



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Fortieth session

25 February–22 March 2019

Agenda item 4

### Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

## Written statement\* submitted by Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 February 2019]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## North Korean Overseas Workers

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Created in Brussels in 2001, *Human Rights Without Frontiers International* (HRWF Int'l) is a non-profit association that seeks to shape European and international policy in ways that strengthen democracy, uphold the rule of law and protect human rights globally. This statement seeks to inform the United Nations about the current human rights violations in respect to North Korean overseas workers and calls upon the United Nations to increase its efforts to end these abuses.

1.2 The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been exporting laborers around the globe. Once brought to their foreign work sites, they are grossly exploited. North Korean overseas workers are deprived of their human rights and economic rights, as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

1.3 These workers are underpaid, subject to unlawful work and housing conditions, placed under heavy surveillance, and are often deprived of adequate nutrition and health care.

1.4 As of April 2018, estimated that 200,000 North Koreans are currently working overseas in these conditions.

### 2. Increasing information, intelligence, and efforts

2.1 While the United Nations has attempted to ban Member States from issuing work permits to North Koreans and to have North Korean workers returned home, the issue remains prevalent. Over the past year, North Korean workers have continued to be exploited around the globe, including in the Russian Federation, Poland, China, the United Arab Emirates and across Southeast Asia and Africa.

2.2 As NGOs and journalists have made improvements in identifying the exact locations of North Korean workers, as well as the companies hiring them, Human Rights Without Frontiers recommends that the United Nations reacts appropriately and in a timely manner.

### 3. Recommendations

Specifically, Human Rights Without Frontiers International recommends that:

3.1 The United Nations urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to respect the rights of workers who are employed in foreign countries;

3.2 The United Nations, and in particular the International Labour Organisation, investigates the monetary transactions between companies whose employees are thought to be exploited North Korean workers;

3.3 The United Nations, specifically the International Labour Organisation, works to collect accurate data on North Korean workers in Member States

3.4 The United Nations places further pressure on Member States' to investigate companies and work sites which are thought to employ North Korean workers;

3.5 The United Nations conducts human rights investigations in Member States where ample evidence of abuse of North Korean workers is plentiful, including in Russia and Poland;

3.6 The United Nations creates a specific mechanism to a) receive allegations of exploitation of North Korean overseas workers in Member States; b) track progress of identifying exploited North Korean workers; c) track progress of investigating allegations; and d) hold Member States accountable for exploiting North Korean workers with strict deadlines of guaranteeing minimum rights for North Korean workers in their respective countries;

3.7 The United Nations continues to urge Member States to ensure the protection of rights for North Koreans who work or reside in their countries.