



The State of Human Rights in North Korea During 2008

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FEB 17, 2009

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The human rights violations in North Korea have begun to be shed to light through the stories of defectors that flee North Korea in search for freedom. The public executions, torture, child abuse, human trafficking, and forced labor that are being practiced behind the iron curtain were not found out until the North Korean defectors fled the country and told their stories.

The continuous escape of defectors that were once held in North Korea's political concentration camps provides witnesses to the international community of the human rights situation in North Korea. Those within North Korea, who are fighting for freedom, also offer news of the human rights violations committed by North Korean authorities. This news both enrages and astonishes the international community.

North Korean authorities force masses of people to watch the public executions of the condemned criminals to instill and emphasize a culture of obedience. Even China, a proletarian dictatorship, which is, in name only, a socialist country, there is a trial and conviction through a peoples' court. However, in North Korea, those who are opposed to the dictator Kim Jong-Il, are executed. These executions are immoral crimes.

In the past, when the international community's criticism of the public executions escalated, North Korea practiced private executions for a period of time. However, as the North Korean peoples' opposition towards the government started to grow, they revived the practice of public executions.

Currently, hundreds of thousands of political offenders are imprisoned in concentration camps without a trial or written judgment of conviction. Like the dew on a plant that evaporates into thin air, these people disappear from their communities—it is impossible to tell how many lives are being taken away. Even at this hour, in the political offenders' concentration camps, the people who disappear from their communities without a sound are crying for their lives in the cold prisons.

There have been reports numbering in the tens reporting the public executions. The following data is a brief compilation of the data sent by insiders operating for PSCORE (People for Successful COrean Reunification).

1. Public Executions

1) The public execution of four businessmen by the State Security Department

- September 17th, 2008- Public execution in Pyongan-bukdo province Yomju-gun, 8th military base shooting field

Crime: Embezzlement of Kim Jong-Il's foreign currency fund

At the 8th military base, Jun Chul-soo (age 44), Han Man-chul (age 51) and In Min-goon were amongst four company owners that were shot to death in a public execution. The money that these men individually made each year exceeded 5 million dollars. They were very influential and known to be untouchable, however, they were convicted of embezzling Kim Jong-Il's foreign currency fund.

2) Hamgyeung-bukdo, Chong-jin city-Chief of the Security, Kim Hong-chun (age 45)

- July 21, 2008-Private execution

Crime: Hoarding rice and selling it for a profit. Kim Hong-chun traded 1,500 tons of rice with North Korea for 6 years. He also used the rice as bribes to various government agencies. Kim Hong-chun charged an expensive price for the rice at 4,000 Yuan per 1kg. The reason for the increase in prices of rice in North Korea during May 2008 was because of Kim Hong-chun. He was ordered to death, because he violated Kim Jong-Il's policy.

3) Pyongan-namdo province Sukchon county chairman Han In-sook (age 55)

- Mid-May, 2008- A public execution in Pyongan-namdo province, Pyongsong City

Crime: Han In-sook's (age 55) crime was selling 3,000 U.S. dollars worth of food provisions and gaining a profit. She was convicted of misfeasance and being disloyal to the Worker's party. Han In-sook was a member of the Supreme People's Assembly. She used her position and did not comply with the Worker's Party. After undergoing inspection, she was shot to serve as an example other members of the party.

**4) Hamgyeung-namdo province, Gumya county public execution of a husband and wife.
- July 13, 2008**

Crime: Due to dementia induced by starvation, a husband and a wife killed their son. The husband and wife were then publicly executed.

On July 13, 2008, Park Seung-il (early 40s) and his wife (age 38) sold their 2-year-old son for a 15kg bag of potatoes and ate the flesh of their 1-year-old baby. The village women who found out about the couple's doing reported what happened. The couple received a public trial and a public execution.

5) The public execution of four people in Pyongan-bukdo province-Shinuiju for the crime of smuggling drugs.

- October 6, 2008

Crime: In order to smuggle drugs, 3 men and 1 woman traveled from Hamhung city to Shinuiju city.

The four people were executed publicly, in front of thousands of people, on a bridge that connects the northern part of Shinuiju city to the southern part of Shinuiju city.

2. The Sale of North Korean Women into Chinese Human Trafficking Trade.

The women who cannot withstand starvation and escape North Korea to China are very likely to be sold into human trafficking. China is where, even in so called civilized society of the 21st century, the buying and selling of human lives is still taking place. China does not recognize North Korean defectors as being refugees, but instead, considers them to be illegal aliens. The victims of human trafficking are most often North Korean women. In China, North Korean defectors have no rights and like goods, they are sold to the Chinese and are scattered around the wide expanse that is China. The price of their bodies is no more than the price of a pig in China, and ranges from a few hundred Yuan to a few thousand Yuan. The following stories were compiled by PSCORE (People for Successful COrean REunification) from North Korean women who defected and currently live in China:

1) Han Jong-sook(age 33) from Hamgyeung-bukdo province-Sebyul county

In May of 2000, Han Jong-sook was sold to a 45-year-old widower for 3000 Yuan. Currently, she cannot escape because she does not speak Chinese. She does not even have the money to go to South Korea, and she does not want to go being oppressed in North Korea. Her Chinese husband is an ex-convict that lived a corrupt life before marrying Jong-sook and every night he demands sex. He is often intoxicated from alcohol and beats Jong-sook. During the day, he bolts the door so she cannot leave.

