

**NORTH KOREA
TODAY****GOODFRIENDS****Weekly Newsletter****Special Edition September 2009**

["Good Friends" aims to help the North Korean people from a humanistic point of view and publishes "North Korea Today" describing the way the North Korean people live as accurately as possible. We at Good Friends also hope to be a bridge between the North Korean people and the world.]

The Current Situation of North Korean People May–August 2009 (Food, Human Rights and Refugee)

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1. The Food Situation of North Korean people

[Summary] In general, there is no food ration and food shortage is very serious. Food ration is either suspended or done in reduced quantities even in the cities with the best food condition such as Pyongyang and Hoeryong. The majority of ordinary people in rural areas are suffering from malnutrition because they are surviving on one to two meals a day or some porridge. However, there seems to be no massive death from starvation as there was during the spring hardship period in 2008. One of the reasons is that the majority of people

are mobilized for 150-day battle, and they are fed at least with lunch even though the nutritional quality of the meal is very low. Another reason is that because many died of hunger last year those who survived have been taking extreme austerity measures for food since early this year in order to save food and deal with food shortage.

Province	City, County	Food Situation
North Hwanghae	Seoheung, Shingye, Hwangju	Spring lean season, farmers ran out of food - surviving on potato and barley
	Sariwon	Suspension of food ration to mobilized workers in rural areas
Pyongyang	Ryongsung district and surrounding districts	No food distribution from May till September
	Central district	15 days worth of ration from May till June. People were told to be on their own with food in July
South Pyongan	Ryonggang Collective Farm	Corn porridge, one or two meals a day
North Pyongan	Jeongju County	Farmers ran out of food during Spring lean season. 30g of corn ration provided for lunch in collective farms
North Hamgyong	Hoeryong	15 days worth of ration provided since July
	Urangcheon Power Plant construction site	Staple food: corn porridge made of corn powder. Side dish: seaweed soup, salt-pickled Chinese cabbage or radish
South Hamgyong	Dancheon	60% of the residents were surviving on grass roots and tree bark during Spring hardship period.
	Shinpo Senior Home	Three meals of corn porridge a day. Seniors unable to move receive only one or two meals a day. The number of residents reduced from 110 last December to 70 in May.

2. The Trend of Grain Prices

[Summary] Despite serious food shortage, the food price has stabilized since May. It is because the market is remarkably suppressed by increased control and most people do not have much purchasing power.

<Table 1> The Price of Rice in Four Regions (April-August 2009)

(Unit: N. Korean Won/Kg)

Region \ Mon	April	May	June	August
Pyongyang	2,500	2,000	1,900	1,800
Pyongsung	2,200	1,900	1,800	1,800
Hamheung	2,000	1,900	2,000	1,950
Chungjin	1,900	1,900	1,900	2,000

<Table 2> The Price of Corn in Four Regions (April-August 2009)

(Unit: N. Korean Won/Kg)

Region \ Mon	April	May	June	August
Pyongyang	1,200	1,000	830	800
Pyongsung	750	700	680	800
Hamheung	800	1,000	900	900
Chungjin	750	850	730	800

3. This Year's Crop Situation

[Summary] Although the 150-day battle campaign encouraged more production, the harvest level declined due to: 1) insufficient agricultural supplies such as fertilizer; 2) bad weather conditions such as low temperature, drought, and flood; 3) insufficient labor due to food shortage. Moreover, private small farming lots are confiscated, making it more difficult for ordinary residents to secure food. People are worried and predict that there will be another mass starvation next year.

1) Agricultural Policy

Date	Region	Participants	Meeting Agenda	Policy / Resolution
5/2	S.Hwanghae Provincial Party Plenary Meeting	City/County Party Leading Secretary, Chief Manager of Collective Farms	Securing fertilizer	"Must secure fertilizer and dry manure. Everyone from middle school student and above must submit 20kg of compost without exception"
5/4	S. Pyongan Provincial Party Plenary Meeting	Provincial Party Organization Secretary, Chief of Rural Area Management	Checking readiness for agricultural work, such as fertilizer, fuel, labor, number of working days attended	"Must yield good harvest by all means" - Even misconducts of some individuals can be exempted from punishment provided good harvest
8	Department of Agriculture	Orders to cities and counties	Crops affected by low temperature	"There may be difficulties in corn and rice production due to the weather, but it should not affect the harvest. We must rise for weeding battle and feed ourselves on our own"
8/17	N.Hamgyong Provincial Party Plenary Meeting	City/County Party Leading Secretary, Chief of Administrative Council, Chief of Rural Area Management	Report of drought and its damages - drought from mid July to mid August will affect corn harvest, reducing it by half	Made a resolution to rise for irrigation battle in corn fields

