sup> Lee, T. (2000). A Political Factor in the Rise of Protestantism in Korea: Protestantism and the 1919 March First Movement. *Church History*, 69(1), 116-142; Kim, P. (2018). Protestants Households in North Korea after the Korean War: Discrimination, Repression and Resurgence. *Korea Observer*, 49(1), 25-50.

<sup>8</sup> Kim, P. (2018). Protestants Households in North Korea after the Korean War: Discrimination, Repression and Resurgence. *Korea Observer*, 49(1), 25-50.

in North Korea, the evidence documented by investigators in this report demonstrates that it has revived, albeit under severe repression.

## North Korean shamanism

Predating institutionalised religion on the Korean peninsula, shamanism adopted many diverse practices from animism, ancestral spiritualism, Cheondogyo, Daoism, Korean Buddhism, Korean Christianity, and neo-Confucianism. Its relative lack of formal institutions and non-conformity with ruling orthodoxies led to periods of severe repression between the 1890s-1940s. These practices of repression were appropriated and employed by both the Soviet Civil Administration and later the North Korean government.

Shamanism is today illicitly practiced by many North Koreans, from ordinary citizens to ranking officials. One respondent suggested that “most people [in North Korea] believe in shamanism”<sup>9</sup> and investigators documented many persons engaging both publicly and privately in shamanistic practice. In its diverse religious practice, shamanism fulfils spiritual, medical, and social functions and is manifested through traditional rituals, fortune telling, physiognomy, exorcism, the use of talismans, the use of the Christian bible, the use of birth charts, tarot cards, and other documented forms.<sup>10</sup>

## Cheondogyo

Cheondogyo emerged in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century from Korea’s Donghak (Eastern Learning) movement and adopted tenets of neo-Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism to become an influential belief system that numbered 93,000 adherents by 1934.<sup>11</sup>

Under the Soviet Civil Administration, Cheondogyo was weakened as a religious and political force. Subordinated to the state-led North Korean Fatherland United Democratic Front (today known as Democratic Front for

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<sup>9</sup> Interview Response: W68D92Q11.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W52D69Q57; W55D75Q14; W56D93Q13; W70D63Q13.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: EI119; EI719; and Young, C. (2013). Into the Sunset: Chondogyo in North Korea, 1945-1950. *Journal of Korean Religions* 4(2), 51-66.

the Reunification of the Fatherland), anti-communist Cheondogyo groups were dismantled and their members purged, imprisoned, or executed. By 1958, Pak Sindok, the second leader of the Chongu Party, reported that less than 10,000 adherents remained in North Korea.<sup>12</sup>

North Korean Cheondogyo today exists as a political institution in the form of the Chongu Party. Investigators documented that many respondents did not classify Cheondogyo as a religion, but as a political organisation.<sup>13</sup> One respondent recounted how their parent, who was a Korean Workers' Party member, travelled to Pyongyang twice a year to greet foreign delegations and "act like an adherent".<sup>14</sup> During these events, the parent told the respondent, "All the Korean Workers' Party members bury their heads in the sand like ostriches".

## Atheism

Atheism, as an institution, had not existed in Korea until the introduction of Western thought prior to the period of Japanese occupation.<sup>15</sup> Following the path of the anti-religious Marxist–Leninist scientific atheism of the Soviet Civil Administration, the North Korean government appropriated atheism for its ideology to justify suppression of theistic beliefs and to provide citizens with an alternative, namely absolute obedience and deification of the Supreme Leader. Consequently, the atheism fostered by the North Korean government today is unrecognisable from the practice of atheism in many democratic societies where non-adherence to a religion or belief is premised on an education and subsequent rejection of the existence of deities. It would be inaccurate to define non-adherence to a religion or belief in North Korea as atheism, given that citizens are denied the freedoms to learn about religion or belief.

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<sup>12</sup> Young, C. (2013). Into the Sunset: Chondogyo in North Korea, 1945-1950. *Journal of Korean Religions* 4(2), 51-66.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W8D12Q11; W42D45Q11; W45D48Q11; W60D81Q12.

<sup>14</sup> Interview Response: W54D80Q11.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: EI219; EI1319; EI419; EI819; EI119.

## Catholicism

Korean Catholicism suffered waves of persecution throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, yet retained an estimated community of 55,000 adherents in northern Korea by 1945.<sup>16</sup> Much as the Soviet Civil Administration and the People's Committee of North Korea had actively disrupted and undermined the Protestant church, so too did the Korean Catholic church suffer. In 1949, church officers of the Apostolic Prefecture of Pyongyang and Deokwon Territorial Abbacy were imprisoned; the Apostolic Vicar of Pyongyang, Hong Yeong-ho, was abducted; the superior of the Deokwon Benedictines was imprisoned and died in custody; priests of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing in Wonsan were imprisoned; and 34 monks and four Missionary Sisters were killed.<sup>17</sup>

According to Cardinal Nicholas Cheong Jin-suk, the former Archbishop of Seoul and apostolic administrator of Pyongyang, by 2006 there were no known Catholic adherents remaining in North Korea and no remaining Vatican-recognised institutions of the Catholic Church.<sup>18</sup>

## Korean Buddhism

Under Japanese colonial rule, Korea's Buddhist institutions were eroded and subordinated through measures such as the abolition of the celibacy of monks.<sup>19</sup> Subjugation continued under the Soviet Civil Administration and North Korean government. Reductions in the numbers of practicing monks were enforced and land reforms expropriated Buddhist funds and led to the closure of temples.<sup>20</sup> The North Choson Buddhist General Federation and the North Choson Alliance of Buddhist Associations, both of which were later absorbed into the current-day Korea Buddhist Federation, centralised state-control over North Korea's remaining Buddhist institutions. It is unknown whether any practising Buddhists remain in North Korea.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview Response: EI119.

<sup>17</sup> Kim, J.S. History of the Korean Catholic Church [Conference Presentation]. December 2017. CIB Conference, Daegu, South Korea.

<sup>18</sup> Cardinale, G. (2006). Korea, for a reconciliation between North and South. *30Giorni* 3.

<sup>19</sup> Interview Response: EI619.

<sup>20</sup> Interview Response: EI1119.

## Part 2: Background on the legal framework of religious freedom

### International law

Freedom of religion or belief is guaranteed under Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. Religious freedom is further protected in other international treaties.<sup>21</sup>

As a matter of international law and international treaties, the North Korean government retains a duty to respect, a duty to protect, and a duty to fulfil religious freedom for its citizens. This right is generally considered to be inclusive of theistic, non-theistic, traditional, and non-traditional religions, and of atheistic, agnostic, and non-institutionalised beliefs. Citizens should not require permission to adhere to a religion or belief, and it is the government that must guarantee this right.

The North Korean government has not ratified all relevant international treaties that protect religious freedom. Nevertheless, many of the rights, principles, and customs of these treaties are considered to constitute legal obligations under customary international law, meaning that a failure of the North Korean government to realise its immediate or progressive legal obligations, either by deliberately contravening, not implementing, or withdrawing rights, may constitute a violation of international law.

### National legal system

When considering the legal obligations of the North Korean government, it is instructive to understand how legal practice interacts with ideological requirements. To this end, Korea Future Initiative sourced internal Korean

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix A.

Workers' Party legal commentaries published in 2018 for both the Socialist Constitution<sup>22</sup> and the Criminal Law.<sup>23</sup>

Legal commentaries are used as authoritative guidance for public officials working within the North Korean legal system and present approved interpretations of legislation within the ideological framework of the Ten Principles for Establishing a Korean Workers' Party Transcendental Guidance System.

Published by the Korean Workers' Party Publishing House, the constitution commentary directs practitioners in how the Korean Workers' Party intends the articles, principles, and norms of the constitution to be interpreted and contextualised.

Within the commentary, and following a reaffirmation of the constitution, the text informs the reader, who will be a legal practitioner, that North Korea's "workers and young people do not believe in any religion, because they deeply understand the profound truth of the Juche ideology".

In a probable reference to Christianity, the commentary then states that, "The American imperialists have used religion as a tool to invade our country in the past and, today, they are viciously plotting to spread religion to paralyse the class consciousness and revolutionary consciousness of the people and crush our republic".

The legal practitioner is warned to remain "on high revolutionary alert to prevent enemies from using religion to attract foreign powers and to harm the national social order, which is an important issue for adherence to our socialist system".

The criminal code commentary is similarly instructive in how North Korean public officials are expected to understand and apply North Korean criminal law to persons who adhere to shamanism.

Defining shamanism as a "crime of superstition", the commentary explicitly criminalises general customs performed by shamans, which are termed

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix C.

“unscientific superstitious acts, such as palmistry, physiognomy, fortune-telling, and exorcism in exchange for money or goods”.

Guidance contained within the criminal code commentary is explicitly associated with the quoted guidance of Kim Jong-il, suggesting that any deviation from the commentary would be a deviation from the instructions of the Supreme Leader.

These two legal commentaries demonstrate how national legislation is subordinated to ideological requirements. Legal practitioners are instructed by the Korean Workers’ Party on their duties and the professed facts of religion. And the existence of religion is presented as an existential threat to the state’s ideological unity. Importantly, these commentaries establish the limited extent of the North Korean constitution and its professed protection of religion or belief.

### The Ten Principles for Establishing a Korean Workers’ Party Transcendental Guidance System

*“In North Korea, loyalty is more important than the constitution [...] The Supreme leader’s words are the law and the Supreme Command”*<sup>24</sup>

The Ten Principles for Establishing a Korean Workers’ Party Transcendental Guidance System (henceforth, the Ten Principles) define the principles of loyalty to the Supreme Leader.<sup>25</sup> These are deification, absolutism, and unquestioning and unconditional obedience.

Anchored in Juche ideology, which is a means to an end, rather than an end, in and of itself, the Ten Principles are the single measure by which every citizen, whether they are a Korean Workers’ Party member or not, is judged. Refuting the existence of any authority other than that of the Supreme Leader, the Ten Principles override in practice many of the rights and freedoms guaranteed under international and national law, including the North Korean constitution.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview Response: W8D12Q12.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix D; Interview Response: W51D52Q51.

The organisation responsible for upholding the Ten Principles is the Organisation and Guidance Department of the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee (OGD).

The OGD advances the Ten Principles through an interlocking nationwide system of organisations, such as the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of People's Security, Border Security Command, and the Propaganda and Agitation Department. Each organisation physically and ideologically enforces adherence to the Ten Principles through their given tools, including: policing, surveillance, education, propaganda, the penal system, the guarding of borders, and organisational life-conduct.

To instil unconditional loyalty to the Supreme Leader in North Korea's organisations, the OGD is exclusively responsible for appointments of all senior personnel. It not only receives and acts upon daily and weekly reports of their ideological integrity, but also monitors lower-ranking personnel and citizens through organisational reporting structures that are present in every neighbourhood and workplace.

The Ten Principles are the single measure for every citizen in their daily lives. For this reason alone, the Ten Principles displace all international and national legal rights and protections for North Korean citizens. Conformity with the Ten Principles is mandatory. This suggests that where perpetrators and organisations commit religious freedom violations within their official duties and with institutional resources, the Ten Principles may be the source and rationalisation for those violations.

## Part 3: Background on government organisations in North Korea

### Ministry of State Security

The Ministry of State Security (MSS) is tasked with monitoring, investigating, and punishing anti-Party acts that violate the Ten Principles.

Investigators documented 193 incidents of religious freedom violations that were attributed to the MSS. These violations occurred at multiple MSS facilities, including offices, an internment camp (*gugeumso*);<sup>26</sup> holding centres (*jipkyulso*);<sup>27</sup> political prison camps (*kwanliso*);<sup>28</sup> and pre-trial detention centres (*kuryujang*, *kamok*, and *guchiso*).<sup>29</sup>

The reach of the MSS is extensive. It oversees national bureaus, provincial headquarters, offices in cities and counties, and offices in districts, towns, and villages from its central headquarters in Pyongyang. Duties include investigations, prosecution, counterintelligence, intercepting communications, information gathering in foreign territories, extraterritorial operations, and the management of political prison camps.

Respondents, including former MSS personnel, explained to investigators that officials receive anti-religious training.<sup>30</sup> To increase investigators' knowledge of MSS anti-religious training, Korea Future Initiative sourced internal MSS lecture materials relating to religion that have been used to train MSS staff.<sup>31</sup>

In the materials, MSS personnel are instructed, “We must fight firmly against religion and superstition [...] Religion and superstition are like poison that break down the socialist ideological foundations and paralyse class consciousness”. And personnel are warned, “If we are tainted with religion

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<sup>26</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W54D80Q15; W68D92Q23; W69D97Q20.

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W17D21Q16; W37D40Q16; W44D47Q25.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W40D43Q16; W65D95Q31; W67D85Q13.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W29D33Q25; W40D43Q16; W66D96Q33.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W19D23Q12; W27D31Q11; W28D38Q11.

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix E.

and superstition, which the enemies are spreading, we will be blinded by a non-existent God and lose sight of class that can identify friend or foe, and we will end up hating the fights that accompany sacrifices”.

MSS instructors are told to explain the contents of the lecture alongside “the contents of ‘Religion is a Polished Superstition’ from page 44 of the Table Lecture Material, Volume 21”, suggesting a much larger volume of anti-religious training material exists.

## Ministry of People’s Security

The Ministry of People’s Security (MPS) operates as a national police force. It is tasked with a wide remit of responsibilities, including criminal investigations, the dissemination of political guidance and directives to citizens, citizen registration, and the operation of penal facilities. Like the MSS, the MPS operates from a central headquarters in Pyongyang and oversees national bureaus, provincial headquarters, offices in cities and counties, and offices in districts, towns, and villages.

Investigators documented 90 incidents of religious freedom violations that respondents attributed to the MPS. These violations occurred at MPS facilities that included, labour training camps (*rodong daryeondae*);<sup>32</sup> holding centres (*jipkyulso*);<sup>33</sup> pre-trial detention centres (*kuryujang*, *kamok*, and *guchiso*);<sup>34</sup> long-term re-education camps (*kyohwaso*);<sup>35</sup> and precinct offices (*bunjuso*).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W27D31Q16; W62D82Q13; W99D102Q14.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W41D44Q20; W83D98Q11; W94D7Q20.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W40D43Q20; W51D52Q13; W66D96Q11.

<sup>35</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W56D93Q6; W57D90Q10; W60D81Q13.

<sup>36</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W41D44Q20; W52D54Q14; W91D105Q13.

## Border Security Command

Border Security Command (BSC) monitors North Korea's border regions and was documented by respondents as playing a significant role in religious freedom violations alongside the MSS and MPS. BSC personnel can often be the first points of contact for many religious persons illegally crossing from China to North Korea.

There are five BSC brigades, specifically the 27th Brigade in North Hamgyong Province (Chongjin City), the 25th Brigade in Ryanggang Province (Hyesan City), the 29th Brigade in Chagang Province, the 31st Brigade in North Pyongan Province (Sinuiju City), and the 14th Brigade in the Rason Special Economic Zone.

Each BSC brigade is composed of one or two regiments and generally of five battalions. Each battalion is believed to typically have five companies. And each company is believed to comprise up to three platoons. Platoons patrol and guard around 4km of border areas each and are a notable presence in regions, such as Hyesan City, where border crossing is more frequent.

Information obtained on the functions and governance of BSC differed between respondents who held knowledge from pre-2016 and respondents who held knowledge from post-2016. This difference suggests that BSC's governance structures may have transitioned from the Ministry of People's Armed Forces to the Ministry of State Security during this period. Existing questions concerning the governance of BSC will be addressed in future research.

## Chapter 2: Factual findings

This chapter presents summaries of the main factual findings of the investigation. Part 1 describes why documented persons who adhered to a religion were arrested and detained. These are the criminal charges of religious adherents and include: religious practice; religious activities in China; possessing religious items; contact with religious persons; attending a place of worship; and sharing religious beliefs. Part 2 explains what happened to documented persons who adhered to a religion. These are the human rights violations and include: arbitrary arrest; arbitrary detention; arbitrary imprisonment; arbitrary interrogation; refoulement; punishment of family members; torture or sustained physical assault; sexual violence; arbitrary surveillance; execution; public trials or resident exposure meetings; verbal abuse; and forced labour.

