



## Kim Jong-Un Bans Drinking at Gatherings; Continues War on Christmas

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Per his anti-Christmas campaign, the supreme leader has now banned singing and any social functions that involve alcohol.

Christmas has been taboo in North Korea for decades, but in recent years supreme leader Kim Jong-un has made it a priority to ramp up his anti-Christmas campaign.

Last year Kim, the Chairman of the Worker's Party of Korea, declared Dec. 25 a national holiday to honor his late grandmother Kim Jong-suk, who was born on Christmas Eve of 1919. Prior to that, Dec. 24 was already designated as Jong-suk's day—she is regarded as the “Sacred Mother of the Revolution” as the first wife of founding leader Kim Il-sung—but according to reports last December, the supreme leader had extended her day to Dec. 25, perhaps to overshadow Christmas.

This Christmas, Kim Jong-un went a step further, by banning gatherings that involve alcohol and singing. According to South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS), the new law serves to “try and stop dissent as sanctions imposed by the United Nations over his country's nuclear program begin to take hold,” as reported by *USA Today*.

“(North Korea) has devised a system whereby party organs report people's economic hardships on a daily basis, and it has banned any gatherings related to drinking, singing and other entertainment and is strengthening control of outside information,” NIS said.

Religious worship is prohibited in North Korea, as organized religion is seen as a threat to the dictator's regime—Christianity in particular.

Cato Institute Senior Fellow Doug Bandow explains, according to the *International Business Times*, “The (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK) ostentatiously treats anyone of faith, but especially Christians, as hostile. Believers place loyalty to God before that of the North Korean state. Churches allow people to act and organize outside of state entities. Christianity also has ties to a world seen as almost uniformly threatening by Pyongyang.”

*TIME* reported in 2009 that “underground churches” are estimated to have helped about 20,000 North Koreans defect to China. As a result, the DPRK targets Christian leaders, who risk imprisonment or execution by spreading Christianity.

Still, even though celebrating Christmas has been illegal in North Korea since the 1950s, the country’s 70,000 or so Christians still find a way to celebrate despite the risk of being busted by authorities.

Some defectors smuggle gifts like clothes and candy through Christian networks, said one North Korean woman who was able to escape, Jeong Young-sil. “Christmas would otherwise be meaningless,” Jeong told *TIME*.