Mapping Crimes Against Humanity
In North Korea
With FOSSD

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Transitional Justice Working Group

August 11, 2018

2018 KDE Akademy - Vienna
Type of Government

- not communist (anymore)
- totalitarian / monarchy / personality cult
- nationalist, race-based ideology
Your *songbun* determines where you live and what you can do.

- loyal
- wavering
- hostile
Control Through Fear

- secret police & citizen informants
- public executions
- political prison camps (*kwalliso*), aka concentration camps / gulags
  - no due process
  - guilt by association for up to three generations

(HRNK/AllSource Analysis: Imagery Analysis of Camp 16)
Location of political prison camps (kwanliso) and ordinary prison camps (kyohwaso) in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Civil Society

- no organizations may exist without permission of the state
- the great famine in 1990s
Recommended Reading

(a) Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea, by Barbara Demick

(b) The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag, by Kang Chol-hwan and Pierre Rigoulot
UN Commission of Inquiry (COI)

no right to:
  - life
  - food

no freedom of:
  - thought / expression
  - association
  - religion
  - movement / residence
  - information (no internet)
Crimes Against Humanity

- extermination
- murder
- enslavement
- torture
- imprisonment
- rape
- forced abortions
- persecution
- deliberate starvation
- and enforced disappearances

have been committed “pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the state”
Transitional Justice

UN definition: “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation.”

- Truth and reconciliation commissions
- Punishment of perpetrators (trials)
- Reparations
- Memorials and education
- Democratic institution-building

- Looks forward and back
- Victim-centered
Sites We Focus On & Methodology

3 Main Site Types
- Where the victims of the regime were killed
- Where their bodies were buried or otherwise disposed of
- Where documents are kept that are related to these human rights crimes.

Satellite imagery via Google Earth
Objectives of Mapping Project

1. Document North Korean regime’s human rights abuse together with specific locations it took place

2. Support ongoing advocacy efforts
   - increase the amount and types of documentation available
   - provide a foundation for increased international pressure on the regime

3. Gather, analyze and provide data to support future accountability measures (trials) against the leadership of the North Korean government

4. Develop maps that can:
   - aid future exhumation of victims’ remains
   - help victims’ families discover the whereabouts of their loved ones
   - assist in future truth-seeking and memorialization activities

5. Apply emerging remote sensing (RS) technologies to complement existing human rights documentation efforts
   - body farm research, LiDAR, drones
N. Korean defectors show locations of mass graves using Google Earth

Much of what happens in North Korea remains hidden from the outside world. But commercial satellite imagery and Google Earth mapping software are helping a human rights organization take inventory of the recent offensiveness of the North Korean regime and identify sites for future investigation of crimes against humanity.

A new report from the South Korea-based Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG)—a non-governmental organization that tracks human rights abuses and crimes against humanity by the world’s most oppressive regimes—details how the organization’s researchers used Google Earth in interviews with defectors from North Korea to identify sites associated with mass killings by the North Korean regime. Google Earth imagery was used to help witnesses recall killings and mass burials; orient themselves and precisely point out the locations of those events.

Entitled “Mapping Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea: Mass Graves, Killing Sites and Documentary Evidence,” the report does not include the actual locations where the researchers deemed to be sensitive sites out of concern that the North Korean regime would move evidence from those sites. But it does provide location data of other sites with potential documentary evidence of crimes, including police stations and other government facilities that may have records of atrocities.
Chart 2: Participant Gender Breakdown

- Female: 299 (79.7%)
- Male: 76 (20.3%)

n = 375
Interviewee Demographics

Chart 3: Participant Age Breakdown

- 15-29 years: 23 (6.1%)
- 30s: 37 (9.9%)
- 40s: 77 (20.5%)
- 50s: 85 (22.7%)
- 60s: 85 (22.7%)
- Over 70: 64 (17.1%)
- Not specified: 4 (1.0%)

n = 375
Interviewee Demographics

Chart 4: Year of Last Defection from North Korea

n = 375
## Main Findings

### Table 3: Sensitive Sites by Category and Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sensitive Site Type</th>
<th>Pre-consolidation Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Witnessed burial site</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Suspected burial site</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Burial site within community cemetery</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Cemetery for prisoners of war</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Storage place for dead bodies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Location of uncovered, unburied, or exposed bodies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Place for disposal of bodies by cremation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Killing site – shooting (if n killed &lt; 10)</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Killing site – mass shooting (if n ≥ 10)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Killing site – hanging</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Killing site – buming</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Killing site – arbitrary killing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Public trial only site</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>393</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- B – Dead body sites/sightings
- K – Killing sites
- T – Trial only sites

