



## North Korea and Forced Labor

Forced labor in North Korea is a deeply entrenched and institutionalized practice, affecting various aspects of life in the country. According to recent reports, the system is extensive and multi-layered, involving several forms of forced labor [1] [2] [3]:

1. **Labor in Detention:** Prisoners are compelled to work under harsh conditions, often facing physical violence and inhumane treatment.
2. **State-Assigned Jobs:** After completing school or military service, citizens are assigned jobs by the state, with no freedom to choose their work or place of residence.
3. **Military Conscription:** North Koreans are subjected to a minimum of 10 years of mandatory military service, which includes forced labor.
4. **Shock Brigades:** Groups of citizens are organized to perform arduous manual labor, often in construction and agriculture, with little or no pay.
5. **Work Mobilizations:** This includes the mobilization of school children and other groups for various labor tasks.
6. **Overseas Labor:** North Koreans are sent abroad to work, with up to 90% of their wages confiscated by the state. They work under constant surveillance and have their passports confiscated [1] [2] [3].

These practices are maintained through violence, surveillance, and the threat of severe punishment, creating conditions that can be likened to servitude and slavery [1] [2] [3].

1. [‘Shocking’: UN details widespread forced labour in North Korea](#)
2. [DPR Korea: Forced labour is institutionalized and dangerous, warns UN rights office](#)
3. [Forced labor system in NK shows features of 'servitude, slavery': UN](#)
4. [Institutionalised forced labour in North Korea constitutes grave ...](#)
5. [DPR Korea: Forced labour is institutionalized and dangerous, warns UN ...](#)
6. [Getty Images](#)

## Forced Labor and North Korean School Children

North Korean school children are often required to work for the state as part of their daily routine. This practice is deeply embedded in the country's education system and includes various forms of labor [1] [2] [3]:

1. **Agricultural Labor:** Students are mobilized to work on farms, performing tasks such as sowing, weeding, rice-planting, and harvesting. This work is considered an essential part of the school curriculum and is unpaid [2].

2. **Item Collections:** Children are tasked with collecting items like scrap iron and other materials, which are often difficult to find in North Korea [2].
3. **Construction Work:** Students participate in building and repairing infrastructure, including school buildings, municipal projects, and even private housing for school personnel [2].
4. **Special Projects:** Occasionally, students are sent to work in factories or fields to complete specific projects assigned by the government [5]. These activities are not only physically demanding but also take up a significant portion of the students' time, often at the expense of their education [2].

1. [Institutionalised forced labour in North Korea constitutes grave ...](#)
2. [Child labor within and outside the North Korean education system - PSCORE](#)
3. [UN: North Korea Exploiting Children | Human Rights Watch](#)
4. [North Korea - United States Department of State](#)
5. [North Korea: Economic System Built on Forced Labor](#)

## International Reactions to North Korean Forced Labor

International reactions to North Korea's forced labor practices have been strong and condemnatory. Here are some key points:

1. **United Nations:** The UN has consistently highlighted the grave human rights violations associated with forced labor in North Korea. A recent report by the UN Human Rights Office describes the practice as deeply institutionalized and calls for urgent international action [1] [2]. The report urges the international community to investigate and prosecute those responsible for these crimes and recommends referring the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) [3].
2. **Human Rights Organizations:** Various human rights organizations have condemned North Korea's use of forced labor, calling it a form of modern-day slavery. They have documented numerous cases of abuse and exploitation, urging global leaders to take a stand against these practices [2] [3].
3. **Sanctions and Diplomatic Pressure:** Several countries, including the United States and members of the European Union, have imposed sanctions on North Korea in response to its human rights abuses, including forced labor. These sanctions aim to pressure the North Korean government to cease these practices and improve its human rights record [2] [3].
4. **International Advocacy:** Advocacy groups and international bodies continue to raise awareness about the plight of North Korean forced laborers. They call for increased support for defectors and survivors, as well as stronger international mechanisms to hold the North Korean regime accountable [2] [3].

These reactions reflect a broad consensus that North Korea's forced labor practices are unacceptable and must be addressed through coordinated international efforts.

1. [UN Report Highlights Institutionalized Forced Labour in North Korea, Urges International Action](#)
2. [Institutionalised forced labour in North Korea constitutes grave ...](#)
3. [DPR Korea: Forced labour is institutionalized and dangerous, warns UN ...](#)
4. [UN details widespread forced labour in North Korea - CNA](#)