2) The Crop Situation

Month	Region	Crop Situation	Reason
May	Anbyun,	Plowing 70% completed	Lack of laboring bulls and

	Pyongyang, Cheolwon, Hoeyang counties in Kangwon Province		fuel for tractors
	High mountainous areas such as Icheon, Cheolwon, Hoeyang in Kangwon Province	Cold weather damage on May 6 and 7. Corn seeds did not sprout. Crop shifted to beans for Tofu.	Due to low temperature in the spring, seeds either froze in the earth or decayed
	Some areas in North Hamgyong Province	Hail damage. Small damages to corn seedlings, but corn plants in the field and small private farming lots had serious damages	
June	Rural areas nationwide	Heungnam Fertilizer Factory, Fertilizer distribution completed on June 10 -S.Pyongan Province: 13,000 tons -S.Hwanghae Province: 16,000 tons -N.Hamgyong Province: 10,000 tons -Ryanggang Province: 7,000 tons -Jagang Province: 8,500 tons	
July	Rural areas nationwide	Weeding in progress - Not well performed	Hungry and weak farmers sabotaged farm work
	Kaesung, N and S Hwanghae Province, Some parts of Kangwon Province	Torrential rain on July 20 damaged agricultural produce -many fields flooded and seriously damaged -Kaesung City, 30% harvest	

		reduction expected compared to last year	
August	Hoeryong and Buryong counties in N. Hamgyong Province	Corn insects damage - Worms ate up corn grains, affecting harvest in many collective farms	Corn insects increase due to low temperature
	Rural areas nationwide	Some areas are expected to have damages by torrential rain and drought	

4. Market Situation

[Summary] General markets are closed and diverted to Farmers markets. These are attempts of normalizing the distribution system through state-run stores. The market is remarkably suppressed because all residents are forced to do extra labor during 150-day battle, and the control on markets is extremely tightened. Nonetheless, the situation of North Korea is such that people cannot live without market activities anymore, and the markets are continuing, albeit faltering.

Month	Region	Situation	Results
March	Nationwide	Strict movement control in preparation for Supreme People's Council Senior Members Assembly (March 8)	Reduced market activities
April	Chungjin, N. Hamgyong	Ban on sale of items other than agricultural produce in the market	Sellers go door to door, sell in small alleys, or sell & run in order not to pay the sales booth fee or continue selling of banned items
	Hamheung, S. Hamgyong	Sellers occupying sales booth reduced by 40% due to market control and slow business	
	Nationwide	Increased price (esp. imported manufactured items) due to high exchange rate of Chinese Yuan	

May	Nationwide	Ban on food sale in the market Re-opened public lectures on market regulations nationwide -trading in cars, wholesales, illegal market activities of national enterprises -Market trading by young women (younger than 40) -Pyongsung is becoming the national wholesale market -Separate sales office in the market -Stiff warning against sales in small alleys, "sell and run" type of sales.	
June	Pyongsung, S.Pyongan Province	Pyongsung market was ordered to close because it had performed as the national wholesale market	Small scale periodic markets in each district
August	Kanggye, Jagang Province	Sellers to be fined if their luggage is too big (from August 2) City parties hold public lectures on "Reduce the volume of sales luggage"	Sellers seem to be indifferent

5. The Human Rights Situation of the North Korean People

[Summary] The human rights situation has worsened: forced labor performed by residents during 150-day battle with the goal of a strong and prosperous nation by 2012; strict investigations on officials to uproot structural corruption; tightened ideology control and corrections forcing them to write their illegal activities; and increased control over residents to eliminate anti-socialism. However, all the investigations and controls are not very effective because it is impossible for both residents and officials to live without illegal activities and corruption. Meanwhile, harsh controls and punishments are prevalent to set examples, deteriorating the human rights situations of most North Korean people.

1) Investigations on Officials

Month	Region	Subject	Control
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Dec (2008)	Major cities nationwide	All officials	Investigation on private houses: punishment on new construction of private houses or luxurious houses - Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province: 54 officials dismissed - Hoeryung, N.Hamgyong Province: City prosecutor dismissed. Other officials demoted to laborer or farmer status - Pyongsung, S.Pyongan Province: 21 officials dismissed and ousted from the Party - Provincial Party Work Secretary of Jagang Province dismissed for illegal modification of his private house on May 2.
Jan	N.Hamgyong Province	Agricultural workers in N.Hamgyong Province	Punishment for insufficient military rice provision- 9 of Ri Party Secretaries dismissed due to failure to secure their assigned military rice provision
Feb	N.Pyongan Province	Hospital workers under Provincial Health Department	Control on counterfeited medical certificate - Laborers demand counterfeited medical certificate to avoid attendance to their work place - 40 incidents identified during investigation. Actual cases presumed to be more than that
	Nationwide	Officials related to electricity	Electricity Department led Provincial Electricity Cross-Investigation (But Hwanghae and N.Pyongan Provinces performed self-investigation) -Pyongsung, S.Pyongan Province: Provincial Chief Instructor and Electricity Distribution Manager put into public execution(Feb 2) -Hamheung, S.Hamgyong Province: 7 managers of factory and national enterprises sentenced to re-education -Heungnam, S.Hamgyong Province: Technical manager of a steel goods factory sentenced to 9 years and 6 months re-education
March	Bocheon, Ryanggang Province	Police officers	Illicit sale of scrap iron - Expulsion and dismissal of 40 incumbent police officers - They are accused of taking the profit from selling