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Map 1: Suspected Body Site Groupings by Province

Where did interviewees live — and what did they report?
Map 2: Suspected Burial Site Grouping Near Killing Sites

The polygon and the point within it were given as the locations of burial sites by two different interviewees. During site analysis we consolidated them into a suspected burial site grouping. Within four kilometers of this grouping there are over four dozen suspected killing sites, the closest of which are seen clustered below the polygon. The interviewee likely did not mean that the whole area depicted by the polygon is used as a burial site, but that the burial site is located somewhere within this area.

An interviewee who left North Korea in 2007 said dead bodies were dumped here in a closed mine.

An interviewee who left in 1999 said the bodies of those publicly executed were thrown onto a pile of waste generated by a mine.
Survey Results

Chart 7: Necessity of Exhumation of Burial Sites Containing Victims of Human Rights Abuses

Is exhumation of burial sites containing victims of human rights abuses necessary after transition?

- **Yes**: 216 (79.4%)
- **No**: 23 (8.5%)
- **I have no opinion**: 33 (12.1%)
Chart 10: How Leaders Should Prioritise Their Efforts After a Transition in North Korea Regarding Burial Sites

How should leaders prioritise their efforts after a transition in North Korea?

- **23 | 8.6%**
  - Exhumation should occur at the same time as construction of economic infrastructure - the two do not conflict.

- **35 | 13.1%**
  - Exhumation of burial sites must take place before the construction of economic infrastructure in those areas.

- **81 | 30.2%**
  - I have no opinion

- **129 | 48.1%**
  - Construction of economic infrastructure should be prioritised over exhumation of burial sites

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n = 268
Chart 11: Should Perpetrators of Human Rights Abuses Receive Prosecution and Punishment in Court

Is it important for perpetrators of human rights abuses to receive prosecution and punishment in court?

- **Yes**: 239 (94.8%)
- **No**: 8 (3.2%)
- **I have no opinion**: 5 (2.0%)

**'Yes' % by Gender**
- Male: 94.1%
- Female: 95.0%

**'Yes' % by Age**
- 15-29: 83.3%
- 30-39: 92.6%
- 40-49: 96.0%
- 50-59: 95.1%
- 60-69: 94.6%
- 70+: 97.8%

**'Yes' % by Experience of Violence in North Korea**
- Experienced: 95.5%
- NOT Experienced: 92.5%

**'Yes' % by Years Living in South Korea**
- 0-4: 70.4%
- 5-9: 83.0%
- 10-14: 80.3%
- 15+: 92.3%
Survey Results

Chart 12: Participant Views on the Fate of Those Who Committed Violent Human Rights Abuses in North Korea

What would you like to see happen to those who committed violent human rights abuses in North Korea? (Multiple choice)

- Punish them: 176 (69.8%)
- See them in trials: 174 (69.0%)
- They should confess their crimes: 154 (61.1%)
- They should ask for forgiveness: 121 (48.0%)
- Make them compensate victims: 111 (44.0%)
- Put them in prison: 105 (41.7%)
- Reintegrate them into the community: 72 (28.6%)
- Give them amnesty after investigation into their crimes: 26 (10.3%)
- Give them amnesty without investigation into their crimes: 5 (2.0%)
- I have no opinion: 2 (0.8%)
- Other: 1 (0.4%)

n=252 (out of 272)
Challenges

- a start-up NGO with a tiny budget
- must protect sensitive data
- alone in my organization and field
Red Star OS 3.0
Software
- QGIS
- PostGIS
- PostgreSQL

Data
- OpenStreetMap
- GADM (Global Administrative Areas)
Challenges in Korea to using FOSS

- turning on Korean input
- fonts
- banking & online transactions
- Hangul word processor / .HWP files
Recommended Reading and Sources

- Blog of a recent, high-level defector: https://thaeyongho.com/en/


- https://www.northkoreatech.org/2014/01/31/north-koreas-red-star-os-goes-mac/
- https://www.northkoreatech.org/2014/12/30/red-star-3-0-desktop-finally-becomes-public/
Image Sources


- TJWG’s mapping report available at: https://en.tjwg.org