

Universal Periodical Review

Third Cycle

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA



Right to Life

and

Related Human Rights Issues

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“From the politics of taking life to the politics of affirming it”

Center for Global Nonkilling | Christophe Barbey | Main representative in Geneva
C/° Center John Knox, 27, ch. des Crêts-de-Pregny, CH-1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland
+41 79 524 35 74 | cb@apred.ch

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***“We understand the right to life as being the right not to be killed,
but also as everyone’s responsibility not to kill or let others die”***

The Center for Global Nonkilling has a unique mission,
that is both inspirational for individuals and transformative for societies:
*“To promote change toward the measurable goal of a killing-free world
by means open to infinite human creativity in reverence for life”.*

Introduction

The Center for Global Nonkilling (CGNK) was founded by Glenn Paige (1929-2017), political science Professor, Korean war veteran and author of the book “Nonkilling Political Science”, translated in numerous languages¹. The book is available in Korean². The Center is a worldwide congregation of persons, scholars and others, working at creating societies that do not kill. Valuing life in all its worthwhile dimensions is a necessary mission; please join the Center for Global Nonkilling in celebrating, enhancing and protecting life³. The Center has ECOSOC special consultative status since 2014. At each session of the UPR, CGNK makes usually one as comprehensive as possible submission and a few shorter ones focusing on specific issues⁴. This is a short submission, focusing mainly on international legal aspects of the right to life.

The right to life

All human rights are universal, of equal importance, indivisible, interlinked and mutually reinforcing. They arise out of our fundamental human nature, they are expressed in our feelings, grow and remain through knowledge, practice and kindness. They are needed to build lasting and prosperous, thriving and humane societies and to for each and every one of us to fulfil our personalities. They are universal values, human and legal.

They are complemented by universal and fundamental methods such as the culture of peace, prevention and precaution, peaceful settlements of disputes and non-violence. These methods are fully needed for the full respect, the common enjoyment and the achievement of all human rights.

Compared to other human rights, the right to life has four specific features:

a. If dignity can be said to be the paramount human right as it is present when each and all human rights are fulfilled, so is the right to life, present within all other human rights. *Yet it can also be said that the right to life precedes all human rights: if life is taken all human rights are cancelled*⁵. Conversely, more joyfully granting and giving solid ground to the right to life and to the quality and equality of life is the base needed for the peaceful progress, the proactive fulfillment and the completion of all human rights.

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b. There are no possible limitations or restrictions to the right to life: one is either alive or not. Issues pertaining to the beginning and to the end of life such as reproductive rights, abortion, suicides and euthanasia, as well as prenatal and genetic engineering should thus be dealt with in a preventive, humane and human sustainable manner, for each and all, in full dignity.

c. There is only one way to guarantee respect of, to protect the right to life: that is prevention. Once a life is lost, compensation may be due, but there are no possible reparations for that life.

d. Henceforth, the right to life is also the duty not to kill. And as such, the right to life is a fully reciprocal right granted to all and in need of being granted to all by all.

The Center for Global Nonkilling recognises no right to kill. Though not rights, three powers to kill have sometimes been legally granted, under very strict circumstances. We do not approve or condone to these existing powers. They should be made into what they often already are, unwanted remnants of the past. They are:

1) The use of legitimate defence by a proportionate reaction linked to a direct, serious and imminent threat, as legally required. These circumstances are a failure of prevention. If they nevertheless occur, using nonviolent means, they should never result in acts of killing or maiming. Nevertheless, whatever the result of legitimate defence may be, an independent judicial control over it is part of the rule of law.

Similarly, because it highly impacts on the rights to life and personal integrity, any *use of force* by officials or by any one, as it impedes on the *right to security*, should be avoided or highly limited. Outmost attention is to be given to prevent situations which may thereafter result in loss or losses of lives or in any type of maiming. Again, any official use of force should be monitored by an independent mechanism.

2) Death penalty, if ever permissible, is however a major and definitive breach of the right to life and numerous other human rights. More often than not, it is also considered as an inhumane, cruel and degrading treatment⁶. It is the worst example of respect for the right to life a State and a nation can give and thus, unworthy and lacking the necessary dignity, moral standards and exemplarity required of any authoritative power.