## Part 1: Patterns of documented criminal charges

### Religious practice

*“My mother used to evangelise in North Korea. She was a very passionate person. There were 10 people in her religious circle and my mother knew them all personally. Then one of them was arrested [...] He was tortured, interrogated, and sent with his entire family to a political prison camp”.*<sup>37</sup>

The investigation documented 149 incidents where persons experienced criminal charges based on their religious practice and that were not in accordance with due process or where the grounds for criminal proceedings were likely unlawful and at odds with fundamental human rights.<sup>38</sup> Arrests of victims often intersected with other criminal charges, such as illegal border crossing, attending a place of worship, contact with religious persons, sharing religious beliefs, or possession of religious items.<sup>39</sup>

The intersection of criminal charges is evidenced in the account of one respondent who explained to investigators how their partner had been reported by a family friend.<sup>40</sup> The victim had told a neighbour, “In China, they believe in Jesus. They believe in God”. When the victim was arrested, MSS officials discovered that the victim owned a bible. The victim’s partner told investigators, “[My partner] received a harsh sentence and, to this date, [they are] imprisoned. We do not have any news”.

The investigation uncovered frequent patterns of arrest for persons who were suspected of religious practice in China.<sup>41</sup> These arrests were often supported by information provided by China’s Ministry of Public Security and by MSS informants.

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<sup>37</sup> Interview Response: W71D62Q16.

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W3D5Q16; W14D18Q16; W19D23Q12; W24D28Q13; W27D31Q16; W30D34Q35; W41D44Q14; W43D46Q16; W66D96Q15; W67D85Q13; W88D104Q13; W89D78Q14.

<sup>39</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W3D5Q16; W41D44Q14; W43D46Q16; W59D94Q20; W66D96Q15; W67D85Q13.

<sup>40</sup> Interview Response: W4D7Q13.

<sup>41</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W31D35Q21; W40D43Q18; W43D46Q15; W51D52Q16; W56D93Q23; W65D95Q20; W67D85Q13.

One respondent learned that their MSS interrogation file contained information about their church attendance in China.<sup>42</sup> The respondent believed this information had been relayed by an MSS informant. Other respondents explained how refoulement documents had been marked by China's Ministry of Public Security with a black stamp. The stamp indicated that the victim had practiced Christianity in China.<sup>43</sup>

Several respondents experienced or witnessed arrests of persons who were reported to North Korean authorities for religious practice by their friends, family members, associates, neighbours, or community.<sup>44</sup> One respondent told investigators, “One of the smugglers near the border was an MSS informant [...] The MSS instructed the informant to report my sister’s family for possessing a bible, so my sister’s entire family was arrested”.<sup>45</sup>

Another respondent explained how an informant gathered information that led to the arrest of a practicing shaman and the shaman’s child in Ryanggang province.<sup>46</sup> Both the parent and child were exiled for three-years. In another case, investigators learned how a named MSS informant had been assigned to a family and had attempted to entrap family members during prayer.<sup>47</sup> The family was placed under surveillance for two-years. And in another case, a victim was actively surveilled and later arrested for sharing the gospel with friends and neighbours in Hyesan City.<sup>48</sup>

According to respondents, persons who practice shamanism are often subject to arrest.<sup>49</sup> One respondent who escaped North Korea in late-2019 explained to investigators, “People who practice shamanism will be sentenced to a maximum of five-years in a re-education camp if the penalty is harsh. They used to be sentenced to a labour training camp for three or six-months, but the sentence has been made stricter”.<sup>50</sup> Another respondent told investigators

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<sup>42</sup> Interview Response: W56D93Q23.

<sup>43</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W58D91Q23; W59D94Q17.

<sup>44</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W23D7Q16; W51D52Q15; W57D90Q31; W66D96Q11; W68D92Q11; W87D60Q15; W92D109Q11.

<sup>45</sup> Interview Response: W44D47Q15.

<sup>46</sup> Interview Response: W11D15Q13.

<sup>47</sup> Interview Response: W23D7Q16.

<sup>48</sup> Interview Response: W43D46Q15.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W1D1Q11; W4D7Q14; W42D45Q14; W45D48Q13; W91D105Q60.

<sup>50</sup> Interview Response: W42D45Q14.

that shamans who gain public notoriety for their religious practice are at risk of arrest and that their punishments often increase in line with the duration of the practice and the number of adherents engaged.<sup>51</sup>

North Korean public officials were documented as being arrested for practicing Christianity and shamanism.<sup>52</sup> In one case, a named MPS Director and their family, including two children, were arrested for possession of a bible.<sup>53</sup> In another case, a named MSS official was executed at Hyesan airfield after their arrest for possession of a bible.<sup>54</sup>

### Religious activities in China

*“I was half my weight when I was being refouled [...] I did not pray. I begged to God every morning and every night. It made me feel more at peace because it gave me the sense that I had someone to depend on”.*<sup>55</sup>

The investigation documented 110 incidents where persons experienced criminal charges based on their religious activities in China that were not in accordance with due process or where the grounds for criminal proceedings were likely unlawful and at odds with fundamental human rights.<sup>56</sup> Importantly, investigators noted that while refoulement was a significant enabler of subsequent religious freedom violations in North Korea, the process of arrest, detention, and refoulement in China had itself generated severe religious freedom violations.<sup>57</sup>

Arrests of victims in China were documented in private homes, underground prayer groups, in border areas, and on public transport.<sup>58</sup> Upon their arrest, victims were interrogated to establish whether they held information relating to churches, bible study groups, and South Korean and United States

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<sup>51</sup> Interview Response: W89D78Q13.

<sup>52</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W5D9Q1; W13D17Q12; W99D102Q19.

<sup>53</sup> Interview Response: W11D15Q12.

<sup>54</sup> Interview Response: W57D90Q15.

<sup>55</sup> Interview Response: W82D110Q20.

<sup>56</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W40D43Q11; W59D94Q20; W65D95Q11; W77D87Q20; W81D79Q20; W82D110Q22; W94D73Q20.

<sup>57</sup> Interview Response: W31D35Q22.

<sup>58</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W1D1Q17; W20D24Q11; W26D30Q17; W43D46Q16; W65D95Q11; W66D96Q15; W68D92Q20.

missionaries in Chinese territory.<sup>59</sup> Within this process, torture and physical assaults were documented.<sup>60</sup>

In one case, a named victim underwent severe torture in Changchun Chubei penal facility.<sup>61</sup> The victim was forced to sit on a wooden chair with a backrest made of corrugated iron and a metal crossbar across their face. The victim was interrogated in the chair for three-days and deprived of sleep for that period. The victim was transferred with a paper bag over their head and their hands tied behind their back to Baishan penal facility. At Baishan penal facility, the victim's ankles were tied with wire and they were detained for one-month. The victim told the respondent, "I think God might send me back to North Korea because he has other plans for me [...] I have only lived 33-years but I am going to heaven". After they had been refouled together, the respondent witnessed the victim squatting on the floor of an interrogation room in Ryanggang Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre. The victim was severely malnourished and their spine had been deformed. On a known date, the victim was sentenced to a political prison camp.

In another case, a respondent experienced electrocution, water torture, and was hung by their legs and arms for 12-hours at Changchun Chubei penal facility.<sup>62</sup> Another respondent, who was arrested while attempting to travel to South Korea, was repeatedly kicked by a Chinese official after the respondent had attempted suicide.<sup>63</sup>

Investigators documented incidents where North Korean religious adherents were sentenced to between 12-days and 12-years imprisonment in Chinese penal facilities.<sup>64</sup> When prisoners were refouled, children and adults were handcuffed and taken by bus to an official border crossing and ordered to either walk into North Korea or to board a goods vehicle, such as a coal hauling truck.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W26D30Q17; W59D94Q11; W66D96Q15.

<sup>60</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W24D28Q2; W31D35Q22; W65D95Q1; W81D79Q17.

<sup>61</sup> Interview Response: W31D35Q22.

<sup>62</sup> Interview Response: W24D28Q28.

<sup>63</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q11.

<sup>64</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W40D43Q17; W41D44Q20.

<sup>65</sup> Interview Response: W59D94Q20.

## Possessing religious items

*“If you are lucky you will be shot. If you are unlucky, you will be sent to a political prison camp”.*<sup>66</sup>

Investigators documented 78 incidents where persons experienced criminal charges based on their possession of religious items where the grounds for criminal proceedings were likely unlawful and at odds with fundamental human rights.<sup>67</sup>

In one case, a victim, who was a member of an underground religious group, was found to be in possession of a bible. The victim and their partner were arrested and sentenced to a political prison camp.<sup>68</sup> In another case, a Korean Workers’ Party member was arrested for possession of a bible and executed at Hyesan airfield in front of 3000 residents.<sup>69</sup> Another respondent told investigators how their relative was arrested for possession of a cross and a bible.<sup>70</sup> The victim had been reported by their partner and was arrested by a named BSC officer. The respondent’s family were not informed of the fate of their relative.

Respondents spoke of being repeatedly warned in lectures and people’s unit meetings to not read bibles and to report anyone who owned a bible.<sup>71</sup> One respondent recalled both MSS and MPS personnel stating in weekly lectures, “Whoever has a bible must turn themselves in”.<sup>72</sup> Fear of arrest led one adherent to destroy their bible.<sup>73</sup> Another respondent explained how their family member would go to great lengths to conceal passages from the bible that they would distribute in their hometown for fellow Christians to collect.<sup>74</sup>

Where direct access to a bible was impossible, a respondent explained how Christian adherents would construct their own copies of the bible.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Interview Response: W46D49Q12.

<sup>67</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W11D15Q16; W30D34Q35; W48D68Q17.

<sup>68</sup> Interview Response: W71D62Q16.

<sup>69</sup> Interview Response: W64D84Q11.

<sup>70</sup> Interview Response: W10D14Q15.

<sup>71</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W66D96Q15; W87D60Q16; W93D107Q41.

<sup>72</sup> Interview Response: W87D60Q16.

<sup>73</sup> Interview Response: W33D37Q13.

<sup>74</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W71D62Q16; W74D86Q12.

<sup>75</sup> Interview Response: W84D99Q12.

Some respondents experienced a bible being used by MSS officers during interrogations.<sup>76</sup> During their cross-examination at Onsong County MSS pre-trial detention centre, one respondent was confronted with a bible with Korean lettering and asked by an MSS officer, “Have you ever seen a book like this?”.<sup>77</sup> Another respondent explained how MSS officers requested that informants collected bibles from churches in China to bring back to North Korea. The officers retained some bibles to use in interrogations or to fabricate cases, while the remaining bibles were reported and destroyed.<sup>78</sup>

### Contact with religious persons

*“The MSS officials asked me, ‘Did you meet any South Koreans?’ and ‘Did you study Christianity?’ Anyone who gets refouled will be asked questions about South Korea and Christianity”.*<sup>79</sup>

Investigators documented 77 incidents where persons experienced criminal charges based on their contact or suspected contact with religious persons and where the grounds for criminal proceedings were not in accordance with due process and were likely at odds with fundamental human rights.<sup>80</sup>

In one incident, a named victim from North Hamgyong province was charged with supplying information to South Korean missionaries and was executed by firing squad.<sup>81</sup> In another case, a victim who had been in contact with religious persons was detained and interrogated at North Hamgyong Provincial MSS holding centre where a named MSS officer shouted, “Hey, you bitch. Does God know that you are in here?”.<sup>82</sup> The victim glared at the officer, which was considered a punishable act. The victim was instructed to crawl backwards out of their cell on their hands and knees. The named MSS officer then beat the victim with an *oseungogakja* (a 5x5 cm angled wooden club).

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<sup>76</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W29D33Q15; W59D94Q23.

<sup>77</sup> Interview Response: W59D94Q23.

<sup>78</sup> Interview Response: W29D33Q15.

<sup>79</sup> Interview Response: W66D96Q33.

<sup>80</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W14D18Q16; W30D34Q23; W31D35Q23; W40D43Q23; W59D94Q23; W81D79Q23.

<sup>81</sup> Interview Response: W94D73Q14.

<sup>82</sup> Interview Response: W67D85Q13.

## Attending a place of worship

*“There is no religion in the world and Kim Jong-il is God”.*<sup>83</sup>

Investigators documented 72 incidents where persons experienced criminal charges based on their attendance at a place of worship. This charge often intersected with the surveillance of religious adherents<sup>84</sup> and suggests that the organised practice of religion operates in small networks and one-to-one relationships.<sup>85</sup> In turn, some adherents would stand guard outside buildings where prayers were taking place to warn of approaching authorities.<sup>86</sup>

According to one respondent, a group of adherents, which the respondent understood to be similar to an underground church, were reported by an MSS informant and arrested in a named location. The group was believed to have existed for a significant period and had gathered together each Sunday. The arrest of the group of adherents was informally discussed among members of the Socialist Women’s Union of Korea in a documented neighbourhood.

The consequences of participating in underground religious groups was understood by many respondents, and even by those who were unaware of private gatherings of worship taking place in North Korea. One respondent told investigators, “I was shocked to learn that there were underground churches that preached the gospel”.<sup>87</sup> Another respondent said that private worship was possible but extremely dangerous due to the necessary secrecy.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Interview Response: W66D96Q15.

<sup>84</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W4D7Q12; W12D16Q12; W23D27Q16; W45D48Q16; W55D75Q15; W57D90Q13.

<sup>85</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W71D62Q15; W85D58Q13.

<sup>86</sup> Interview Response: W1D1Q17.

<sup>87</sup> Interview Response: W88D104Q7.

<sup>88</sup> Interview Response: W39D42Q12.

## Sharing religious beliefs

*“She used to hide her bible in the ceiling [...] I became curious about the bible and I thought, ‘What is this ‘bible’ that can lead to a whole family being arrested?’”<sup>89</sup>*

Investigators documented 22 incidents where persons experienced criminal charges based on their sharing of religious beliefs where the grounds for criminal proceedings were likely at odds with fundamental human rights.<sup>90</sup> In one example, a named group of three victims were arrested and detained at North Hamgyong Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre.<sup>91</sup> The group had been reported for proselytisation in Hoeryong City. In another instance, the partner of one respondent was arrested for proselytisation and was detained at Ryanggang Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre. The respondent was not informed of the fate of their partner and did not see them again.<sup>92</sup> In another case, a named victim was executed by firing squad for propagating religion and for organising large-scale escapes from North Korea to South Korea.<sup>93</sup>

In other incidents, victims were arrested and executed for sharing religious items, such as bibles.<sup>94</sup> In one case, a victim who brought bibles into North Korea was arrested and executed by a firing squad close to Samjiyon Hospital, Ryanggang Province. The execution was conducted by MPS officials and approximately 300 witnesses were gathered to observe the execution.<sup>95</sup>

Investigators documented incidents where religious beliefs were shared in penal facilities.<sup>96</sup> One respondent explained how a fellow prisoner proselytised in Chongori long-term re-education camp and performed glossolalia in their cell, which the respondent recognised as being passages from the bible. The respondent said, “Other prisoners in the cell did not know

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<sup>89</sup> Interview Response: W73D57Q15.

<sup>90</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W4D7Q13; W40D43Q23; W46D49Q11.

<sup>91</sup> Interview Response: W41D44Q21.

<sup>92</sup> Interview Response: W4D7Q16.

<sup>93</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W40D43Q17; W41D44Q14.

<sup>94</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W3D5Q16; W4D7Q13; W43D46Q16; W48D61Q15; W57D90Q15; W63D84Q15; W66D96Q15; W80D89Q15; W90D74Q15.

<sup>95</sup> Interview Response: W17D21Q13.

<sup>96</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W5D9Q24; W38D41Q15; W76D66Q11.

what this person was doing under the blanket, but I knew”.<sup>97</sup> Another respondent recalled how a prisoner told her, ““God had sent me here for you””.<sup>98</sup> The respondent recalled, “eventually I listened to her [...] she was a light that came and warmed me when I was drowning in my sorrow [...] I would have killed myself if it were not for her”.

