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North Korea: Summary executions yet another injustice for beleaguered population

Amnesty International today condemned the North Korean authorities for executing 15 people in public for illegally crossing the border with China. A North Korean official reportedly said that 13 women and two men were shot dead in the town of Onseong in late February “to send a warning to people,” according to South Korean NGO, Good Friends.

Due to chronic food shortages, many North Koreans have little choice but to risk the dangerous journey to China in order to access food and other essential supplies.

“Tens of thousands of North Koreans have been forced to flee their country to avoid starvation,” said Tim Parritt, Amnesty International’s Deputy Programme Director for Asia. “These summary executions compound other human rights violations - including arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and severe restrictions on freedom of speech - faced by some of the most desperate people in the world.”

Amnesty International calls on the North Korean government to end its policy of summary executions, and appeals to North Korea’s neighbours in China and Japan to set a regional example by following the moratorium on the death penalty, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 18 December 2007.