3) Powers of war, as conceded by humanitarian law permit, as an exception to the right to life and under certain circumstances only, the taking of the life of soldiers. Seeing peace and respect of life prevail – always – and thus nullifying this exception is one of the objectives of the Center for Global Nonkilling.

Other human rights

All human rights are needed to fulfil a safe and happy life. However, some of them may be of more direct importance either for the full realisation of the right to life or to avoid its breaches.

The links between *human rights and peace* are progressively being developed⁷. The Center for Global Nonkilling attaches a special importance to the *human right to peace* as human rights can only progress and be coordinated, be reciprocally fulfilled in a peaceful environment⁸.

Furthermore, peace and peaceful methods provide means to solve conflicts (including between competing human rights) without aggravating them and, as may be, to the advantage of all concerned in a constructive or reconstructive way. Conflicts solved peacefully make it easier to alleviate feelings with respect, to draw lessons learned from difficult situations and to design policies for future prevention and overcoming.

It is with great respect that we salute the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has supported in 2016 the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Peace⁹. We now look forward for its implementation in North Korea as in the whole Peninsula¹⁰.

The *right to participation*, including of women and youth and disabled persons is highly important as well. The more people take responsibility for their life, the more they will respect the lives of others as of all. Further, the more people participate to decision making, the easier it will be to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The right to *accurate standards of living*, including the rights to food, water and sanitation, clothing and housing, to work and social security deserve full attention too, in all circumstances. The *right to health* is an essential right for the fulfilment of the right to life and of the subsequent right to longevity. It is needed as well to achieve societies in which *human rights are all equally shared*. The *human right to a healthy natural environment*, thus sustaining humanity and life on Earth, deserves accurate protection and attention as well. The *right to happiness* or to fulfilment in reverence for life should be mentioned as:

“Happy people breed a happy world”.

Universal Periodic Review **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**

We wish a happy UPR to the people and the country.

The international human rights constitution.

The following legal obligations – the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of *genocide*, the covenant on *civil and political rights* and its optional protocol on the *abolition of the death penalty*, and the convention on *enforced disappearances* – are, within the human rights constitution (basic treaties), the ones mostly concerned with the right to life. They are the minimum international standards needed for any country to show full legal respect for life and the right to life. National constitutions should reflect as well this legal stand in favor of life.

However, beyond legal aspects, it is consciously evident that it is the bounty of life, the ethics, the knowledge and the human best practices, strong heart feelings and our well understood instincts, our good will; it is what we offer to each other and to humanity for life, living well and living means; it is what our institutions promote and exemplify to pursue progress in dignity and to achieve a sustainable civilization on Earth and so forth it is our personal and collective commitments that give a future, a meaning and a worth to the lives we lead and live, leaving no one behind, for ourselves as for future generations.

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Prevention of genocide and the international covenant on civil and political rights

We commend the fact that DPRK has ratified the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide and ICCPR.

Abolition of the death penalty

To respect life is to value all lives, without distinction or discrimination. The act of killing is the same, be it official or a crime. States have the duty to stand as examples of respect for life and for the right to life. We recall that the right to life granted to all is also the responsibility vested in all to refuse to kill. Accepting that one could be killed, or to kill one is accepting the act of killing; as such regardless of who is killed, how many are killed or why there is a kill.

I. Therefore, we strongly encourage the people and the Authorities of North Korea to abolish the death penalty and to ratify protocol II (CCPR OP2-DP) on the death penalty of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Illegality of enforced disappearances

To be granted a life is also receiving a right to a presence, to a public presence before the law and to a private presence, or an acknowledgeable presence with and for one's kin.

As such enforced disappearances violate numerous human rights, be them in law or in jus cogens. As need be, we will recall that there is an unanswered invitation of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to visit the country. There are numerous cases of enforced disappearances listed by the working group¹¹. Ratifying the convention will also enhance the peace process.

II. Henceforth, we hereby recommend to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to urgently ratify the Enforced Disappearances Convention and if not yet done, to answer the allegation sent by Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance.

The right to peace

We congratulate the authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for the ongoing process of peace in the Korean Peninsula. Alleviating tensions therein has positive effects, regionally and globally, but also locally for the people and the institutions.

In July 1953, the United Nations command in Korea and so forth all the belligerents of the Korean War signed an Armistice Agreement containing *a mandate* to set up *within three months* a high level Political Conference to achieve a Peaceful Settlement of the Korean question, to terminate the State of war between the two Korean Nations¹².