Religious adherents who shared their faith were not always detected. In one case, the grandparent of a respondent had encountered both South Korean missionaries and pastors from the United States in China who had taught them prayers and hymns.<sup>99</sup> The respondent’s grandparent had memorised the prayers and hymns and recorded them in a notebook after they had returned to North Korea.

Investigators also documented Christian adherents who had remained in North Korea following the Korean War. These documented Christians shared their beliefs and religious practices with family members. One respondent recalled, “From the age of seven until I was 50, I kept watch when my mother prayed [...] And just as I had, my youngest daughter kept watch for my mother from the age of six”.<sup>100</sup> Another respondent recalled, “my maternal grandmother was from South Korea. I saw her pray [...] She prayed while lying down, before she went to bed, and when no one else was at home she prayed on her knees”.<sup>101</sup>

In other cases where beliefs were shared, respondents had engaged shamans at their own homes or at the homes of shamans.<sup>102</sup> Information about the identities of shamans was widely known among communities and spread through word-of-mouth. Citizens from all social classes were documented as engaging in different forms of shamanistic practice, including public officials. According to one respondent who practiced shamanism, “Officials came because they wanted to find out ways to improve their prospects. They were wary of word spreading that they were visiting shamans, so they had their fortunes read via their daughters or their wives”.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Interview Response: W41D44Q13.

<sup>98</sup> Interview Response: W76D66Q11.

<sup>99</sup> Interview Response: W6D10Q11.

<sup>100</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q11.

<sup>101</sup> Interview Response: W38D41Q11.

<sup>102</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W91D105Q13; W95D108Q11; W99D102Q11.

<sup>103</sup> Interview Response: W99D102Q11.

## Part 2: Patterns of documented religious freedom violations

### Arbitrary arrest

*“They shackled us all in handcuffs [...] As an adult, it was heart-breaking to see children being handcuffed. Our [child] was only 13-years old at the time”.*<sup>104</sup>

Investigators documented 244 incidents where persons experienced arbitrary arrest based on their alleged or suspected religious adherence.<sup>105</sup> Arbitrary arrest refers to the arrest of a person that is not in accordance with due process or where the grounds for the arrest are likely illegal under law or at odds with fundamental human rights. The investigation revealed clear patterns in organisations associated with documented arbitrary arrests. MSS officers were principally responsible for arrests of Christian adherents and MPS officers typically performed arrests of persons who adhered to shamanism.

Documented arrests of Christians were conducted primarily by MSS officers. These arrests took place in a host of settings, such as at the homes of victims, and were characterised by a veil of secrecy and an absence of an explanation as to the reasons for the arrests.<sup>106</sup> In certain cases, investigators noted that the residences of victims were stormed by MSS officers at night. This was presumably following surveillance. Victims, which included entire families, were arrested and led to waiting black *kaengsaeng* cars or motorbikes.<sup>107</sup> In one case, the two adult children of a Christian family were arrested and removed from their respective Korean People’s Army units on the same night as their parents were arrested in their home province.<sup>108</sup> Families arrested in this manner were not documented as having been returned to their residences and the whereabouts of many arrested victims remained concealed.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q13.

<sup>105</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W3D5Q16; W36D39Q16; W39D42Q16; W40D43Q23; W42D45Q14; W62D82Q16; W66D96Q14; W70D63Q14.

<sup>106</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W11D15Q16; W45D48Q15; W46D49Q43.

<sup>107</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W11D15Q12; W51D52Q16; W55D53Q18.

<sup>108</sup> Interview Response: W34D67Q15.

<sup>109</sup> Interview Response: W11D15Q13.

Although most respondents did not report violence during the process of their arrests, one respondent described watching MSS officers at Kyongwon County MSS office prepare and mobilise with weapons for the arrest of two persons suspected of Christian adherence.<sup>110</sup> Returning to the office with the two victims, the MSS officers were witnessed calling one victim a “fucking bitch” and referring to both victims as “crazy bitches” for believing in a God. One of the victims was screaming, “Mom, mom, do not say anything”, as they were brought into the MSS office.

Arrests performed by MSS officers were documented in some cases as being reliant upon pre-received information collected by informants.<sup>111</sup> Documented informants had typically been prior victims of arrest and had been coerced into becoming informants as an alternative to imprisonment.<sup>112</sup>

One former informant explained that they were not paid, but they were allowed to resume their job until they were given assignments.<sup>113</sup> Assignments included surveillance on suspected Christian adherents and shamans, crossing into China to gather information about the names of North Koreans who attended churches, collecting the phone numbers of missionaries and pastors in China, and accumulating religious items from churches in China, such as bibles and crosses, that were smuggled back into North Korea and used by MSS officers.<sup>114</sup> The names and identities of informants were known by many respondents and were documented by investigators.

Informants were not immune to further arrests or violations. One victim who continued to practice Christianity following their release and their assignment as an informant was re-arrested and subjected to 60-days of interrogation at Pukchong County MSS pre-trial detention centre.<sup>115</sup> The former informant was deprived of sleep, food, and water for 30-days and suffered two broken ribs, a broken clavicle, and a swollen and bruised face following physical assaults by MSS personnel.

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<sup>110</sup> Interview Response: W3D5Q16.

<sup>111</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W25D29Q15; W87D60Q16; W92D106Q14.

<sup>112</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W12D16Q12; W23D27Q16; W39D42Q16.

<sup>113</sup> Interview Response: W29D33Q15.

<sup>114</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W29D33Q15; W45D48Q15; W87D60Q16.

<sup>115</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q13.

Arrests of religious adherents were aided by the creation of government taskforces. One taskforce, named MSS 918 Taskforce, conducted inspections of personal communication devices for illegal content, such as mobile phones and smartphones. One respondent was arrested by the MSS 918 Taskforce after their phone was found to contain the Book of Esther and various hymns.<sup>116</sup> The respondent was physically assaulted during their detention and subjected to torture for seven consecutive days.

Taskforces were also used to specifically target shamanism. In July 2017, a directive, titled ‘A Directive to Root Out Superstitious Acts That Damage Socialism’, led to the creation of local taskforces that were collectively named MPS Group 712. Comprising officials from the MPS, the Korean Workers’ Party, the prosecution, and MPS informants from people’s units, MPS Group 712 was documented as being responsible for arrests of shamans and persons who adhered to shamanism.<sup>117</sup>

### Arbitrary detention

*“When I was in the pre-trial detention centre, the correctional officers made women hang on the steel bars like monkeys. It was so inhumane and humiliating”.*<sup>118</sup>

Investigators documented 195 incidents where persons experienced arbitrary detention based on their alleged or suspected religious adherence. Arbitrary detention refers to the detention of a person without legal grounds or where the victim’s procedural rights and due processes have likely been violated.<sup>119</sup> Documented respondents were detained following their arrests and prior to their trials for criminal charges that included religious practice and religious activities,<sup>120</sup> possessing religious items,<sup>121</sup> contact with religious persons,<sup>122</sup> and sharing religious beliefs.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Interview Response: W21D25Q13.

<sup>117</sup> Interview Response: W36D39Q16.

<sup>118</sup> Interview Response: W79D77Q34.

<sup>119</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W4D7Q16; W40D43Q16; W41D44Q16.

<sup>120</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W17D21Q16; W36D39Q14; W62D8216; W77D8716; W89D7813; W90D74Q16.

<sup>121</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W2D3Q13; W66D96Q15; W80D89Q15.

<sup>122</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W26D30Q16; W31D35Q21; W94D73Q16.

<sup>123</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W17D21Q11; W31D35Q21; W66D961Q15.

Periods of detention were documented as being longer for Christian adherents than shamanistic adherents. In one instance, a Christian adherent was detained in Ryanggang Provincial MSS holding centre for over a year after they were reported for smuggling pages from the bible into North Korea.<sup>124</sup> In another case at the same facility, a new mother and her baby were detained for 70-days.<sup>125</sup> In several instances, persons detained for shamanism were released following the payment of bribes.<sup>126</sup> MSS and MPS officials were documented as receiving bribes from victims and their families.<sup>127</sup>

Documented prisoners arrived at detention facilities in handcuffs<sup>128</sup> and some were even tied together with rope.<sup>129</sup> Prisoners at one documented facility were first made to sign documents relating to their admittance and were then subjected to degrading internal and invasive nude body cavity searches.<sup>130</sup> Prisoners at another documented facility were subjected to blood tests.<sup>131</sup> In one instance, a female working in the canteen of Ryanggang Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre conducted invasive nude internal body cavity searches of female prisoners.<sup>132</sup> Investigators noted that invasive body cavity searches were more commonly documented at MSS facilities than MPS facilities.

Female prisoners who were suspected of being pregnant were subjected to further degrading treatment in detention. One respondent, who was arrested while escaping to South Korea, admitted, “I was humiliated. They asked me questions like, ‘Who fucked you and got you pregnant?’”.<sup>133</sup> Another respondent told investigators, “I was pregnant. So, instead of kicking me they slapped me, because if I had a miscarriage it would have been their responsibility. My face was blue”.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Interview Response: W26D30Q15.

<sup>125</sup> Interview Response: W17D21Q11.

<sup>126</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W53D55Q14; W95D108Q16; W99D102Q19.

<sup>127</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W1D1Q11; W39D42Q16; W92D106Q43; W99D102Q19.

<sup>128</sup> Interview Response: W67D85Q11.

<sup>129</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q21.

<sup>130</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q21.

<sup>131</sup> Interview Response: W52D54Q25.

<sup>132</sup> Interview Response: W31D35Q33.

<sup>133</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q21.

<sup>134</sup> Interview Response: W2D3Q26.

Investigators heard how a group of families were detained in North Pyongan Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre.<sup>135</sup> The group had formed an underground church that comprised adults and children with ages ranging from 10-years of age to close to 80-years of age. One teenage child was admitted into the detention facility as an adult while younger children were placed into care. The two families continued to pray together silently and with their eyes open in their cells. The respondent told investigators, “I asked them whether they were afraid. They just smiled. [One victim] said she was not frightened and told me, ‘Jesus looks over us’ [...] I began to cry because I knew what would happen to people like her, but she told me not to worry. The children did not cry either. They were all smiling. They said they were not scared. The next day they were all sent to Chongjin Susong political prison camp”.

Prisoners were referred to by prisoner number and cell number.<sup>136</sup> For example ‘Prisoner Number Two of Cell Five’. Cells were assigned based on the gender of the prisoner. In North Hamgyong Provincial MSS holding centre, cells one, three, four, and seven were designated for male prisoners and cells two, five, and six for female prisoners at the time of one respondent’s detention.<sup>137</sup> Investigators collected detailed accounts of multiple detention facilities, including the geolocations of buildings, details concerning personnel, and drawings of internal structures.

In one case, a respondent explained that prisoners in Musan County MPS pre-trial detention centre were held in semi-circular detention cells around a central corridor to enable one MPS officer to monitor all 10 cells at once.<sup>138</sup> Each cell was 3.5m in depth and 1.2m wide and held up to 24 prisoners. Prisoners were forced to sleep on the floors of cells and to overlap their bodies with other prisoners due to overcrowding.

Many respondents spoke of how the conditions of detention cells dehumanised prisoners. This included severely overcrowded cells, such as in Musan County MSS pre-trial detention centre, Hyesan City MPS pre-trial detention centre, and Ryanggang Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q21.

<sup>136</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q21.

<sup>137</sup> Interview Response: W67D85Q16.

<sup>138</sup> Interview Response: W60D81Q33.

<sup>139</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W30D34Q22; W36D39Q16; W47D53Q15.



*“I have experienced the three types of torture: beating, sitting in a fixed position, and deprivation of food”.*<sup>140</sup>

In Hyesan City MPS pre-trial detention centre, over 30 prisoners were detained in a cell measuring 13.2m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>141</sup> Prisoners were forced to sit in their cells for up to and beyond 12-hours each day while CCTV cameras monitored their movements.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Interview Response: W54D80Q15.

<sup>141</sup> Interview Response: W36D39Q16.

<sup>142</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W54D80Q15; W65D95Q21; W67D85Q13; W82D110Q22.

Several respondents spoke of both Christian and shamanistic practices being performed secretly and openly in detention cells. In North Pyongan Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre, one respondent was taught passages from Genesis and a hymn titled, ‘God Inside Me’.<sup>143</sup> In another case, a victim from Musan County who was detained at Onsong County MSS pre-trial detention centre confessed to MSS officers that they had prayed in their cell. The victim’s fellow prisoners perceived that the victim’s praying had endangered their safety and they subsequently physically assaulted the victim.<sup>144</sup>

In an incident from 2005, one respondent estimated that between 50-60 percent of their fellow detainees at Onsong County MSS pre-trial detention centre had attended some form of Christian service in China.<sup>145</sup>

Poor sanitary conditions in detention cells were widely documented. Cells typically contained one toilet that was partially concealed from other prisoners and correctional officers by a small concrete wall measuring 1m in height.<sup>146</sup> In North Hamgyong Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre, prisoners were instructed to shout when they needed to use the toilet. A respondent recalled yelling, “Prisoner Number X of Cell Number X! May I urinate and defecate?”.<sup>147</sup> If a female prisoner was constipated, correctional officers were documented as shouting, “You, bitch. Make it quick and stand up”.<sup>148</sup> Prisoners were not provided with toilet paper and the respondent was forced to use a communal cloth that was rinsed with toilet water and left for the next prisoner to use.

Prisoners in Ryanggang Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre were only permitted to use the cell toilet at the hours of 06:00 and 18:00. Outside of those hours, prisoners were forced to urinate and defecate in their clothes.<sup>149</sup> One respondent, who had been detained at Hyesan City MPS pre-trial detention centre for attending a church in China, recalled, “Some people defecated in their pants. They were beaten for that. Even though the toilet was right behind us, we were not allowed to use it without permission”.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Interview Response: W76D66Q11.

<sup>144</sup> Interview Response: W38D41Q15.

<sup>145</sup> Interview Response: W1D1Q18.

<sup>146</sup> E.g., Interview Responses W67D85Q13; W79D77Q13.

<sup>147</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q33.

<sup>148</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q33.

<sup>149</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q13.

<sup>150</sup> Interview Response: W83D98Q33.

Another respondent told investigators, “there was a 60-litre container in the cell where we fetched the water to flush the toilet, but because there were so many people in the cell there was not enough water to flush the toilet so the whole cell smelt bad”.<sup>151</sup>

Respondents received inadequate food provisions while in detention.<sup>152</sup> One respondent recalled, “There were a few grains of corn for the meals. [Officers] put a few grains in a black bowl. There was also soup, but it was not proper soup. It was made of the leaves and stems of a radish and salt. There were 3-4 tablespoons of sand in the soup. Then we washed our dishes with toilet water”.<sup>153</sup>

Investigators were told by another respondent that their meals had included “a medium sized plate with thinly spread boiled corn. It was about 20 kernels”.<sup>154</sup> A respondent who was detained at North Pyongan Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre told investigators, “[the MSS officers] mixed corn with soybeans to prevent the inmates from dying from malnutrition. We were given between 1-2 minutes to eat otherwise our rice was taken away from us. We were given just three spoons of rice”.<sup>155</sup>

Cells were typically documented as having three concrete walls and one wall of iron or steel bars. The doors to many documented cells were intentionally small so that prisoners were forced to crawl from their cells. In Hyesan City MPS pre-trial detention centre, the cell door was between 50-60cm tall.<sup>156</sup> The cell doors measured 70cm in Onsong County MSS pre-trial detention centre.<sup>157</sup> While in North Hamgyong Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre, the cell doors were 50cm in height.<sup>158</sup>

When called for interrogation, respondents were forced to bend forwards and have their hands shackled behind their backs. They were then forced to crawl from their cells backwards. Prisoners who crawled out head-first were kicked

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<sup>151</sup> Interview Response: W31D35Q34.

<sup>152</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W65D95Q33; W78D88Q20; W80D89Q15; W82D110Q20.

<sup>153</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q23.

<sup>154</sup> Interview Response: W80D89Q15.

