

Beat: Miscellaneous

Food crisis in N. Korea may have killed 10,000 people last year

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USPA News - Thousands of people may have died as a result of severe food shortages in North Korea last year, forcing some people to resort to cannibalism, according to a Japanese news agency which estimates the death toll could be as high as 10,000. Asia Press, which is based in Japan but secretly works with a group of citizen journalists inside North Korea, said dozens of interviews and reports have led the agency to conclude that "considerable numbers of people" died last year as a result of severe food shortages in North Korea's North and South Hwanghae provinces. The findings from the agency were published on Sunday in the UK's The Sunday Times, which said the death toll in the two provinces alone is believed to be more than 10,000. It is not possible to confirm the figures or determine the extent of the food shortages as North Korea bans journalists and rarely comments on negative events in the country.

The food shortages, described by Asia Press as a "hidden famine," are believed to have forced some people to resort to cannibalism. One man was said to have been arrested after digging up the grave of his grandchild and eating the remains, while another man was executed after killing 11 people and selling their meat as pork. In South Hwanghae province, according to one informant, a man was executed by firing squad after killing his two children and trying to eat them. "While his wife was away on business he killed his eldest daughter and because his son saw what he had done, he killed his son as well," the informant was quoted as saying by The Sunday Times. "When the wife came home he offered her food, saying 'We have meat.'" While it is impossible to verify the information, it is well-known that cannibalism also took place in the early 1990s when North Korea was hit by a disastrous famine that claimed as many as two million lives. A 2004 report from Amnesty International documented actions of the North Korean government that aggravated the effects of the continuing food crisis, including denying its existence for many years. The latest food crisis took place as Kim Jong-un succeeded his father Kim Jong-il as the country's Supreme Leader. Asia Press said officials confiscated food from farm collectives in North and South Hwanghae in early 2012 to reward the privileged residents of the capital Pyongyang for their loyalty to the Kim dynasty. The agency told The Sunday Times that the transfer of power was the "top priority" of the North Korean government, and the severe food shortages may in part have been the result of food being taken for celebrations and extra rations in Pyongyang. But natural disasters such as a drought and torrential rains also added to the severity of the crisis. "One family was completely wiped out, everyone died of starvation, while another family gave up hope of living and killed themselves," one reporter was quoted as saying by the British newspaper. "The farming villages I visited from May to June were in such a tragic state that I had to cover my eyes." Asia Press said the severe food shortages had passed their peak by the second half of the year, when a United Nations (UN) team visited the country and concluded that household food security had shown "improvement" from 2011 due to timely food imports and a more stable food assistance pipeline. But the inspection was supervised by the government and the reporters said it was likely the team was shown no evidence of the crisis.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-460/food-crisis-in-n-korea-may-have-killed-10000-people-last-year.html>

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