III. We strongly call for the setting up of this conference as soon as possible and urge other States to make a recommendation to this end.

To forward peace in, its international obligations as locally, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should ratify the following treaties:

To enhance the progress of **peace in the international legal order**, we encourage the Authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to urgently ratify the following conventions or treaties:

- IV. **The second and third protocols of the Geneva conventions on humanitarian law.**
- V. **The second protocol of the Convention on the rights of the child.**
- VI. **The Convention on conventional weapons and all its protocols**
- VII. **The Hague Conventions on the protection of cultural property.**
- VIII. **The convention on environmental modification techniques (enmod)**
- IX. **The Convention on chemical weapons.**
- X. **The Mine ban treaty.**
- XI. **The Convention on cluster munitions.**
- XII. **The arms trade treaty.**

And in due time:

- XIII. **The treaty banning nuclear weapons.**

To enhance **peace within the country**, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should:

- XIV. **Adopt a violence prevention plan as advocated by the World Health Organisation¹³**
- XV. **Criminalize war and violence propaganda as prescribed by article 20 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.**
- XVI. **Guarantee education for peace and non-violence at all levels of the school system, as promoted by SDG 4.7 and educate to human rights as advocated by numerous UN resolutions and action plans.**
- XVII. **Forward peaceful settlement of disputes within the country as it is internationally by upholding and making mediation procedures easily available to individuals and social groups.**

For both peace within and without the country, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

- XVIII. **Should establish a ministry of peace.**

The process will take time and wisdom, courage and resources, but rising out of decades of tensions and conflict is formidable opportunity, not only to reach peace and human rights standards, but also to implement them in enhanced manners and as such, to share progress in life quality and sustainability with all the human community.

*Welcoming the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to Geneva,
we wish them and to all the people of the country
a constructive and fulfilling Universal Periodic Review.*

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¹ <http://nonkilling.org/center/publications-media/books-translations>

² <https://nonkilling.org/center/book-review/pisalsaeng-chongchihak-segye-pyongheua-rul-sinchongchiiron-korean>

³ <http://nonkilling.org/center/how-to-help>

⁴ For more comprehensive analysis, see the ones recently done for the UPR's of Costa Rica or Mauritius. Such submissions look at all legal aspects of the right to life and at many practical aspects of a fulfilling and lasting life, including in relation with the Sustainable Development Goals. Statistics are used therein to uphold the Universal Periodic Review process regarding the fulfilment of life from conception until death, including inter alia reproductive rights and abortions, birth registrations, child and mother's mortality, suicides of all sorts and homicides, traffic, work and leisure casualties and life expectancy. Other topics such as deaths in custody, minimal standards of living and other applications of the right to life may be added as accurate for the enhancement, the enjoyment and the protection of life and of the right to life.

Rights to health, minimum standards of living, a healthy environment and peace, all deeply related to the right to life, are studied as needed or according to available means

⁵ The Human Rights Committee, in its draft comment 36 (2015) on the right to life describes it this way: "It is the supreme right from which no derogation is permitted. The right to life has profound importance both for individuals and for society as a whole. It is most precious for its own sake, but also serves as a basic right, facilitating the enjoyment of all other human rights".

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CCPR/Pages/GC36-Article6Righttolife.aspx>

⁶ See i.e. the 9th meeting of the 34th session of the Human Rights Council.

⁷ See 3rd meeting of the 34th session of the Human Rights Council on mainstreaming human rights on the contribution of human rights to peacebuilding, but also resolutions 2250 on youth and peace of the Security Council, the common resolution of the General Assembly and the Security Council (2282) on Sustaining peace. Or the 13th of June 2016 appeal by Switzerland and 70 States, <https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-62152.html>. Or the Declaration on the Right to Peace: <http://www.undocs.org/A/RES/71/189>.

⁸ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 28: "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized".

⁹ <http://www.undocs.org/A/RES/71/189>

¹⁰ They are possibilities described here: http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/39/31

We add peaceful settlement of disputes for internal disputes as for international ones.

¹¹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/236/81/PDF/G1823681.pdf?OpenElement>

¹² Preamble, article II§13, IV§60 and V§62,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20140305164517/http://news.findlaw.com/cnn/docs/korea/kwarmagr072753.html>

¹³ http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/status_report/2014/report/report/en/, page 73, 232.