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Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) - Country of Concern: latest update, 30 September 2014

0.1 Latest Update: 30 September 2014

There has been little discernible improvement in the human rights situation in the period between July and September 2014, emphasising the DPRK's continued unwillingness to engage seriously on this issue.

A small positive development is the DPRK's signature in September of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography.

However, also in September, the DPRK Supreme Court sentenced American Matthew Todd Miller to six years' imprisonment with hard labour for committing "acts hostile" to the DPRK as part of "the US anti-DPRK human rights campaign". A Korean Central News Agency report alleged Mr Miller had torn up his passport when entering the DPRK in April 2014, believing that he would be arrested and taken to prison, where he could "spy on [the] prison and human rights situation...in the DPRK". The report also claimed that the trial had been held in camera at the request of the defendant. In practice, the fact that Mr Miller's trial was held in a closed court brings into question the legitimacy and transparency of the judicial process. A second American detainee, reportedly arrested for leaving a bible at a hotel, remains in detention with no date as yet set for his trial.

There is some indication that the DPRK is responding to international pressure on human rights. During a meeting in August with EU Heads of Mission, DPRK Foreign Minister Ri Song Yu indicated the DPRK's willingness to engage with the EU on human rights issues. The DPRK has also produced its own human rights report (published by the DPRK Association for Human Rights Studies on 13 September). However, this provided a further platform for the DPRK to reject the findings of the Commission of Inquiry report and other criticisms of its human rights record, demonstrating that the DPRK remains unwilling to engage seriously with the international community on human rights issues, or to take steps to improve its human rights performance.

The DPRK has also continued to engage with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, confirming its acceptance of 114 of the recommendations made during its second UPR earlier this year. When the DPRK's UPR report was adopted at the 27th session of the UN Human Rights Council in September, the UK, alongside the international community, welcomed the DPRK's engagement, but maintained our call for the DPRK to take concrete steps to implement all UPR recommendations, including those which reflect the findings of the Commission of

Inquiry.

The UK has continued to play an active role, both domestically and internationally, in raising awareness of human rights violations in the DPRK. In July, Minister for the Far East, Hugo Swire, visited Washington and discussed DPRK human rights with his US counterparts. Also in July, Foreign & Commonwealth Office Director Asia-Pacific visited Pyongyang where he held talks with the DPRK's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). He underlined the importance the UK attaches to improvements in DPRK's human rights record and encouraged the country to engage with the UN Special Rapporteur and allow human rights NGOs to visit.

In July, the House of Lords held a debate focusing on the findings of the [UN Commission of Inquiry report on human rights in the DPRK](#). Responding for the UK government, then Minister for Human Rights, Baroness Warsi, underlined the UK's commitment to ensuring the Commission of Inquiry's report was a beginning rather than an end, and set out the UK's response to the report and its recommendations.

At the start of 69th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the UK participated in a US-hosted meeting to highlight the DPRK's human rights situation. Featuring testimony from a survivor of a DPRK prison camp, the meeting underlined the DPRK's poor human rights record, and re-affirmed the international community's calls on the DPRK to uphold both its international human rights obligations and the protection of the universal human rights of DPRK citizens.

The UK is currently working with EU partners and Japan to draft a strong resolution on the human rights situation in DPRK for consideration at the UNGA Third Committee.

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