

UN Human Rights Report on North Korea could be about the U.S. or South Korea

By [Stephen Gowans](#)

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Surely one could be forgiven for thinking that when the Washington Post's Chico Harlan (February 17) described the conclusions reached by the UN Human Rights Commission's investigation into North Korea that he was really describing his own country, the United States. Harlan wrote,

“The report makes for devastating reading, laying out the way North Korea conducts surveillance on its citizens (see Edward Snowden's revelations about the NSA's spying on US citizens...and everyone else), bans them from travel (anyone up for a visit to Cuba?), discriminates against them based on supposed ideological impurities (has the United States ever been kind to Marxist-Leninists?), tortures them (water boarding and Abu Ghraib) and sometimes banishes them to isolated prison camps, where they are held incommunicado” (recently Guantanamo and other CIA torture camps around the world to which opponents of the US regime have been rendered, more distantly, the incarceration of German-, Italian- and Japanese-Americans during WWII.)

The report recommends that North Korea be referred to the International Criminal Court at The Hague, but if the charges against North Korea are true, then surely the case for referring the United States to the same court is at least as compelling. Add the United States' record of extrajudicial assassination, its world-leading rate of incarceration, its illegal wars, and its support for the most vile human rights violators on the planet, among them Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain, and the case for referring US leaders to The Hague is overwhelming.

The UN report says that North Korea is committing human rights violations “without any parallel in the contemporary world,” a conclusion that could only be reached by wilful blindness to the human rights violations of the United States, its democracy-abominating allies in the Gulf, and its south Korean neo-colony. South Korea, whose affronts against human rights are passed over largely in silence by the Western media (and it seems by the UN Human Rights Commission too), conducts surveillance on its citizens, bans them from travel to North Korea, discriminates against them if they hold views sympathetic to North Korea, its official Juche ideology or Marxism-Leninism, and uses its highly repressive National Security Law to lock up and intimidate anyone who has a good word to say about North Korea.

The UN report can hardly be taken seriously. It is a transparent effort to discredit a government that has, for more than half a century, been in the cross-hairs of a US program of military intimidation, economic warfare, diplomatic isolation and ideological assault, targeted for regime change for rejecting participation in a US-superintended global capitalist order. More than that, by passing over regimes that do what North Korea is accused of doing, it sanitizes the behavior of the United States and its allies, buttressing the ideological fiction that anti-capitalist governments are uniquely human rights violators, while upholders of global capitalism are uniquely champions of human rights.

If a case is to be pressed to refer North Korea to the ICC, then referrals of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea to The Hague—to start—are long overdue. Until this oversight is rectified, it is impossible to regard the UN report—and the western media's coverage of it—as anything but sops to the propaganda imperatives of US foreign policy.