<sup>155</sup> Interview Response: W82D110Q20.

<sup>156</sup> Interview Response: W36D39Q33.

<sup>157</sup> Interview Response: W24D28Q21.

<sup>158</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q21.

and beaten.<sup>159</sup> When re-entering their cells, prisoners were forced to crawl head-first so they could not look their correctional officers in the eyes.<sup>160</sup>



One victim detained at North Hamgyong Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre was forced to crawl close to the bars of their cell on their knees. The perpetrator put their arm through the cell bars and repeatedly struck the prisoner with an *oseungogakja* in their stomach. Sitting in a fixed posture in the cell, the prisoner later cried and asserted, “I am God’s daughter. I am crying because I am worried that God will be in pain seeing his daughter being assaulted in prison”.<sup>161</sup> The victim was transferred to Chongjin Susong political prison camp.

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<sup>159</sup> Interview Response: W67D85Q13.

<sup>160</sup> Interview Response: W36D39Q23.

<sup>161</sup> Interview Response: W67D85Q13.

Acts of violence were often perpetrated against prisoners who practiced their religion in detention facilities.<sup>162</sup> In one instance, a named victim who had re-entered North Korea as a trained missionary was detained at Musan County MSS pre-trial detention centre.<sup>163</sup> The victim was caught praying in their cell and their fellow prisoners were ordered by an MSS correctional officer to physically assault the victim. In another case, a North Korean missionary underwent detention at North Pyongan Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre before being executed by firing squad at North Hamgyong Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre.<sup>164</sup>

### Arbitrary imprisonment

*“Hamhung long-term re-education camp had a field with cabbage and radish. Cremated bodies and human manure were used as fertiliser so the plants grew very big”.*<sup>165</sup>

Investigators documented 125 incidents where persons experienced arbitrary imprisonment based on their alleged or suspected religious adherence.<sup>166</sup> Imprisonment of North Koreans associated with Christianity ranged from adherents who possessed religious items to those who engaged in underground churches.

In one case, investigators were told how a victim was sentenced to Hwasong political prison camp for carrying pages of the bible from China into North Korea.<sup>167</sup> Investigators also learned how an MSS officer signed the sentencing paper for a victim to be transferred from Musan County MSS pre-trial detention centre to a political prison camp for the crime of possessing a Christian pamphlet.<sup>168</sup> In another case, a soldier was reported to a BSC squadron because their parent had smuggled a bible into North Korea from China. The home of the soldier was searched and the parent was executed.

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<sup>162</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W40D43Q16; W60D81Q13; W83D98Q33.

<sup>163</sup> Interview Response: W60D81Q13.

<sup>164</sup> Interview Response: W40D43Q16.

<sup>165</sup> Interview Response: W24D28Q34.

<sup>166</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W2D3Q21; W41D44Q11; W56D93Q8.

<sup>167</sup> Interview Response: W26D30Q15.

<sup>168</sup> Interview Response: W48D61Q15.

The soldier and remaining family members were sentenced to a political prison camp.<sup>169</sup>

Conditions in long-term re-education camps were particularly severe. One Christian victim at Kaechon long-term re-education camp contracted tuberculosis due to poor sanitary conditions, including open sewerage.<sup>170</sup> The victim was transferred to a re-education camp reserved for prisoners with tuberculosis in Chonnae County, Kangwon Province. The victim's mother was informed of the victim's death. In another case, an elderly victim detained at Chongori long-term re-education camp was taken to a cell where prisoners were tortured throughout the night.<sup>171</sup> The victim had recited the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer in their cell and was transferred to a political prison camp.

Accounts of persons and entire families being sentenced to political prison camps for adhering to Christianity were documented.<sup>172</sup> Typically, these sentences were known or understood to be life-sentences. For example, one respondent spoke of how 10 named co-attendees of bible study groups were arrested and sentenced to political prison camps.<sup>173</sup> The parent of one of the victims was informed that their child had died at a political prison camp. In a similar case, the child of a respondent was imprisoned at Chongjin Susong political prison camp owing to their parent's known attendance at a church in China.<sup>174</sup> The parent was later informed that their child had died at the camp.

Prior to their imprisonment, several respondents were provided with attorneys.<sup>175</sup> One respondent recalled, "I had an attorney [...] The attorney did not do much. I think he just came to see if he could get a pack of cigarettes if he visited me. Attorneys have no authority in a trial".<sup>176</sup> Correspondingly, another respondent said, "Attorneys in North Korea do not defend prisoners. Attorneys do as the state says".<sup>177</sup> And a different respondent said, "North

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<sup>169</sup> Interview Response: W28D38Q15.

<sup>170</sup> Interview Response: W56D93Q11.

<sup>171</sup> Interview Response: W41D44Q13.

<sup>172</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W28D38Q15; W40D43Q18; W71D62Q16.

<sup>173</sup> Interview Response: W40D43Q16.

<sup>174</sup> Interview Response: W20D24Q11.

<sup>175</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W30D34Q15; W37D40Q32; W41D44Q11; W60D81Q32; W83D98Q23; W86D59Q19.

<sup>176</sup> Interview Response: W83D98Q23.

<sup>177</sup> Interview Response: W86D59Q19.

Korea assigns attorneys during trials, but North Korean attorneys do not defend the accused [...] They are just formalities".<sup>178</sup>

Another respondent told investigators, "In North Korea, an attorney is present as a formality, but we do not have the right to speak. I was tried, so I know that we are not granted the right to answer or to speak. The judge announced my crimes and the attorney recognised my crimes and asked whether I was guilty. I could only answer that I was guilty. You must agree with everything they say. If you deny the charges, your sentence will be extended".<sup>179</sup>

Investigators heard how one respondent, who worked at a church in China prior to being refouled, spoke of meeting their assigned attorney for just 15-minutes.<sup>180</sup> The attorney informed the respondent that they would serve a 13-year sentence for religious crimes. Prior to their transfer to Chongori long-term re-education camp, the respondent sang a hymn, 'To me in Jesus', in their mind during a 10-minute exercise break.

Another respondent who was arrested for distributing USB sticks containing hymns told investigators how their named attorney stated that the respondent was a "spy".<sup>181</sup> The attorney said, "[The victim] knows the bible and is already deeply invested in its teachings. Releasing [them] would be the wrong decision".<sup>182</sup> In another case, a respondent on trial for practising shamanism recounted how the judge shouted, "Answer, you bitch!" while MPS officials kicked the respondent when they were unable to answer the judge.<sup>183</sup>

Victims imprisoned for shamanism were documented as receiving trials that included lay judges, an attorney, prosecutors, and judges.<sup>184</sup> An attorney assigned to a person accused of shamanism was documented as asking whether the accused had experienced any human rights violations at MPS facilities. If the accused had confirmed this to be the case, the attorney would pass the information to the MPS facility and the person would be physically assaulted prior to their imprisonment.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Interview Response: W60D81Q32.

<sup>179</sup> Interview Response: W30D34Q15.

<sup>180</sup> Interview Response: W41D44Q20.

<sup>181</sup> Interview Response: W79D77Q12.

<sup>182</sup> Interview Response: W79D77Q32.

<sup>183</sup> Interview Response: W99D102Q32.

<sup>184</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W37D40Q32; W84D99Q13; W86D59Q16.

<sup>185</sup> Interview Response: W60D81Q32.

## Arbitrary interrogation

*“Kill me with that club if it is a crime to believe in God!  
Why is it a crime to believe in God?”<sup>186</sup>*

Investigators documented 111 incidents where persons experienced arbitrary interrogation based on their alleged or suspected religious adherence, including naturalised South Korean nationals and children as young as seven-years old.<sup>187</sup> The names, ranks, and physical descriptions of numerous interrogators were recorded.<sup>188</sup> Arbitrary interrogation refers to information gathering activities that are not conducted in a lawful manner in that they do not respect due process rights, they take place over an extended period, or they involve other human rights violations, such as threats or physical assault.

A number of respondents who experienced interrogation had been refouled from China. During their interrogations, the respondents were pressured to reveal the names, locations, and phone numbers of North Koreans who practiced Christianity and of South Korean, United States, and Chinese nationals associated with religious groups. Questions included, “Do you know God?”, “Do you know Jesus?”, and “Which church did you attend in China and with whom?”.<sup>189</sup>

In one case, a victim was interrogated by an MSS Director at Sinpa County MSS pre-trial detention centre. The Director said, “You bitch. How many times did you go to church? You need to die”.<sup>190</sup> The same victim underwent further interrogation at Ryanggang provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre for 15 consecutive days, where they were asked, “How many times did you go to church?”, “Where is the church located?”, “How many people attend the church?”. At one stage, and following the persistent denials of the victim, a male dressed as a pastor entered the interrogation room to elicit confessions while the victim, who had been forcibly sleep deprived, had their hands tied behind their back and was made to kneel. When the respondent refused to

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<sup>186</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q13.

<sup>187</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W5D9Q12; W17D21Q16; W51D52Q16; W52D5414; W87D60Q16.

<sup>188</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W31D35Q37; W53D55Q16; W56D93Q15.

<sup>189</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W37D40Q23; W56D93Q23; W82D110Q23.

<sup>190</sup> Interview Response: W68D92Q23.

answer the questions of the interrogator and ‘pastor’, their arms, legs, and shoulders were beaten with an *oseungogakja*.

Interrogators were documented using information that had been sourced from informants in China and from prior victims. One respondent was identified by interrogators at North Pyongan Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre as having attended a church in China. Shown a map of the Chinese city they had lived in, the respondent was asked, “Is there not a church not too far from where you lived?”.<sup>191</sup>

During interrogations, prisoners were forced to write statements about their engagement with religion.<sup>192</sup> The sibling of one respondent who was interrogated at Ryanggang Provincial MSS holding centre wrote a confession stating, “I believe in God. I am religious. I read a bible with my relatives. I did worship”.<sup>193</sup>

Interrogations of shamans tended to be for shorter periods of time than interrogations of Christians. The identities of shamans were more widely known within their local towns and cities, suggesting there was less valuable information to be gained through interrogation.

In one case, a named perpetrator, who has since been promoted to a Director at Ryanggang Provincial Prosecution Bureau, oversaw the interrogation of suspected shamans and was documented as having physically struck victims with his fists and pulled their hair.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Interview Response: W58D91Q23.

<sup>192</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W47D53Q23; W67D85Q13; W82D110Q23.

<sup>193</sup> Interview Response: W44D47Q15.

<sup>194</sup> Interview Response: W37D40Q10.



*“I was beaten up so much in prison. The steel bars in North Korean prisons are thick. [Officers] will grab your hair and bash your head against the steel bars”.*<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Interview Response: W4D7Q23.

In many incidents, the length of interrogations corresponded with the alleged religious crimes. In one case, a victim underwent 60-days of interrogation after confessing to believing in Jesus.<sup>196</sup> In another case, a victim was interrogated for over four-months at North Hamgyong Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre based on information submitted by China's Ministry of Public Security in the victim's refoulement notes.<sup>197</sup>

Humiliating and degrading treatment was experienced by several respondents. Investigators heard how one respondent was forced by MSS officers at Ryanggang Provincial MSS holding centre to recite passages of the bible for the amusement of officers.<sup>198</sup>

Investigators interviewed a respondent who oversaw the interrogation of victims who were suspected of religious adherence. Stationed at a BSC brigade with no interrogation rooms, the respondent interrogated victims in air raid shelters in the grounds of the provincial BSC brigade. Each interrogation lasted 40-minutes and the interrogator asked their victims, "If you have seen a bible, then describe it. We will let you go" and "Have you ever seen a bible or been to church?".<sup>199</sup>

Violence inflicted during interrogations led one respondent to describe being "treated like an animal".<sup>200</sup> In North Hamgyong Provincial MSS holding centre, a victim who was arrested in possession of a small black bible with the writing, '*Shin-yak-seong-suh*' (New Testament) in gold lettering, was physically kicked by MSS officers with boots and struck with a wooden stool and tree branches during interrogation.<sup>201</sup> The victim was unable to walk following the assaults and was dragged along the floor by MSS officers into a cell. Another victim committed suicide following 15-days of interrogation following their arrest for receiving a Christian education in China.<sup>202</sup>

Certain responses suggested that while MSS interrogations must take place within a defined time limit, certain circumstances will warrant extensions of

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<sup>196</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q13.

<sup>197</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q21.

<sup>198</sup> Interview Response: W80D89Q23.

<sup>199</sup> Interview Response: W46D49Q23.

<sup>200</sup> Interview Response: W10D14Q16.

<sup>201</sup> Interview Response: W94D73Q16.

<sup>202</sup> Interview Response: W14D18Q16.

that period. If charges cannot be brought against a prisoner following their interrogation, a second interrogator may replace the first interrogator.<sup>203</sup> Interrogators at provincial MSS facilities were documented as using laptops, while MSS interrogators at city and county-level MSS facilities wrote notes on paper.<sup>204</sup> Upon completion of the interrogation process, prisoners were either charged and subjected to a pre-trial examination or were transferred to another facility or released. Respondents who were released were required to write or sign a memorandum confirming they would not disclose information about their experiences of detention and interrogation.<sup>205</sup>

### Punishment of family

*“If the Ministry of State Security takes someone away, they tell us, ‘Do not look for that person anymore’”.*<sup>206</sup>

Investigators documented 36 incidents where family members of persons who had been charged with crimes associated with religion were subsequently targeted.<sup>207</sup> In certain incidents this led to the arrests of children as young as three-years old.<sup>208</sup> In other incidents, entire families were arrested.<sup>209</sup> Investigators also documented incidents where the partners of persons sentenced with religious crimes were forced to divorce victims.<sup>210</sup>

### Torture or sustained physical assault

*“I was tortured in prison and physically assaulted. These experiences remain with me as trauma. I have nightmares in the middle of the night [...] The memory of living among a pile of corpses is still there”.*<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Interview Response: W67D85Q16.

<sup>204</sup> Interview Response: W67D85Q13.

<sup>205</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W21D25Q13; W28D38Q25; W45D48Q16.

<sup>206</sup> Interview Response: W55D75Q13.

<sup>207</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W11D15Q16; W24D28Q13.

<sup>208</sup> Interview Response: W55D75Q13.

<sup>209</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W11D15Q16; W34D67Q15; W55D75Q16.

<sup>210</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W26D30Q12; W80D89Q17.

<sup>211</sup> Interview Response: W60D81Q10.

Torture and sustained physical assaults of persons who were charged with crimes associated with religious adherence were documented in 36 incidents by investigators.<sup>212</sup> Investigators retained the names of several perpetrators.<sup>213</sup>

Torture was experienced by respondents in various forms: being forced to hang on steel bars while being beaten with an *oseungogakja*; being hung by their legs; having their body tightly bound with sticks; being forced to perform ‘squat-jumps’ and to sit and stand hundreds or thousands of times each day; having a liquid made with red pepper powder forcibly poured into their nostrils; being forced to kneel with a wooden bar inserted between their knee hollows; strangulation; being forced to witness the execution or torture of other prisoners; starvation; being forced to ingest polluted food; being forced into solitary confinement; being deprived of sleep; and being forced to remain seated and still for up to and beyond 12-hours a day.<sup>214</sup>

Investigators heard how a victim who was detained at Ryanggang Provincial MSS holding centre for belonging to an underground church and attempting to escape to the United States was taken from their cell each morning and returned each afternoon with their face severely bruised following repeated physical assaults.<sup>215</sup> In a different case, a respondent was physically assaulted at Hyesan City MPS pre-trial detention centre during an interrogation into the respondent’s links to Christianity.<sup>216</sup> The respondent was punched in the face three times and suffered hearing loss. Following the assault, the respondent was unable to walk and was forced to crawl to and from the interrogation room.

Multiple respondents were physically assaulted with perpetrators’ fists and feet or with an object, such as an *oseungogakja*. Repeated use of the *oseungogakja* by perpetrators was documented by investigators. This may suggest that the *oseungogakja* is a standard-issue weapon used for torture.

