

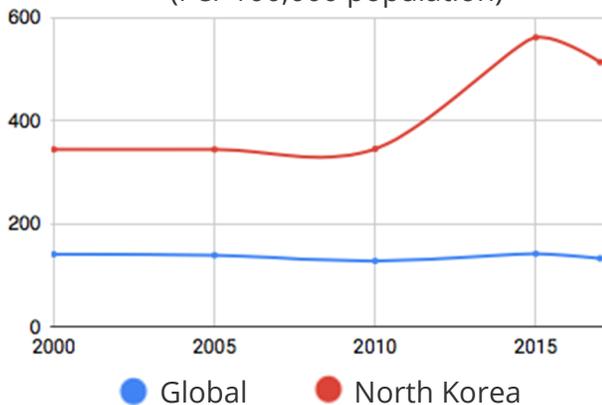
# NORTH KOREA'S TUBERCULOSIS EPIDEMIC

North Korea has one of the highest TB infection rates in the world, and drug-resistant strains are increasingly prevalent. International humanitarian agencies are working to solve the crisis, but sanctions and funding cutoffs are severely constraining their efforts.

## THE FACTS

- North Korea reported a TB incidence rate of 513 per 100,000 people in 2017 — **the fifth highest in the world.**
- The WHO estimates that **5,200 North Koreans are infected with multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) every year**, making it one of the top 20 high MDR-TB burden countries. **Some expert estimates are significantly higher.** MDR-TB is extremely deadly and difficult to treat.

## TUBERCULOSIS INCIDENCE RATE (Per 100,000 population)



## EFFORTS TO ADDRESS TB

- From 2010-2018, the Global Fund supported WHO and UNICEF programs in North Korea working to address this crisis, **treating over 100,000 patients annually.**
- U.S.-based NGOs have also worked to treat MDR-TB cases and to build diagnostic and treatment capacity at TB care centers.

## AID IS BEING CUT OFF

- Earlier this year, the Global Fund quietly announced that it would end support for TB treatment in North Korea, **ending the primary source of funding for these programs.**
- U.S. and UN **sanctions have severely impeded efforts to address this crisis**, disrupting supply channels used by NGOs and imposing complex and time-consuming regulatory burdens.
- The State Department has recently begun **denying Americans permission to travel to North Korea for humanitarian purposes**, including travel to support or monitor TB treatment programs.

## THE RISKS OF INACTION

- **Even a short-term disruption of treatment and the supply of medicine could be deadly**, leading to preventable deaths and an explosion of MDR-TB.
- A worsening TB epidemic would have major long-term public health implications for North Korea, and **potentially spread to neighboring countries.**

Sources: World Health Organization; The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria; PLOS Medicine.

**NCNK**  
THE NATIONAL  
COMMITTEE ON  
NORTH KOREA

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