2) Kim Hyang-sun (age 29) from Hwanghae-namdo province-Shinchon county

In July of 1999, Kim Hyang-sun crossed the Tumen River into China's Jilin province. She was sold to a 40-year-old widower for 5,000 Yuan (USD 800). She has lived with the man for almost 10 years and bore his child. She left North Korea because she couldn't bear the starvation and was sold into human trafficking upon arriving in China. Her son cannot go to school because his mother does not have Chinese citizenship.

3) Kim Sun-hui (age 58) from Hamgyeong-namdo province-Kyungsun county

In May of 1998, Kim Sun-hui and her three daughters escaped North Korea and entered China. Along the way, they lost each other and were scattered. She is currently in the Chinese city of Ando in Jilin province, caring for a hunchback Chinese man.

Right after crossing the Tumen River that serves as a partial border between North Korea and China, Kim Sun-hui and her daughters were sold in to the human trafficking trade. Her eldest daughter (age 25 at the time) was sold for 6,000 Yuan (USD 1,000), her second daughter (age 23 at the time) was sold for 8,000 Yuan (USD 1,200), and her youngest daughter (age 21 at the time) was sold for 10,000 Yuan (USD 1,500). Because of her old age, Kim Sun-hui was sold to a hunchbacked widower for only 500 Yuan (USD 100).

After they were sold to the Chinese men, Kim Sun-hui never saw her daughters again and for fear of being pursued and traced by North Korean authorities, she cannot even advertise the loss of her daughters in order to possibly find them. She currently hides in an isolated mountain village in China.

4) Jang Sun-mi (aged 44) from the northern part of Hamgyeong province-Onseon county

In 1998, Jang Sun-mi attempted to escape North Korea for the first time. Sun-mi was selling Chinese garments in North Korea until all her merchandise was seized by the North Korean police and suddenly she became a debtor. She couldn't possibly go on living in North Korea and heard from a female Chinese merchant that she could make money in China. Upon arriving in China, she was sold in to a man in a Chinese farming village for around 6000 Yuan (USD 900).

Jang Sun-mi's Chinese husband was 10 years her senior, but because he was an ex-convict, he didn't work much, and used the money that Sun-mi made to play mahjong (a Chinese gambling game).

She was lamenting her plight when a young Chinese man in the neighborhood bought her for 8000 Yuan (USD 1,200). Jang Sun-mi and her new husband were living happily, when her previous husband called the Chinese police and reported in illegal alien status. She was suddenly arrested and forcibly repatriated to North Korea.

In North Korea, she was sent to the Worker's Party labor training camp for 6 months. After she completed the 6 months she attempted her second escape from North Korea. She returned to the Chinese village she had lived in, but was reported to the Chinese police by her neighbors. After another forced repatriation, she was sent to another labor camp for 2 years. After the 2 years she escaped North Korea for the 3rd time and is now living in a small farming village in China. She says she would rather die than go back to North Korea and longs to go to Seoul.

5) Jung Gum-soon (age 30) from the southern part of Hamgyeong province

When Jung Gum-soon was 18-years-old in 1997, her mother and father starved to death. Not being able to withstand the hunger, Gum-soon went to wander the open markets of North Korea and she met a middle aged woman who told her that she can make money if she went to China. This led her to cross the Amnok River into China.

After just spending one night in China, she found herself being taken to a house of a Chinese man in his 40s, who she was forcibly married to.

Her ankles were shackled and she was prohibited from going outside. Three years passed, but she still could not speak Chinese. One day, in the middle of the night, she took the chance and ran away from the house. During the severe cold of December, in minus 25 degrees Celsius, she tried to cross a mountain that was 1,000 meters above sea level. However, while trying to escape, she developed frost bite on her feet and fell to the ground.

Her husband and his brothers were not far behind her. They eventually found her, beat her, dragged her back to his village, and sold her to another Chinese man for 3000 Yuan (USD 400). At this new Chinese man's house, she bore a child. The child was registered under the family name and was documented by the Chinese census; however, Gum-soon still has not had her name documented in the Chinese census. She is living in a village of around a thousand Chinese people. She and about 30 North Korean other defector women continue to hide in this village.

Translated by: Susan Duggan

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