			scrap iron collected from residents for 600 won per kg
	Hoeryong, N.Hamgyong Province	Ri Party Secretary, Workers in collective farms	1. Collected money for buying agricultural supplies and took it for themselves 2. Selling or using of grain for personal benefit
April	Nationwide	City/County Party Leading Secretary	1. Responsible official at the Central Party dismissed for delayed construction at Mt.Baekdu site 2. Warning of punishment of the responsible official if food and other necessary supplies are not provided to the laborers at Mt.Baekdu Construction Site
May	Nationwide	All Party members	1. Party Central Council ordered "Officials must spell out in repentance every illegal acts they committed within the last three years" 2. Reinforced Public Letter Diary in order to encourage cross surveillance over each other
June	Ryongyang Province	Provincial Party officials	After fleeing of Provincial Youth Alliance 1 Secretary, all related officials were punished - Dismissal of Provincial Party Leading Secretary, Organization Secretary, Propaganda Secretary, Work Secretary, Head of Security Department (June 17)
August	National Border Area	All officials	Central Party Investigative Group - investigate illegal acts of officials in the national border area - comprised of exemplary workers of National Security Agency and students of Keumsung Political College (School of Officials) - 60 officials arrested for illicit trade and protection in Sinuiu, N.Pyongan. Most extreme punishment expected for 20 of them
	Nationwide	All Party, Administrative workers	Ideology investigation project - Anti-socialism investigation in Kangwon Province resulted in 80 officials arrested, 20 sentenced for re-education, some for death penalty. Others dismissed from their position, or their family members expelled to other regions

2) Control over Residents

Month	Region	Authority	Control
Jan	National Border Area	National Security Agency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anti-socialism Investigation Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - investigated number of family members, names, livelihood - in order to control spy activities and crossing the national border 2. Special Lectures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Report on people who defected to South Korea" - "A family member crosses the border, everyone will be expelled" - "Those deported from China will be sentenced to re-education up to 10 years" - "Save food and make careful allocation for many days"
Feb	Nationwide	Safety Bureau of each region	1. Strict movement control in preparation for Supreme People's Council Senior Members Assembly (March 8)
	National Border Area	Safety Bureau of the region	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reinforced control over lodging 2. Radio wave detection team was sent to investigate 3. National Security Command investigation 4. Anyone without a pass to be put into detention center from March 9
	All N.Pyongan Province	National Defense Council, Central Party Investigation	February 10-14. Full-scale control over trading in small alleys
April	National Border Area	27th Office Investigation sent by the Central Party	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate if the TV channel is set to a fixed position 2. Investigate possession of illegal video 3. Sudden withdrawal of 27th office investigators on May 17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - because they interfere with 150-day battle work - people whose TV and computers confiscated do

			not go to work and try every means to get them back, so County Parties appealed to the Central Party
May	Hamheung, S.Hamgyong	Safety Bureau	Cracking down on drugs until Sept 9
June	Eunduk N.Hamgyong Province	Safety Bureau	Cracking down on illegal alcohol until June 2-4
	Nationwide	Safety Bureau, disciplinary teams	Control on women's dress - Cracking down on women who are not wearing skirts - Pants are allowed for women to wear from July, but the color should not be gray or black.
July	National Border Area	National Security Agency	Increased control on households whose family member defected from North Korea - 20 people arrested in N.Hamgyong Province from January to June accused of their relation with South Korea. 15 of them put to life sentence. - Order issued to tighten the surveillance of every family member of defectors who went to South Korea
	Nationwide	National Environment Bureau under People's Safety Agency	Nationwide forest investigation from June 20
	Sariwon, N.Hwanghae Province	City Party, Safety Bureau	Final review of Anti-socialism Investigative Group's work - Comprised of selected 25 from each of Youth Alliance, Workers Alliance, Women's Alliance, Farmers' Alliance - Results of investigation in June revealed 58 drop-outs of organizational life without any job, 27 Party members, 37 Youth Alliance members, 30 farmers who do not go to work. They were sentenced to be