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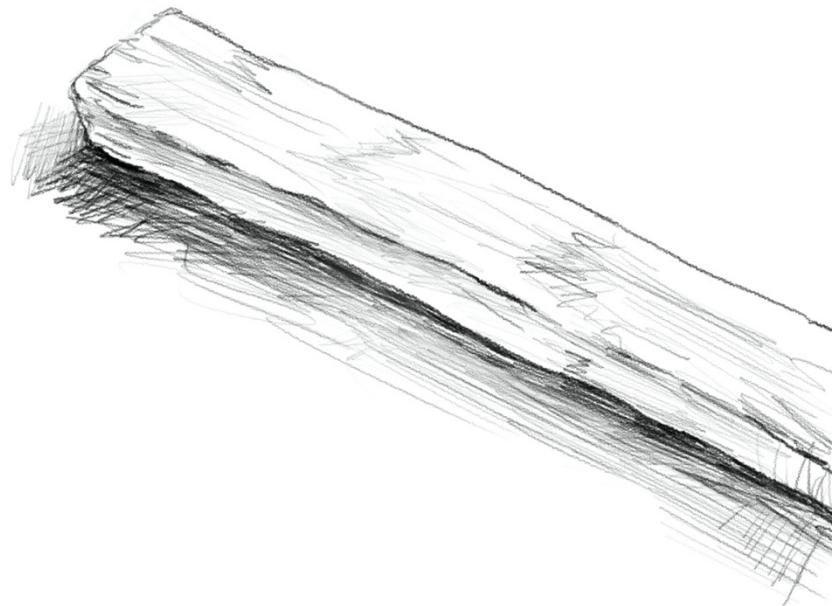
<sup>212</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W56D93Q25; W60D81Q10; W81D79Q25.

<sup>213</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W31D35Q27; W48D61Q14; W56D93Q15.

<sup>214</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W1D1Q25; W4D7Q25; W76D66Q10.

<sup>215</sup> Interview Response: W17D21Q11.

<sup>216</sup> Interview Response: W83D98Q20.



*“They hung my body by my limbs and beat me with an oseungogakja. This was called ‘airplane torture’”.*<sup>217</sup>

At North Pyongan Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre, one respondent explained, “Men were beaten like dogs. Even in the cell. They screamed like crazy because they hurt so much. Even though women were beaten less, I was hit in the face and my skin ruptured and I bled a lot. [MSS officers] told me to wipe the blood, so I cleaned it [...] I wept a lot when they hit me again. Blood and discharge ruptured during my next pre-trial examination. They hit me again because I wept. I do not know if it was God, but the wound healed by the next pre-trial examination”.<sup>218</sup> Investigators noted a scar on the respondent’s face.

Following a period of severe physical assault, another respondent told investigators that it had felt as if their body was “decomposing”.<sup>219</sup> The respondent has been tortured owing to their possession of a section of the

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<sup>217</sup> Interview Response: W56D93Q25.

<sup>218</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q31.

<sup>219</sup> Interview Response: W21D25Q13.

bible. Another respondent who had practiced Christianity recalled waking each day at Pukchong County MSS pre-trial detention centre and thinking, “I am still alive. I wish I had died already. How can I bear more torture?”.<sup>220</sup> A victim who experienced over 100-days of detention and torture told an investigator, “I prayed from morning until night for my children, and for God to punish Kim Jong-un”.<sup>221</sup>

Incidents of torture and physical assault inflicted on persons adhering to shamanism were documented, albeit with less frequency. In Musan County MSS pre-trial detention centre, a named perpetrator broke the fingers of a victim who had practiced physiognomy.<sup>222</sup> The perpetrator later became a prosecutor in Musan County. Another victim was reported at Kaechon re-education camp for reading the fortunes of fellow prisoners and was placed in solitary confinement.<sup>223</sup>

Particularly inhumane and unusual forms of torture were documented in several instances.<sup>224</sup> In one case, a respondent who had converted to Christianity was tortured at Hoeryong City MSS pre-trial detention centre.<sup>225</sup> The respondent was forced into a steel cage and its bars were heated with an electric current. The victim prayed while in the cage until they urinated themselves and lost consciousness after 12-hours. After regaining consciousness, the respondent recognised that they had been physically assaulted while unconscious and had suffered severe injuries to their face and right-leg.

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<sup>220</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q11.

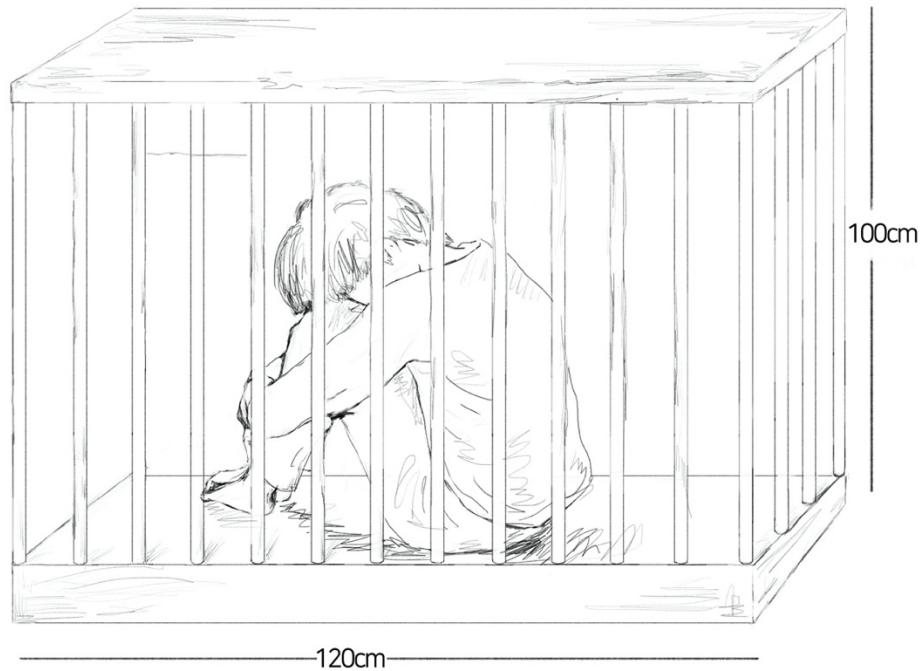
<sup>221</sup> Interview Response: W68D92Q23.

<sup>222</sup> Interview Response: W48D61Q14.

<sup>223</sup> Interview Response: W57D90Q14.

<sup>224</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W24D28Q23; W56D93Q25; W81D79Q25.

<sup>225</sup> Interview Response: W81D79Q21.



*“I was sent underground and placed inside a cage at Hoeryong City MSS pre-trial detention centre. There were steel bars on all four-sides that were heated with electricity. Usually prisoners lasted only 3-4 hours in the cage, but I sat there for 12-hours and prayed. I kept praying to God to save me”.*<sup>226</sup>

Another respondent spoke of water and electric torture that they experienced in China, telling investigators, “Torture with water is common in China [...] They also still use electric torture [...] Your bones hurt so much afterwards and it is hard to use your hands and feet”<sup>227</sup>

Several victims were forcibly or repeatedly starved as a form of torture.<sup>228</sup> In one case, a respondent was deprived of food and water for 30-days.<sup>229</sup> Another respondent described how their friend, who had been arrested for

<sup>226</sup> Interview Response: W81D79Q25.

<sup>227</sup> Interview Response: W24D28Q28.

<sup>228</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W24D28Q23; W57D90Q31; W82D110Q21.

<sup>229</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q13.

distributing small copies of the Old and New Testaments, “looked like a skeleton” in detention.<sup>230</sup> Another victim, who was detained in Ryanggang Provincial MSS holding centre for attending a Christian study group in China, was so severely malnourished that they required assistance to support their own body weight.<sup>231</sup>

Provision of food at many documented facilities was inadequate. At Yonggwang County long-term re-education camp, one respondent explained how they were fed a soup made of water, salt, and sand.<sup>232</sup> When forced to labour in the camp’s agricultural fields, the respondent received a ‘soup’ containing liquified grass and corn-flour to thicken the mixture. Prisoners caught picking and eating grass from the field were beaten with a shovel.

Lasting physical and mental trauma from torture and physical assault were experienced by many respondents. In one case, a respondent was continuously denied food throughout their three-year imprisonment at Chongori long-term re-education camp and was released weighing just 27kg and with lasting damage to a kidney.<sup>233</sup>

Another victim who had been imprisoned for three-years for practising shamanism at an unidentified long-term re-education camp was released with permanent damage to their eyes because of repeated physical assaults.<sup>234</sup> Investigators noted that many respondents were currently receiving mental or physical support because of their experiences in North Korea.

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<sup>230</sup> Interview Response: W46D49Q16.

<sup>231</sup> Interview Response: W43D46Q15.

<sup>232</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q33.

<sup>233</sup> Interview Response: W2D3Q10.

<sup>234</sup> Interview Response: W70D63Q14.



*“They tilt a person’s neck backwards. They mix the red pepper powder into a water kettle and pour the water into the nostrils. At first, they hold you tightly by tying you from the back. As you sneeze and cough [...] you tell false statements about things you have never done [...] Among the pretrial examiners, there is one person I remember”.*<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Interview Response: W56D93Q25.

## Sexual violence and forced abortion

*“A female officer asked me why my breasts were so swollen. I told her it was because I had been pregnant and that my child had just been aborted.*

*She let me take a blanket with me even though that was usually not permitted”.*<sup>236</sup>

Investigators documented 32 incidents of sexual violence and forced abortions that were perpetrated against persons who experienced criminal charges based on their religious adherence. In one case at North Hamgyong Provincial MSS pre-trial detention centre, a respondent recounted a particularly appalling system of abuse.<sup>237</sup> When a prisoner was forced into an induced abortion and gave birth to a live-born infant, MSS officers would tear a thin plastic bag and cover the infant’s face with the torn plastic. The infant would then be wrapped tightly in a cloth blanket. After a short while, the infant would suffocate and die, which was noted by officers from the changing colour in the infant’s face. Bodies of dead infants were stored in a closet that was used for chlorine and maintenance tools. Later, the bodies of the infants were buried. Mothers of the aborted infants were forced to resume manual labour the day after the abortion and without medicine or rest.

In another case, a respondent explained to investigators how they were forced to undergo an abortion following a ruling that pregnant women could not be tried at court.<sup>238</sup> The respondent had been refouled from China and was detained after being suspected of attending a church. Three named MPS officers escorted the respondent to Kyongwon County Hospital. The respondent was handcuffed and injected by a named doctor. The respondent underwent an induced abortion the following day after 21-weeks of pregnancy. The infant’s head was injected and the body placed into a plastic bag. Later, an MPS officer buried the body. The respondent was immediately removed from the hospital and was placed on trial three-days later.

Incidents of verbal and physical sexual violence in penal facilities were documented with frequency. Female prisoners were repeatedly referred to as ‘bitches’ and underwent nude invasive cavity searches of their vaginas and

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<sup>236</sup> Interview Response: W2D2Q30.

<sup>237</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q33.

<sup>238</sup> Interview Response: W2D3Q30.

anuses. One respondent recalled that the vagina and anus of a three-year old girl were examined.<sup>239</sup>

## Execution

*“When they said, ‘Ready Position’, I covered my ears [...] After the last bullet was fired, I saw uncle fall flat on his face. Our whole school attended”.*<sup>240</sup>

Investigators documented 20 incidents of execution of persons who had experienced criminal charges based on their religious adherence. Public executions were designed to instil fear into crowds who had been summoned to attend through workplaces, schools, and people’s units.

In one case from 2018, three women convicted of practicing shamanism were executed by firing squad at Hyesan City airfield.<sup>241</sup> This location was also the site of four executions of North Korean Christians. At one execution, a respondent described how the hair of a victim, who had been in possession of a bible, was tied before their execution. When the bullets penetrated the victim’s skull, the respondent recalled how the victim’s hair loosened and blew in the wind.<sup>242</sup>

A particularly visceral recollection was also offered by a respondent who described being forced to attend a public execution of a victim who had also been arrested while in possession of a bible.<sup>243</sup> In front of over 1000 citizens at Musan Market, the victim was tied to a wooden stake and executed by an MPS firing squad. The respondent recalled, “I saw the flesh fall off. That is how close I was”.

In other incidents, victims were executed in penal facilities. One respondent described how a prisoner at Chongori long-term re-education camp confessed to having read a bible. The victim was forced to write a confession and was

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<sup>239</sup> Interview Response: W59D94Q20.

<sup>240</sup> Interview Response: W67D85Q11.

<sup>241</sup> Interview Response: W36D39Q35.

<sup>242</sup> Interview Response: W57D90Q15.

<sup>243</sup> Interview Response: W67D85Q16.

executed by three young MPS officers while prisoners were forced to watch.<sup>244</sup> In another case, a BSC officer was executed at a BSC brigade in North Hamgyong Province.<sup>245</sup> The victim had brought bibles into North Korea from China. The respondent explained to the investigator that BSC executions generally proceed in a similar way. First, a victim is read their death sentence. Second, the victim's head, ankles, and torso are roped to a wooden post. Third, the victim is executed by a five-person BSC firing squad who aim for the victim's head, chest, and feet. Fourth, a ditch is dug in front of the wooden post holding the corpse to receive the victim when the ropes are cut. Fifth, a BSC Commander will order the ditch to be filled with rocks.

### Public trials and resident exposure meetings

*“It is a form of education. Even though we have self-criticism and life-appraisal sessions, the public trials and executions of prisoners are there to make us learn for ourselves”.*<sup>246</sup>

Investigators documented 19 incidents of public trials and resident exposure meetings. Investigators were informed that recent public trials were referred to as “resident exposure meetings”.<sup>247</sup> These meetings were like public trials in that they were designed to cause terror among the assembled crowd.

North Korean citizens of all ages, including schoolchildren, were forced to attend trials as members of compulsory mass organisations. In one case, a respondent attended the public trial of a 14-year-old shaman at the Meeting Hall of the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea in Pyongyang.<sup>248</sup> The child was sentenced to imprisonment.

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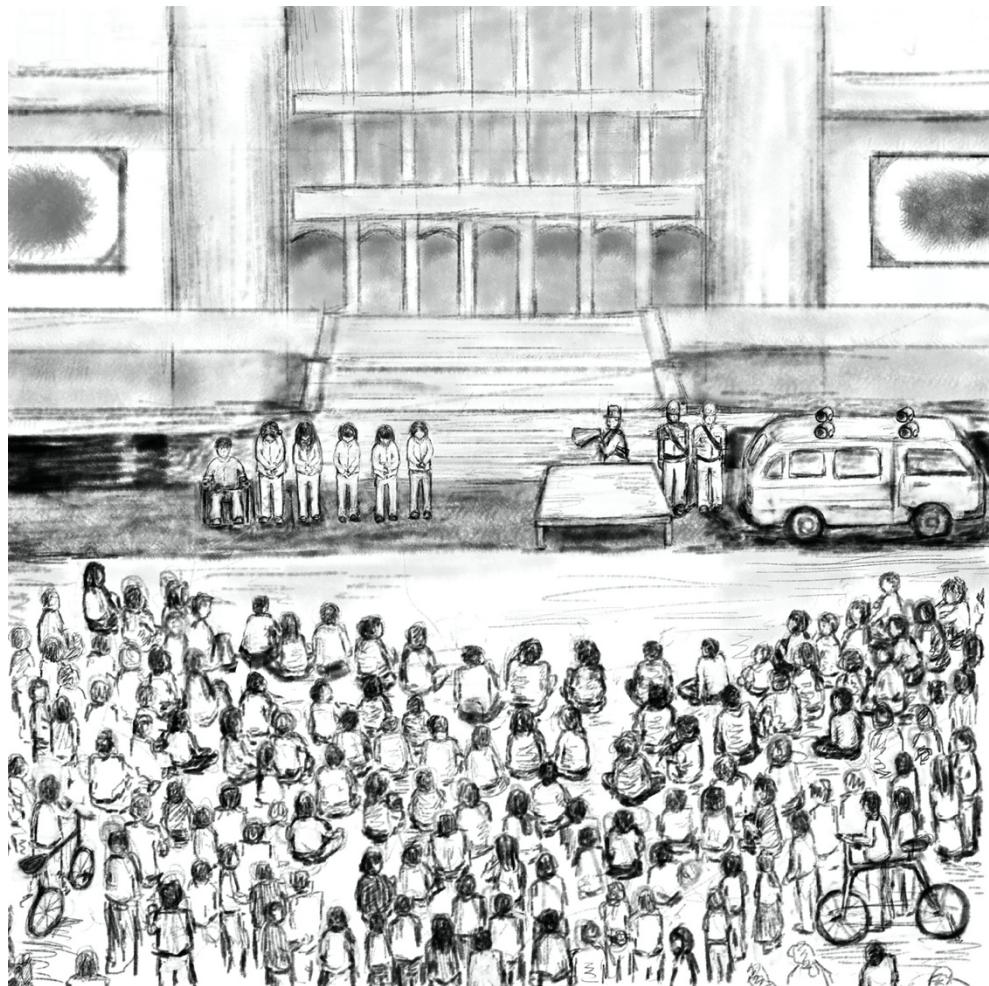
<sup>244</sup> Interview Response: W2D3Q25.

