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Sacrifice of North Korean Resident's Human Rights in the Guise of Patriotism, Unity, and Loyalty

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The recent intensification of the idolization of Kim Jong-un and social control has become a key factor negatively impacting the human rights of North Korean residents. As part of the idolization of Kim Jong-un and social control, North Korea is strengthening emphasis on patriotism, unity, loyalty, dedication, and repayment under the slogan “Let’s unite under patriotism,” and promotion of notions ‘power of patriotism,’ ‘power of unity.’

1. Collectivism and Patriotism: Imposition of Unity, Loyalty, Dedication, and Repayment

Although the responsibility for sanctions against North Korea following nuclear development lies with the North Korean authorities, they are misrepresenting sanctions against the North as external security threats, forcing sacrifice upon the residents under the guise of patriotism, unity, and loyalty while disguising the struggle for self-reliance as patriotism.

Recently, North Korea has increasingly emphasized the establishment of the spirit

of collectivism through official media outlets like *Rodong Sinmun* as part of its social control efforts. Since the beginning of 2024, *Rodong Sinmun* has repeatedly published articles titled “One for All, All for One,” glorifying examples of self-sacrifice for all, and highlighting the spirit of collectivism by celebrating individual sacrifices for the benefit of the whole. Recently, there has been a particularly notable trend of conducting ideological education by linking the spirit of collectivism with “patriotism.”

This trend is characterized by strengthening ideological education on collectivism through the theory of the Socialist Grand Family. Regarding the Socialist Grand Family theory, Kim Jong-un is portrayed as a “friendly father,” and the narrative concludes with idolization that respecting and honoring him as the “father of the entire nation” is the most joyful part in life. The recent emphasis on the spirit of collectivism, centered on the existing Socialist Grand Family theory, appears to stem from the need to reinforce ideological control over the populace, along with controlling external information through legal systems.

The ultimate reason behind North Korea’s recent emphasis on patriotism and loyalty is the idolization of Kim Jong-un. He is portrayed as the “banner of patriotism” and the “center of unity,” and they propagate the idea that “endless loyalty to Kim Jong-un is the highest form of patriotism.” Additionally, they promote the notion that repaying Kim Jong-un’s love and benevolence is the rightful duty of a “patriotic citizen.”

2. Patriotism and Unity, Loyalty and Repayment, Culminating in Sacrifices of Human Rights

The spirit of collectivism, when linked with the pretext of “patriotism,” is adversely affecting the formation of human rights awareness among North Korean residents. As the spirit of collectivism is tied to patriotism and enforces loyalty, dedication, and repayment, the opportunity for individuals to form an awareness on human rights, which revolves around the individual’s sense of self, is diminishing even further.

In particular, the dedication and repayment required to realize Kim Jong-un’s

achievements result in the sacrifice of human rights, especially among North Korean youth. The large-scale construction projects mobilizing shock brigades is one of the most prominent cases of infringement on residents' human rights that emphasize repayment and dedication under the guise of the spirit of collectivism. These instances of forced labor for Kim Jong-un's achievements starkly reveal the fallacy of North Korea's propaganda of people-centered socialism and the prioritization of youth based on voluntary dedication and loyalty.

Under the guise of the spirit of collectivism, loyalty, dedication, and repayment, voluntarism is emphasized, but in reality, it often leads to coercion and human rights violations, as seen in the case of 'group petitions.' In North Korea, petitions involve exploiting and mobilizing labor under the pretense of voluntary social participation by the masses. Despite North Korea emphasizing the voluntary nature of the petition system under the pretext of the revolutionary and ideological struggle of youth, the system is essentially a state-driven campaign involving compulsory mobilization, even infringing upon the freedom of occupational choice.

Another prominent example of infringement on the social rights of residents under the pretext of patriotism and repayment is the "Patriotic Rice Contribution Movement." Continuously conducted under the guise of voluntarism in the name of "patriotism," this movement imposes contributions on farmers, negatively impacting the farm workers' right to food.

The core elements of North Korean human rights violation such as collectivism, patriotism, unity, loyalty, dedication, and repayment, are now exacerbating the human rights situation in North Korea. This is due to the recent idolization of Kim Jong-un, reinforcement of social control, and the suffering inflicted upon residents due to intensified sanctions. These factors combine to worsen the human rights situation for North Korean residents. ©KINU 2024

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