End the horror of North Korean political prison camps

Amnesty International

Yodok is one of six known political prison camps in North Korea. Men, women and children in the camp face forced hard labor, inadequate food, beatings, totally inadequate medical care and unhygienic living conditions. Many fall ill while in prison, and a large number die in custody or soon after release.

Around 50,000 people are held in Yodok, and most are imprisoned without trial or following grossly unfair trials on the basis of "confessions" obtained through torture. There are two zones in Yodok. Prisoners in the "Revolutionary Zone" are released after serving sentences lasting from a few months to ten years. Prisoners in the "Total-Control Zone" are never released.

Yodok political prison camp must be closed, to stop these appalling, systematic and widespread human rights abuses.

Those sent to political prison camps include officials perceived to have performed poorly in their job, people who criticize the regime or the ruling family and anyone suspected of engaging in "anti-government" activities, including listening to TV or radio broadcasts from South Korea.

Family members of those suspected of crimes are also sent to Yodok. This can include parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews and cousins. Infants born in Yodok automatically become inmates, and if they are born in the "Total Control Zone", they will be there for life.

The North Korean government denies the existence of political prison camps in the country, including Yodok, even though testimonies of former detainees and satellite photographs confirm their existence.

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