

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 24/001/2007

15 February 2007

UA 37/07

Imminent execution

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF KOREA
(NORTH KOREA)

Two male soldiers (names unknown)

Two North Korean soldiers have reportedly been sentenced to death for helping North Koreans to make unauthorised visits to China. Their execution could be carried out any time after 16 February.

The two men, an officer and a sergeant, were apparently the commander and vice-commander of a border guard post near the town of Hoeryong in North Hamgyong province. They were arrested following an investigation by government investigators into the flow of North Korean nationals crossing the border into China.

The executions of the two men were reportedly scheduled to be carried out in mid-January 2007, but sources suggest that they have been postponed until after the birthday of North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-il, on 16 February, which is a national holiday. It is thought that the two men could be executed in the days after 16 February. It is not known if their execution is likely to take place in public or in secret.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Acute food shortages in North Korea have forced thousands of North Korean nationals to flee across the border into China's north-eastern provinces. Under North Korean law, anyone who illegally crosses "a frontier of the Republic" faces up to three years in a political penal labour colony or "control and management place" (*kwalliso*). This law is in clear breach of Article 12 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which North Korea is a state party, which states that "Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own". It is thought that North Korea's test of its nuclear weapons in October 2006 has also led to an increase in the flow of North Koreans to China.

The Military Security Control Centre of the North Korean People's Army reportedly conducts indoor executions. Sources suggest that suspects face a public trial, and if found guilty, they are executed swiftly thereafter.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that two North Korean border guards are at risk of imminent execution;
- urging the North Korean government to halt the executions, and calling for an immediate moratorium on all executions pending the abolition of the death penalty in North Korean law;
- calling on the North Korean government to ratify the Second Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aimed at the abolition of the death penalty, which is the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment.

APPEALS TO:

Chairman Kim Jong-il
National Defence Commission
Pyongyang
Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Salutation: Dear Chairman

COPIES TO:

Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations in New York
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and to diplomatic representatives of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.