<sup>245</sup> Interview Response: W46D49Q36.

<sup>246</sup> Interview Response: W7D11Q43.

<sup>247</sup> Interview Response: W28D32Q11.

<sup>248</sup> Interview Response: W8D12Q13.



In one resident exposure meeting in April 2019, the respondent explained how six victims were assembled in front of a crowd of over 1000 citizens from each people's unit household in Hyesan City.<sup>249</sup> The six victims were charged with committing "superstitious acts". One victim who was physically disabled and in a wheelchair was sentenced to life imprisonment. The respondent recalled, "[They were] sentenced with life imprisonment, [but they] watched the crowd with dignity. Now I finally understand [their] faith. I remember thinking, 'Why is that person so confident?'. All the [other victims] who were getting their sentences had their heads down, but not [the first victim]. I think it is because [they] had [their] faith". The remaining five victims were sentenced to imprisonment for terms between 3-10 years.<sup>250</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Interview Response: W28D32Q11.

<sup>250</sup> Interview Response: W28D32Q11.

In another case from April 2019, victims who had engaged in shamanistic acts were placed on public trial in Pochon County, Ryanggang province.<sup>251</sup> Prior to the trial, a public official delivered a lecture to the assembled crowd titled, ‘Let Us Pull up the Roots of Superstitious Acts!’. Presiding MPS officials announced the crimes of the victims and a judge delivered their sentences. The victims were sentenced to long-term re-education camps, labour training camps, and labour reform centres.

### Verbal abuse

*“You bastard; you went over to Christianity?”.<sup>252</sup>*

Verbal abuse of religious persons, and particularly of females, by North Korean officials was documented by investigators. The language sought to dehumanise victims and to criticise their faith. Respondents and victims were variously referred to as a “bastard”,<sup>253</sup> a “bitch”,<sup>254</sup> a “fucking bitch”,<sup>255</sup> and a “Christian bitch”.<sup>256</sup> When one informant, who was a practising shaman, failed to provide information on a named target, their MPS handler shouted, “You bitch, when are you going to shape up?”.<sup>257</sup>

### Forced labour

*“I kept wrestling with the log, but it did not move an inch [...] The prisoner who oversaw all the other prisoners kicked me and yelled, ‘Drag, you bitch!’. He was scared that he would be punished”.*<sup>258</sup>

Investigators documented incidents of forced labour that were perpetrated against persons experiencing criminal charges based on their religious

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<sup>251</sup> Interview Response: W91D105Q43.

<sup>252</sup> Interview Response: W94D73Q16.

<sup>253</sup> Interview Response: W94D73Q16.

<sup>254</sup> Interview Response: W30D34Q25.

<sup>255</sup> Interview Response: W3D5Q16.

<sup>256</sup> Interview Response: W77D87Q13.

<sup>257</sup> Interview Response: W92D106Q11.

<sup>258</sup> Interview Response: W99D102Q18.

adherence at multiple facilities, including labour training camps, long-term re-education camps, and pre-trial detention centres.<sup>259</sup>

One respondent was imprisoned and forced to labour at Hamhung long-term re-education camp.<sup>260</sup> Prisoners were forced into gruelling agricultural work and the death-rate at the facility was documented as being high. Investigators were told, “Chimney Number 78 was where corpses were burned once every three-days. The cremated body ash was scattered on the field and the whole field was black when it rained in the summer because the body oils resurfaced. When they planted spinach, it would grow thick and tall”.

Another respondent was forced to labour at Yonggwang County long-term re-education camp.<sup>261</sup> Female prisoners were forced into agricultural work, such as picking weeds and harvesting corn, and were made to fell trees for firewood for public officials in the re-education camp. Prisoners laboured in handcuffs and their hair was shaved to aid their identification in the event of their escape. Following each day of forced labour, prisoners were forced to participate in daily life-appraisal sessions that commenced at 22:00. Sitting face-to-face with other prisoners in their cell, each prisoner criticised the ideological integrity of their fellow prisoners. An MSS officer oversaw the life-appraisal sessions while sitting on a chair in a corridor between all the cells. Throughout the night, each prisoner was forced to “stand guard” within the prison cell for two-hours to ensure that other prisoners did not attempt to escape.

The same respondent also observed female prisoners in light-grey prisoner uniforms at Chongjin Susong political prison camp who were forced to engage in agricultural work.<sup>262</sup> The respondent witnessed five to six female prisoners harvesting cabbages, radishes, and corn inside areas fenced by electric and barbed-wire between 05:00-06:00. Male prisoners remained inside a higher-security fence closer to the prison. The fields were sectioned by barbed-wire fencing and checkpoints.

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<sup>259</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W19D23Q20; W36D39Q12; W38D41Q20.

<sup>260</sup> Interview Response: W24D28Q33.

<sup>261</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q33.

<sup>262</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q31.

## Abduction in foreign territory

*“The MSS were trying to catch me, so they sent Chinese gangsters [...] There was a North Korean woman inside the car they put me in. She was an MSS informant in Shenyang”.*<sup>263</sup>

Investigators documented four incidents of abductions of religious adherents in foreign territory.<sup>264</sup> While not large enough to define as a pattern of violations, the act was deemed of significant importance to warrant inclusion in this report.

One respondent was identified by an MSS informant and reported for attending a church in China. In 2015, the respondent was forcibly abducted at a known time and in a known location in China by three Han-Chinese males and one North Korean female. Forced into a car, the respondent was driven to the border, where the car was flagged down by an ethnic-Korean Chinese male on a road bordering the Amnok River. Between four to five MSS officers emerged from a wooded area in Chinese territory and took custody of the respondent. The respondent’s mouth was covered and they were dragged to a small rubber dinghy. The respondent re-entered North Korea on the opposite bank. They did not re-enter through an official checkpoint. Forced into a waiting car, the respondent was driven to a MSS pre-trial detention centre and interrogated by an MSS Director.<sup>265</sup>

## Denial of medical care

*“The MSS officers hit my head so many times that my head has a dent-like furrow. My wife touched my head and I cried a lot”.*<sup>266</sup>

Respondents revealed how certain prisoners who were beaten and sustained physical injuries did not receive medical treatment.<sup>267</sup> While not large enough to define as a pattern of violations, the act was deemed of significant

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<sup>263</sup> Interview Response: W68D92Q16.

<sup>264</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W5D9Q12; W68D92Q16.

<sup>265</sup> Interview Response: W68D92Q18. Details of the location were withheld for the safety of the witness.

<sup>266</sup> Interview Response: W47D53Q10.

<sup>267</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W2D3Q30; W76D66Q10; W89D78Q13.

importance to warrant inclusion in this report. For example, in one incident, a victim who was suspected of religious adherence and possession of religious items in China developed a haemorrhage on the right side of their head from repeated physical assaults by MSS officers. The victim was denied medical care and their condition worsened.<sup>268</sup> In another case, the religious adherence of a victim was reported by a fellow prisoner at Onsong County MSS pre-trial detention centre.<sup>269</sup> The fellow prisoner shouted, “You did pray! I saw you praying! I saw it with my own eyes that you prayed [...] You are lying!”. MSS officials entered the victim’s cell and began to repeatedly kick the victim and strike them with an *oseungogakja*. A large pool of the victim’s blood formed on the cell floor. The victim was denied medical care.

### Anti-religious education

*“I thought, ‘missionaries are bad people’ [...] Teachers said that religious people [...] would go to political prison camps”*.<sup>270</sup>

Investigators learned how respondents had been actively educated in anti-religious education from the age of four at kindergarten.<sup>271</sup> While elements of Buddhism and Cheondogyo were explained as matters of historical interest, rather than as religions,<sup>272</sup> it was Christianity that was singled out for attention within the public-school system. Multiple respondents spoke of textbooks containing sections on Christian missionaries that listed their “evil deeds”, which included rape, blood-sucking, organ harvesting, murder, and espionage.<sup>273</sup>

Respondents explained how anti-religious and particularly anti-Christian education left strong and lasting impressions.<sup>274</sup> One respondent recalled

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<sup>268</sup> Interview Response: W65D95Q23.

<sup>269</sup> Interview Response: W38D41Q15.

<sup>270</sup> Interview Response: W39D42Q50.

<sup>271</sup> Interview Response: W21D25Q50.

<sup>272</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W27D31Q54; W101D76Q53.

<sup>273</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W28D38Q50; W37D40Q55; W39D42Q50; W40D43Q50; W45D58Q55; W49D50Q50; W50D51Q54; W52D54Q50; W54D80Q50; W85D58Q54.

<sup>274</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W26D30Q59; W39D42Q50; W45D58Q5.

thinking, “[Christianity] is frightening. I should not believe in it”.<sup>275</sup> Another respondent believed that “American missionaries were not to be trusted”.<sup>276</sup>

Many respondents told investigators about a story taught to North Korean children, which was identified by investigators and multiple respondents as ‘*The Fallen Apple*’.<sup>277</sup> In the story, a young Korean boy picks and eats an apple from the orchard of an American missionary. In retaliation, the missionary ties the young boy to a tree and marks the word ‘*Thief*’ on his forehead with acid. Further anti-religious education targeted at children was documented in state-sponsored popular culture. Several respondents referenced the film, ‘*Wild Dogs*’, and the television show, ‘*By the First Shore*’.<sup>278</sup> The productions depicted Christian missionaries using churches and chapels for espionage or to lure victims to their deaths.

Outside of the classroom, one respondent was forced to attend life-appraisal sessions every Friday at 10:00-11:00 between the ages of 9-15.<sup>279</sup> Lasting for one-hour, a Political Guidance Officer from the Korean Children’s Union instructed a teacher, a Class President, and a Class Vice-President, both of whom were children, to deliver anti-religious and anti-superstition lectures to between 40-50 students per class.

### Anti-religious instruction

*“It was really bad in 2019. There were many others who were arrested on the allegation of superstitious acts. Kim Jong-un is trying to cut the roots of all religious acts. He ordered that all ideologies be rooted out. This message was spread by the people’s unit and through lectures”*.<sup>280</sup>

The investigation revealed anti-religious education continuing into adulthood in people’s unit lectures, weekly self-criticism sessions, Women’s League lectures, and various study sessions.<sup>281</sup> Anti-religious instruction refers to

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<sup>275</sup> Interview Response: W28D38Q11.

<sup>276</sup> Interview Response: W45D58Q11.

<sup>277</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W40D43Q13; W49D50Q50; W52D54Q50; W86D59Q50.

<sup>278</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W28D38Q50; W52D54Q50; W60D81Q50; W87D60Q50.

<sup>279</sup> Interview Response: W97D100Q51.

<sup>280</sup> Interview Response: W28D38Q59.

<sup>281</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W28D38Q60; W29D33Q60; W62D82Q59; W69D97Q60; W73D57Q50; W91D105Q60; W92D106Q60; W97D100Q51.

forced adult instructions in state-run organisations on issues that are designed to undermine and discredit a religion or to caution persons against associating with a religion.

Respondents were instructed by MPS and MSS lecturers that their entire families would be punished for adherence to religion,<sup>282</sup> that persons who engaged in shamanism would be sentenced to long terms of imprisonment at labour training camps or long-term re-education camps,<sup>283</sup> and even disclosed the names of persons who had supposedly died from causes attributed to practising shamanism.<sup>284</sup>

Anti-religious instruction was also documented as being delivered to and by public officials within state-run organisations. One respondent attended a lecture where MSS officials were taught about an underground religious group, termed “an espionage network”, that had been uncovered in Jaeryong County, Hwanghae province.<sup>285</sup>

Other respondents spoke about an internal MSS training film of 5-7 minutes in length that used captured photos of arrested North Korean Christians who were holding crosses and praying. A commentary explained that the victims had been sentenced to a political prison camp and overlaid the sound of gunfire to signal that some of the victims had been executed.<sup>286</sup>

One former public official who was tasked with delivering anti-religious instruction to BSC personnel explained how they would receive a “briefing document” explaining that bibles were being circulated and that they were “anti-socialist phenomena”.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Interview Response: W73D57Q50.

<sup>283</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W28D38Q60; W69D97Q60.

<sup>284</sup> Interview Response: W62D82Q59.

<sup>285</sup> Interview Response: W29D33Q60.

<sup>286</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W19D22Q23; W27D31Q13.

<sup>287</sup> Interview Response: W46D49Q60.

## Anti-religious directives

*“The announcement said that anyone who engaged in superstitious acts would be arrested, and whoever heavily engaged in superstitious acts would be sent to a long-term re-education camp. If the case was serious, the accused would be shot. We all shook in fear”.*<sup>288</sup>

Anti-religious directives refer to government-issued orders and instructions that specifically seek to undermine and discredit a religion or that serve to incite religious freedom violations. These anti-religious directives were referenced by numerous respondents as a means of instilling fear of religious acts, particularly shamanism.<sup>289</sup>

According to one respondent, “In 2010, the Central Committee of the Korean Workers’ Party issued a directive when there were many lectures about superstitious acts. There was one announcement on the apartment walls of each people’s unit. It said that anyone who engaged in superstitious acts should be reported immediately and that superstitious acts were banned in a socialist state”.<sup>290</sup>

Respondents noted a greater frequency of anti-religious directives in recent years. The creation of MPS Group 712 in 2017 was publicised on posters and in people’s unit meetings where it was announced, “On July 12th, the Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un issued a decree to weed out superstitious acts”.<sup>291</sup>

A similar campaign was announced between December 2018 and January 2019, named, “People Who Visit Fortune Tellers Are Just As Guilty As People Who Read Others’ Fortunes”.<sup>292</sup> Other directives in different years included, “On The Extermination of Religion And Superstition”,<sup>293</sup> “Do Not Engage In Superstitious Acts”,<sup>294</sup> and “All Fake”.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Interview Response: W91D105Q60.

<sup>289</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W49D50Q60; W55D75Q60; W62D92Q59; W70D63Q60; W79D77Q60; W81D01Q60; W92D106Q60; W99D110Q60; W101D76Q60.

<sup>290</sup> Interview Response: W89D78QD60.

<sup>291</sup> Interview Response: W36D39Q12.

<sup>292</sup> Interview Response: W96D109Q14.

<sup>293</sup> Interview Response: W56D93Q60.

<sup>294</sup> E.g., Interview Responses: W70D63Q60; W101D76Q60.

<sup>295</sup> Interview Response: W100D103Q60.

## Appendix A: Rights to religious freedom

### **North Koreans possess the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion**

International law guarantees the right of North Koreans to freely hold any religion or belief of their choosing.

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) | Article 18:** “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”.
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) | Article 18:** “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”.

### **North Koreans possess the right to adopt, change, and renounce a religion or belief**

International law guarantees the right of North Koreans to adopt any religion of their choosing. They may change their religion and they have the right to renounce their religion. This right is protected without exceptions or conditions.

- **UDHR | Article 18:** “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief”.
- **ICCPR | Article 18:** “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice”.
- **1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (henceforth ‘Religious Discrimination Declaration’) | Article 1:** “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his choice”.

