

Dennis Rodman Celebrates With North Korean Christian Persecutor

Former NBA star Dennis Rodman's praises for North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un during a basketball exhibition in the isolated country are commanding attention for their personal endorsement of Kim's rule. But while many are decrying Rodman's words as outrageous, North Korea's treatment of its Christian population is even more so, according to a recent report by a human rights watchdog.

Of an estimated 200,000 prisoners in North Korea, 70,000 of them are Christians, according to a recent report authored by the human rights watchdog Open Doors. For the 11th consecutive year, North Korea tops Open Doors' list of the worst countries for its brutal treatment of Christians.

"[Kim's] a good guy. He's my friend," Rodman shared on ABC's Sunday morning *This Week* broadcast following his return from the hermit kingdom. Rodman and Kim shared dinner and drinks following the exhibition game, where later Rodman told local media that Kim's father, Kim Jong Il, and grandfather, Kim Il Sung, "were great leaders, and he's such a proud man."

"He's proud, his country likes him—not like him, love him, love him," Rodman said. "Guess what, I love him. The guy's really awesome."

Faith J.H. McDonnell, Religious Liberty Program Director for The Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) commented:

"From incarcerating Christians and political prisoners in gulags to executing those caught fleeing over the Chinese border; North Korea's despotic rulers have consistently held the title of worst oppressors in the world.

“Rodman’s party antics with the North Korean dictator seem scripted for the parody cartoon ‘Adventures of Kim Jong Un,’” she added. “Rodman must function on a continuum stretching from clueless to cruel to celebrate with such a tyrant as his people languish behind bars.

“Rodman says Kim Jong Un’s people love him? What choice do they have? If you don’t show your ‘love’ by wearing a Kim Jong Un pin on your clothing, three generations of your family get sent to prison camp!

“North Korea’s despotic rulers have consistently held the title of worst oppressors in the world,” McDonnell concluded. “A nation’s internal record of respect for human rights is the single most reliable predictor of that nation’s external intentions and integrity.”