			<p>punished at City Discipline Center</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 women who traded sex for money put to public trial - 60 households without registration identified. 40 of them were fined, the rest 20 were expelled
August	Chungjin, N.Hamgyong Province	National Security Agency	<p>Political lectures against border crossing</p> <p>-"Anyone accused of crossing the national border and/or using cell phones will be severely punished and put to public accusation."</p>

6. The Refugee Situation

[Summary] New refugees who recently crossed the national border are rarely found due to increased control over the national border area. The situation of the refugees already living in China is very grave. However, the possibility of a new refugee outbreak is increasing as living conditions in North Korea continue to deteriorate. For now, it is difficult for anyone to cross the border without third-party assistance due to increased control around the border.

<Examples> Survey on North Korean Refugees Living in China

- 1) Survey period: June 4 ~ 12, 2009 (8 nights and 9 days)
- 2) Survey area: Joyang City and Hurudo City in Yonyung Province, Wangcheong Prefecture in Jilin Province, and Villages near Tumen and Yalu rivers on the Chinese side
- 3) Interviewees: 10 North Korean refugees (9 women, 1 man)
- 4) Time of defection
 - ① Less than a year: two people (a married couple who recently crossed the border)
 - ② 3-5 years: 3 people
 - ③ 6-10 years: 5 people
- 5) Human trafficking involvement
 - ① Interviewee 1 and 2 voluntarily crossed the border

② Interviewee 3-10 were sold at 7,000-18,000 Yuan, but they do not fall in typical human trafficking cases. They intentionally came to China to make money or to get help from their relatives. They have lived in China for more than three years and are settled down quite well.

6) Household income

Most of them have serious difficulties in their livelihood except interviewee 3. Corn farming (annual income 3,000 Yuan-6,000 Yuan), Most of them are very poor (their Han-Chinese husband's earning ability is very low)

7) Housing condition

① Interviewee 3 lives in a clean and big house, with TV and audio set, and a tractor

② Interviewee 6, though poor, lives in a relatively clean house newly built with the compensation her father-in-law received after an accident.

③ Interviewee 8 lives in a newly built brick house after a fire breakout destroyed her old house

④ Others live in a coarse mud hut

8) Human rights violations:

③ Interviewee 5 is frequently beaten by her husband and lives under strict control. Her husband works in a mine but wastes his wages in gambling.

④ Except for interviewee 6, 8, and 9, all others are under strict control of their Han-Chinese family members. There have been many cases of North Korean women in the region running away heading for South Korea. As a result, the Chinese residents became increasingly suspicious of foreigners.

9) Conclusion

① There are many North Korean refugees in China who have lived more than three years there. They are more or less settled down.

② Their children's Hukou (official registration) and education are urgent problem and need immediate attention.

③ The control of Chinese police over North Korean refugees are relatively loosened compared to 2006. Without external alarm, the refugees will be tacitly tolerated and the status quo will remain.

④ There are very few cases of refugees who recently cross the border. However, the refugees trafficked from North Korea and already living in China suffer from harsh life. Most of them want to go to South Korea, but it is difficult without the help of brokers.

⑤ It is impossible to obtain the exact number of North Korean refugees living in China. Compared to 2006 survey in the same region, the total number of North Korean refugees decreased a little because some went to South Korea and others were repatriated to North Korea. New refugees are very rare. The best estimate is that there are around 50,000 North Korean refugees in China. 🌸



Good Friends: Center for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees



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Good Friends– An International NGO for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees

Good Friends provides relief works for international refugees to become all lives' friends, peace movement to fundamentally resolve disputes and conflicts that human beings face, and human rights movement to protect human rights

Good Friends has been providing information on food shortages in North Korea, raising funds for humanitarian assistance, dispatching activists to national border areas between China and DPRK and having them investigate local situations, and publishing reports on food shortages in North Korea.

Now Good Friends USA intends to improve humanitarian and human rights situation of North Korean residents and to inform this situation to the international community by

- 1) collecting information on severe food shortages and bad situations in health, education, and transportation and providing them to other humanitarian aids organizations so that they can support North Korean people effectively.
- 2) investigating current situations of North Korean refugees in China, and providing protections and aid for them.
- 3) assessing human rights violations occurring in North Korea, informing international communities, and requesting that the North Korean government act to improve human rights and living conditions.

Also, Good Friends USA publishes the newsletter North Korea Today (English edition) to inform the international public.

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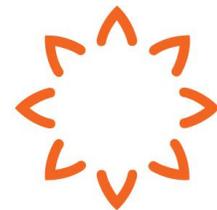
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