- **General Comment 22 of the United Nations Human Rights Committee (henceforth ‘General Comment 22’) | Paragraph 5:** “the freedom to ‘have or to adopt’ a religion or belief necessarily entails the freedom to choose a religion or belief, including the right to replace one’s current religion or belief with another or to adopt atheistic views, as well as the right to retain one’s religion or belief”.

### **North Koreans possess the right to manifest a religion or belief**

International law guarantees the right of North Koreans to, either individually or with others and in public or private, manifest their religion or belief through worship, observance, practice, and teaching.

- **UDHR | Article 18:** “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom [...] either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”.
- **ICCPR | Article 18:** “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom...either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching”.
- **Religious Discrimination Declaration | Article 1:** “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom...either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching”.
- **General Comment 22 | Paragraph 4:** “The freedom to manifest religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching encompasses a broad range of acts. The concept of worship extends to ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to belief”.

### **North Koreans possess the right to worship and to establish places of worship**

International human rights standards define the right of North Koreans to worship in accordance with their religion or belief and to establish places for worship.

- **Religious Discrimination Declaration | Article 6:** “the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include the following freedoms [...] To worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes [...] write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas [...] teach a religion or belief in places suitable for these purposes”.
- **General Comment 22 | Paragraph 4:** “The concept of worship extends to ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to belief, as well as various practices integral to such acts, including the building of places of worship [...] the freedom to choose their religious leaders, priests and teachers, the freedom to establish seminaries or religious schools and the freedom to prepare and distribute religious texts or publications”.

#### **North Koreans possess the right to display religious symbols**

In accordance with international standards, all North Korean citizens may wear or display any religious symbols in accordance with their individual religion or belief. For example, a North Korean Christian may wear a crucifix.

- **Religious Discrimination Declaration | Article 6:** “the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include the following freedoms [...] To make, acquire and use to an adequate extent the necessary articles and materials related to the rites or customs of a religion or belief”.
- **General Comment 22 | Paragraph 4:** “The concept of worship extends to ritual and ceremonial acts giving direct expression to belief, as well as various practices integral to such acts, including [...] the display of symbols”.

#### **North Koreans possess the right to celebrate religious holidays and observe rest days**

International standards guarantee the right of North Koreans to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in accordance with their religion or belief and to observe days of rest.

- **Religious Discrimination Declaration | Article 6:** “the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include the following freedoms [...] To observe days of rest and to celebrate holidays and ceremonies in accordance with the precepts of one's religion or belief”.
- **General Comment 22 | Paragraph 4:** “The concept of worship extends to [...] the observance of holidays and days of rest”.

**North Koreans possess the right to teach religion or belief and to disseminate religious materials, including missionary activity**

International human rights law protects North Koreans who seek to convince or convert other North Koreans, for example through missionary activity. In other words, teaching others about a religion or belief is a legitimate expression and exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief.

- **Religious Discrimination Declaration | Article 6:** “the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include the following freedoms [...] To write, issue and disseminate relevant publications in these areas [and] To teach a religion or belief in places suitable for these purposes”.
- **General Comment 22 | Paragraph 4:** “the practice and teaching of religion or belief includes acts integral to the conduct by religious groups of their basic affairs, such as [...] the freedom to establish seminaries or religious schools and the freedom to prepare and distribute religious texts or publications”.

**North Korean parents and guardians possess the right to ensure the religious and moral education of their children**

International law guarantees the right of parents and guardians to raise their children in accordance with the tenets of a religion or belief. In practice, this means that the North Korean government may not decide on the religion or belief that parents or guardians teach their children.

- **ICCPR | Article 18:** “The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when

applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions”.

- **Religious Discrimination Declaration | Article 5:** “The parents or, as the case may be, the legal guardians of the child have the right to organise the life within the family in accordance with their religion or belief and bearing in mind the moral education in which they believe the child should be brought up [...] Every child shall enjoy the right to have access to education in the matter of religion or belief in accordance with the wishes of his parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians [...] The child shall be protected from any form of discrimination on the ground of religion or belief. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, respect for freedom of religion or belief of others, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men”.

#### **North Korean children possess the right to learn of religions or beliefs in an unbiased and objective way**

- **UDHR | Article 26:** “Everyone has the right to education [...] It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups”.
- **General Comment 13 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | Paragraph 28:** “The Committee is of the view that [Article 13 of ICESCR] permits public school instruction in subjects such as the general history of religions and ethics if it is given in an unbiased and objective way, respectful of the freedoms of opinion, conscience and expression”.

#### **The North Korean government retains only a very limited legal means to limit the freedom to manifest a religion or belief**

Under international human rights law, the North Korean government is only permitted to limit the freedom of North Korean citizens to manifest their religion or belief when it is able to prove that such restrictions are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

- **ICCPR | Article 4:** “In time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed, the States Parties to the present Covenant may take measures derogating from their obligations under the present Covenant to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with their other obligations under international law and do not involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, colour, sex, language, religion or social origin”.
- **ICCPR | Article 18:** “Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others”.
- **Religious Discrimination Declaration | Article 1:** “Freedom to manifest one’s religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others”.

**The North Korean government must prevent, prohibit, and eliminate discrimination based on religion or belief**

Customary international law prohibits the North Korean government from discriminating against its citizens on the basis of religion or belief and compels the government to take actions that prevent and remedy any forms of discrimination on the part of public officials and non-state actors, including the enforcement of criminal sanctions against perpetrators of religious discrimination.

- **ICCPR | Article 2:** “Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognised in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as [...] religion”.
- **ICCPR | Article 27:** “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group [...] to profess and practice their own religion”.

- **Religious Discrimination Declaration | Article 3:** “Discrimination between human beings on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity [...] and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”.
- **General Comment 22 | Paragraph 2:** “The Committee therefore views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reason”.

**The North Korean government must not discriminate against citizens who do not accept the official belief and ideology of the state**

The North Korean government must not prevent its citizens from adopting different or opposing religions or belief systems.

- **General Comment 22 | Paragraph 10:** “If a set of beliefs is treated as official ideology in constitutions, statutes, proclamations of ruling parties, etc., or in actual practice, this shall not result in any impairment of the freedoms [...] nor in any discrimination against persons who do not accept the official ideology or who oppose it”.

**The North Korean government must not deprive prisoners of their right to religion or belief**

The North Korean government must provide resources and opportunities for prisoners to manifest their religion or belief, such as attending religious services or possessing a book of religious observance.

- **General Comment 22 | Paragraph 8:** “Persons already subject to certain legitimate constraints, such as prisoners, continue to enjoy their rights to manifest their religion or belief to the fullest extent”.

**The North Korean government must prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment of persons who adhere to a religion or belief**

International human rights law compels the North Korean government to prohibit and prevent all acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading

treatment or punishment committed by or with the consent of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.

- **ICCPR | Article 7:** “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.

## Appendix B: The North Korean Constitution Commentary

조선민주주의인민공화국 사회주의헌법 해설	The Socialist Constitution Commentary of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
<p>사회주의헌법에서는 공민의 신앙의 자유를 규제하고 있다.</p> <p>조선민주주의인민공화국 사회주의헌법 제 68 조는 다음과 같다.</p> <p>&lt;&lt;공민은 신앙의 자유를 가진다. 이 권리를 종교건물을 짓거나 종교의식 같은 것을 허용하는것으로 보장된다. 종교를 외세를 끌어들이거나 국가사회질서를 해치는데 리용할수 없다. &gt;&gt;</p> <p>신앙의 자유에 대한 헌법적규제에서 주요한 것은 신앙문제를 국가나 그 어떤 남의 강요를 받지 않고 자기자신의 자유로운 의사에 따라 해결하도록 하는것이다. 신앙의 자유는 국가가 공민에게 종교를 믿도록 강요하거나 종교를 믿지 못하게 강제하지 않는 경우라야 보장될수 있다.</p> <p>사회주의헌법에서는 신앙에 관한 문제를 공민들자신의 의사에 기초하여 해결할 자유가 있다는데 대하여 규제하고 있다. 이것은 공민들이 자기자신의 의사에</p>	<p>The Socialist Constitution regulates freedom of religion of the people.</p> <p>The Article 68 of the Socialist Constitution of the DPRK is as follows.</p> <p>&lt;&lt;People have freedom of religion. This right is guaranteed by permitting the construction of religious buildings or practice of religious ceremonies. Religion cannot be used to engage foreign powers or to harm the national social order.&gt;&gt;</p> <p>What is critical about the constitutional regulation on freedom of religion is that the matter of religion be determined by one's own free will, without being forced by the state or any other person. Freedom of religion can only be guaranteed if the state does not force its people to believe in religion or not believe in religion.</p> <p>The Socialist Constitution regulates that the people have the freedom to decide the matter of religion based on their own free will. This means that people have freedom to not believe in religion based on their own will.</p>

기초하여 종교를 믿지 않을수 있는 자유를  
가진다는 것을 의미한다.

우리 공화국에서 근로자들과 청년들은  
자기 운명의 주인은 자기자신이며 자기  
운명을 개척하는 힘도 자기자신에게  
있다는 주체사상의 심오한 진리를  
심장깊이 체득하고있기 때문에 그 어떤  
종교도 믿지 않고있다.

신앙의 자유에 대한 공민의 헌법적권리는  
종교건물을 짓거나 종교의식 같은 것을  
허용하는것으로 보장된다.

종교를 외세를 끌어들이거나  
국가사회질서를 해치는데 리용할수 없다.  
미제국주의자들은 지난날 종교를  
길잡이로 하여 우리 나라를 침략해왔으며  
오늘은 우리 인민의 계급의식, 혁명의식을  
마비시키고 우리 공화국을 압살하기 위해  
종교를 퍼뜨리려고 악랄하게  
책동하고있다. 이런 조건에서 적들의  
책동에 높은 혁명적경각성을 가지고  
종교를 외세를 끌어들이고  
국가사회질서를 해치는데 리용하지  
못하도록 철저히 경계하는 것은 우리의  
사회주의제도를 고수하는데서 중요한  
문제로 나선다.

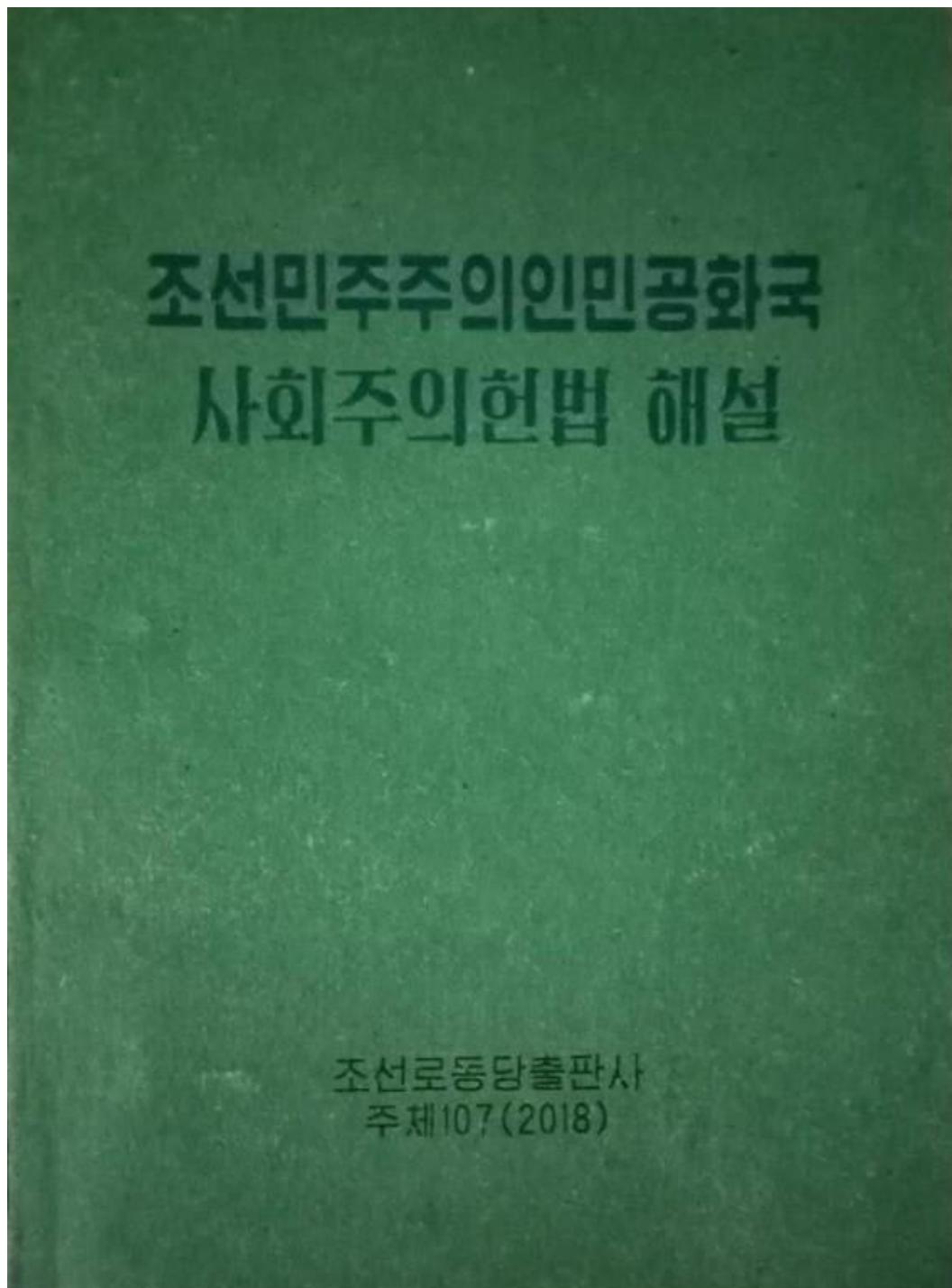
사회주의헌법에 규제된 신앙의 자유는  
조국통일을 위한 전민족의 대단결을  
이루하며 세계 량심적인 종교인들과의  
친선협조를 강화하는 확고한 담보로 된다.

In our republic, workers and young people do not believe in any religion, because they deeply understand the profound truth of the Juche ideology, and that the master of their own destiny is themselves and that the power to mould their own destiny lies in them.

The constitutional rights of the people to freedom of religion is guaranteed by permitting the construction of religious buildings or practice of religious ceremonies.

Religion cannot be used to engage foreign powers or to harm the national social order. The American imperialists have used religion as a tool to invade our country in the past and, today, they are viciously plotting to spread religion to paralyse the class consciousness and revolutionary consciousness of the people and crush our republic. Under these conditions, remaining on high revolutionary alert to prevent enemies from using religion to attract foreign powers and to harm the national social order, which is an important issue for adherence to our socialist system.

The freedom of religion regulated in the Socialist Constitution is a solid guarantee for achieving national unity for reunification and strengthening cooperation with conscientious religious people in the world.



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<sup>296</sup> An enlarged edition of the Socialist Constitution Commentary printed on 1 March 2018 at Pyongyang Central Printing and published on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018 by the Korean Workers' Party Publishing House.

## Appendix C: The North Korean Criminal Code Commentary

형법 해설	The Criminal Code Commentary
<p><b>13) 사회주의 공동생활질서를 침해한 범죄는 어떤 범죄인가</b></p> <p>위대한령도자 김정일 동지께서는 다음과 같이 지적하시었다.</p> <p>『례의범절과 공중도덕을 잘 지켜야 사람들 사이의 관계를 깊이하고 집단의 단합과 화목을 이루할 수 있으며 사회에 건전하고 문명한 생활기풍을 세울 수 있습니다.』 [『김정일선집』 14권, 151 페지]</p> <p>사회주의 공동생활은 사회주의문화도덕생활규범에 기초한 생활로서 사회주의문화도덕규범을 철저히 지킬 때 보장된다.</p> <p>공화국형법은 온 사회에 선군시대의 요구에 맞는 문화도덕생활기풍을 철저히 세워 우리 인민의 일심단결을 더욱 반석같이 다지기 위하여 사회주의공동생활질서를 어기는 행위들을 범죄로 규제하고 그와의 엄격한 투쟁을 벌릴 것을 예전하고 있다.</p>	<p><b>13) What are the crimes that violate the socialistic communal life order?</b></p> <p>The Great Leader Kim Jong-il stated as follows.</p> <p>『Keeping good manners and public morals can deepen relationships among people, build unity and harmony among groups, and create a healthy and civilised lifestyle in society.』</p> <p>[『The Kim Jong-il Selection』 Vol.14, p.151]</p> <p>Socialist communal life is a lifestyle based on the socialistic culture and moral standard of life and it is guaranteed when the socialistic culture and moral standard is strictly followed.</p> <p>The Criminal Code of the DPRK predicts that the whole society will thoroughly establish a culture and moral lifestyle that meets the needs of the military-first era and regulate the acts of violating the socialistic communal culture life order and fight against them to further strengthen the unity of the people.</p> <p>Crimes that violate the socialist communal life order are crimes that severely violate the socialistic communal life rules and order, and</p>

사회주의 공동생활질서를 침해한 범죄는 사회주의적 공동생활준칙과 질서를 심히 어겨 사회질서를 문란하게 하며 사회의 건전한 분위기를 흐리게 하는 범죄로서 여기에는 불량자행위죄, 패싸움죄, 미성인 범죄추진죄, 거짓행세죄, 미신행위죄, 실력행사죄, 학대괄시죄 등이 속한다.

#### - 미신행위죄

미신행위죄란 돈이나 물건을 받고 손금보기, 관상보기, 점치기, 액풀이 같은 비과학적인 미신행위를 한 범죄를 말한다.

돈이나 물건을 받지 않고 단순히 『신수』를 보아주었거나 장난삼아 한 경우에는 범죄로 되지 않는다.

thereby disrupt the social order and the healthy social atmosphere. Crimes of bad behaviour (misdemeanours), crimes of group fighting, crimes of instigating juvenile crimes, crimes of false conduct, crimes of superstition, crimes of using force, and crimes of abuse and disdain belong to this category.

#### - Crime of Superstition

Crime of Superstition refers to the crime of carrying out unscientific superstitious acts such as palmistry, physiognomy, fortune-telling, and exorcism in exchange for money or goods.

Simply reading a person's fortune for fun without being paid is not criminalised.

위에 끌어들이었거나 미성인에게 범죄를 감행하도록 추긴 범죄를 말한다.

미성인 범죄 추긴 죄는 주체 혁명 위업의 명맥을 이어나갈 혁명의 믿음직한 계승자, 후비대인 청소년들을 불량자로 만드는 위험한 행위로서 추김을 받은 미성인이 범죄를 감행하였건 감행하지 않았건 관계없이 추긴 행위 자체로써 범죄로 된다.

#### — 미신행위죄

미신행위죄란 돈이나 물건을 받고 손금보기, 관상보기, 점치기, 액풀이 같은 비과학적인 미신행위를 한 범죄를 말한다.

돈이나 물건을 받지 않고 단순히 《신수》를 보아주었거나 장난삼아 한 경우에는 범죄로 되지 않는다.

#### — 실력행사죄

실력행사죄란 자기의 인신상 및 재산상권리를 법에 의거하지 않고 실력을 행사하여 실현한 범죄를 말한다.

인신상 및 재산상권리가 침해당한 경우 그에 대한 해결은 민사재판의 절차로 해결하여야 한다.

인신상 및 재산상권리를 민사재판의 절차로 해결하지 않고 실력을 행사하여 실현하면 범죄로 된다. 즉 꾸어준 돈을 제때에 물어주지 않거나 인신에 피해를 주고 보상하여주지 않거나 자기의 물건을 흡쳐간자의 집에 가서 강압적으로 그 집물건을 가져오는 경우에 범죄로 된다.

실력행사를 하여 상해를 입혔거나 재산을 파괴한 경우에는 실력행사죄와 상해죄 또는 재산파괴죄로 형사책임을 진다.

#### — 학대 팔시죄

학대 팔시죄란 자기의 보호밑에 있는 사람을 계통적으로 학대 팔시한 범죄를 말한다.

학대 팔시한 행위에는 보호대상자를 집에서 내쫓거나 계통적으로 육설을 폐붓거나 구박을 주어 기를 쪄지 못하게 하였거나 먹을것을 제대로 주지 않은 것 같은 행위들이 속한다.

학대 팔시한 행위로 하여 보호밑에 있는자가 장애자로 되게 하였거나 종교 밑에 있는 사람을 정신병환자로 몰아 정신병원에 보낸 것 같은 경우에는

### 13) 사회주의 공동생활질서를 침해한 범죄는 어떤 범죄인가

기  
업  
운

위대한 령도자 김정일동지께서는 다음과 같이 지적 하시였다.  
『례의범절과 공중도덕을 잘 지켜야 사람들사이의 관계를 깊이하고 집단의 단합과 화목을 이루할수 있으며 사회에 건전하고 문명한 생활기풍을 세울수 있습니다.』(『김정일선집』 14권, 151페이지)

사회주의 공동생활은 사회주의문화도덕생활규범에 기초한 생활로서 사회주의문화도덕규범을 철저히 지킬 때 보장된다.

문화국형법은 온 사회에 선군시대의 요구에 맞는 문화도덕생활기풍을 철저히 세워 우리 인민의 일심단결을 더욱 반석같이 다지기 위하여 사회주의공동생활질서를 어기는 행위들을 범죄로 규제하고 그와의 엄격한 투쟁을 벌릴것을 예견하고 있다.

사회주의공동생활질서를 침해한 범죄는 사회주의적공동생활준칙과 질서를 심히 어겨 사회질서를 문란하게 하며 사회의 건전한 분위기를 흐리게 하는 범죄로서 여기에는 불량자행위죄, 폐싸움죄, 미성인범죄추진죄, 거짓행세죄, 미신행행위죄, 실력행사죄, 학대팔시죄 등이 속한다.

#### — 불량자행위죄

불량자행위죄란 체면도 창피도 모르고 파렴치한 행위를 하여 사회에 무질서와 혼란을 조성한 범죄를 말한다.

불량자행위로는 첫째로, 상스러운 말로 사람들을 희롱하거나 사람들의 옷에 어지러운것을 발라주어 사람들에게 창피를 주는 행위가 속하며 둘째로, 성적관계를 가짐이 없이 변태적성욕의 충족을 비롯하여 여성들에게 추잡하게 논 모든 행위들이 속한다.

#### — 폐싸움죄

폐싸움죄란 집단적으로 폐싸움을 하여 사회질서를 문란시킨 범죄를 말한다.

폐싸움이라 할 때에는 한두명이 아니라 여러명이 폐를 무어 싸우는것을 의미한다.

폐싸움을 하여 살인이나 파괴와 같은 엄중한 결과를 발생시켰을 때에는 무거운 형사적제재를 받는다.

#### — 미성인범죄추진죄

미성인범죄추진죄란 17살에 이르지 못한 미성인을 자기의 범죄행

## Appendix D: The Ten Principles for Establishing a Korean Workers' Party Transcendental Guidance System

1. We must give our all in the struggle to model the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism.
2. We must honour the Great Leader comrade Kim Il-sung and comrade Kim Jong-il with all our loyalty as the eternal leaders of the Party and people and as the sun of Juche.
3. We must make absolute the authority of the Great Leader comrade Kim Il-sung and comrade Kim Jong-il and the authority of the Party and defend it to death.
4. We must arm ourselves firmly with the revolutionary ideas of the Great Leader comrade Kim Il-sung and comrade Kim Jong-il and with the party lines and policies, which are the incarnations of these ideas.
5. We must adhere strictly to the principle of unconditional obedience in carrying out the teachings of the Great Leader comrade Kim Il-sung and comrade Kim Jong-il and accomplishing the Party lines and policies.
6. We must strengthen from all sides the entire Party's ideology and will-power and revolutionary unity, centring on the Leader.
7. We must follow the example of Great Leader comrade Kim Il-sung and comrade Kim Jong-il and adopt a dignified spiritual and moral look, revolutionary work methods, and people-oriented work style.
8. We must hold dearly the political life we were given by the Party and the Leader and loyally repay the Party's political trust and thoughtfulness with heightened political awareness and work results.
9. We must establish strong organisational regulations so that the entire Party, nation, and military move as one under the sole leadership of the Party.

10. We must pass down the great achievements of the Juche revolution and Songun revolution pioneered by Great Leader comrade Kim Il-sung and led by comrades Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, inheriting and completing it to the end.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> This is an abridged version of the Ten Principles.

## Appendix E: Ministry of State Security lecture materials

학습제강	Ministry of State Security lecture materials
<p style="text-align: center;">[필기]</p> <p>종교, 미신행위를 반대하여 견결히 투쟁하여야 한다.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[해설]</p> <p>종교와 미신은 사회주의 사상적 기초를 허물고 계급의식을 마비시키는 독약과 같다.</p> <p>적들은 &lt;지구상에서 종교와 미신의 유일한 반대투사는 북조선 사람들이다. 그러나 그들도 인간이다. 아직 북조선의 경제난, 식량난이 회복되지 못한 것만큼 인간생활에 가까우면서도 유혹이 센 종교, 미신침투활동을 계속 벌리면 그들의 정신세계에서 변화가 일어나게 될 것이다.&gt;라고 떠벌이면서 우리 내부에 종교와 미신을 퍼뜨리기 위해 미쳐 날뛰고 있다.</p> <p>적들은 &lt;성경책&gt;을 비롯한 종교와 미신과 관련된 인쇄물들과 록음록화물들을</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">[Note]</p> <p>We must fight firmly against religion and superstition.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Explanation]</p> <p>Religion and superstition are like poison that breaks down socialist ideological foundations and paralyses class consciousness.</p> <p>The enemies are raving to spread religion and superstition within us by saying &lt;The only anti-religious fighters on earth are North Koreans. However, they are humans, too. As economic difficulties and food shortages in North Korea have yet to recover, if we continue to let them engage in religious and superstitious activities that are tempting and close to human life, a change will occur in their psychological world.&gt;</p> <p>The enemies are sending out religious and superstitious prints and recordings including the bible through various channels, and spreading religion and superstition by planting spies among various delegations and individual travellers visiting our country, and bribing people.</p>

여러 경로를 통하여 들어보내고 있으며 우리나라에 들어오는 각종 명목의 대표단, 사사려행자들 속에 제놈들의 첩자를 끼워넣거나 일부 성원들을 매수하여 종교와 미신을 퍼뜨리게 하고 있다.

※ 얼마전 남조선잡지 <시사저널>에는 남조선의 반동적인 그리스도교단체들이 이웃 나라 국경지방에 둑지를 틀고 우리 내부를 와해시키기 위해 <목숨을 건 <복과선교활동>>을 벌리려고 한다는 내용의 글이 실렸다. 그에 의하면 이웃 나라 국경지역에 파견된 십여개의 적측 종교단체들이 우리 사람들을 식량과 돈으로 매수해서 우리 내부에 <지하교회>를 조직하려고 한다는 것이 밝혀졌다.

이러한 현실은 우리 군인들이 그 어느때보다도 높은 혁명적 경각성을 가지고 놈들의 책동에 대처해나갈 것을 요구하고 있다.

만일 우리가 적들이 퍼뜨리는 종교와 미신에 조금이라도 물젖게 되면 있지도 않는 <신>이나 <하느님>에게 혼혹되어 적과 벗을 가려보는 계급의 눈이 멀게 되며 희생을 동반하는 싸움마당을 싫어하게 된다.

※ Not long ago, the South Korean magazine <Sisa Journal> wrote that reactionary Christian groups in South Korea are trying to set up a nest in the border regions of the neighbouring country and conduct <missionary activities in North Korea> to destroy us from within.

According to the journal, tens of religious groups dispatched to the border regions are trying to buy our people with food and money to organise an underground church within us.

This reality calls for our soldiers to cope with their actions with ever-higher revolutionary alertness.

If we are tainted with religion and superstition, which the enemies are spreading, we will be blinded by a non-existent God and lose sight of class that can identify friend or foe and end up hating the fights that accompany sacrifices.

※ Explain this with the contents of <Religion Is a Polished Superstition> from page 44 of the Table Lecture Material Vol. 21.

In the end, we would end up as a helpless group that has lost its ideas, beliefs, and efficiency, as the enemies want.

Therefore, all soldiers must remember that the struggle to prevent religion and

※ 탁상교양자료 21 권 44 페이지에 있는  
<종교는 세련된 미신>의 내용과 결부하여  
해설할 것.

그러다 결국에 가서는 적들이 바라는대로  
사상과 신념을 잃고 전투력을 상실한 무맥한  
집단이 되고 만다.

그러므로 모든 군인들은 종교, 미신행위를  
막기 위한 투쟁은 경애하는  
최고사령관동지의 두리에 철통같이 굳게  
뭉친 우리의 일심단결을 고수하기 위한  
투쟁, 우리식 사회주의를 끝까지 지키기  
위한 첨예한 계급투쟁이라는 것을 똑바로  
명심하고 종교와 미신이 우리 혁명대오 안에  
절대로 밭불이지 못하게 해야한다.

※ 해당한 과업을 결부하여 해설할 것.

superstitious acts is the struggle to remain united under the honourable Supreme Leader and the radical struggle of classes to adhere to our way of socialism, and with that awareness, we must never let religion and superstition in our line of revolution.

※ Explain together with the tasks concerned.

나중에는 배신자로 굴리떨어졌다.

우리 군인들은 너색이 총잡은 군인에게 있어서 최대의 금물이라는것을 똑똑히 명심하고 너성들과 쓸데없이 접촉하거나 흐지부지하는 일이 절대로 나타나지 않도록 해야 한다.

※ 자기 단위 실태와 결부하여 해설할것.

· 돈과 물건에 절대로 현혹되지 말아야 한다.

경에 하는 최고사령관동지께서는 사람이 돈에 현혹되고 물욕에 빠지면 사회와 집단도, 조국과 인민도, 당과 혁명도 몰라보게 된다고 지적하시였다.

지금 적들은 동서도이칠란드가 《통일》되는데 400억 US \$가 들었다는것, 돈과 물건을 들이밀수록 동부도이칠란드가 눈에 뜨이게 변한것처럼 북조선 사람들의 사상정신도 반드시 《변화》를 가져오기 마련이라고 폐치면서 우리 인민군대의 지휘관들과 군인들에게 해당한 액수까지 정해놓고 매수공작을 벌리려 하고있다.

이런 조건에서 총잡은 우리 군인들이 돈과 물건에 현혹되게 되면 적들의 책동을 가려 못보는 청맹파니로 되여 적들의 반공화국모략책동에 리용당하게 될수 있다.

모든 군인들은 이것을 똑바로 명심하고 혁명군대의 군인답게 오직 혁명임무수행에만 전심하며 비범적인 장사행위나 돈벌이에 절대로 말려들지 말아야 한다.

※ 해당한 과업을 결부하여 해설할것.

#### 【필기】

◦ 종교, 미신행위를 반대하여 견결히 투쟁하여야 한다.

#### 【해설】

종교와 미신은 사회주의사상적기초를 허물고 계급의식을 마비시키는 독약과 같다.

적들은 《지구상에서 종교와 미신의 유일한 반대투사는 북조선사람들이다. 그러나 그들도 인간이다. 아직 북조선의 경제난, 식량난이 회복되지 못한것만큼 인간생활에 가까우면서도 유혹이 센 종교, 미신침투활동을 계속 벌리면 그들의 정신세계에서 변화가 일어나게 될것이다.》라고 떠벌이면서 우리 내부에 종교와 미신을 퍼뜨리기 위해 미쳐날뛰고있다.

적들은 《성경책》을 비롯한 종교와 미신과 관련한 인쇄물들과 특음특화물들을 여러 경로를 통하여 들어보내고있으며 우리 나라에 들어오는 각종 명목의 대표단, 사사역행자들속에 제놈들의 첨자를 끼워넣거나 일부 성원들을 매수하여 종교와 미신을 퍼



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