

# MAPPING NORTH KOREA'S EXECUTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

13 Years of the Death Penalty  
Under Kim Jong-un

2  
0  
2  
6



TRANSITIONAL  
JUSTICE  
WORKING GROUP

# **MAPPING NORTH KOREA'S EXECUTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

13 Years of the Death Penalty Under Kim Jong-un

2026



# **MAPPING NORTH KOREA'S EXECUTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

13 Years of the Death Penalty Under Kim Jong-un

2026



**TRANSITIONAL  
JUSTICE  
WORKING GROUP**

## **ABOUT TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE WORKING GROUP (TJWG)**

Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG) is a human rights documentation and advocacy NGO established in Seoul in 2014 that aims to develop best practices to address mass human rights violations and to realize reparation and judicial accountability through a victim-centered approach in societies that are making a transition from or have yet to make a transition from armed conflict or dictatorship. TJWG also cooperates and shares experience with organizations and individuals who lead work in human rights documentation and accountability for mass atrocities. TJWG is a member organization of the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN), the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC).

## **Authors and Contributors**

Hubert Younghwan Lee  
Minjong Ryu  
Seonghwi Cho  
Ethan Hee-Seok Shin  
Suyoung Yang  
Soogon Park  
April Song-Ah Park  
Seungju Lee  
Eojin Park

## **Cover Artwork**

Chun Hyuk Kang | North Korean escapee artist

## **Recommended citation**

Transitional Justice Working Group, *Mapping North Korea's Executions Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic: 13 Years of the Death Penalty Under Kim Jong-un* (Seoul: Transitional Justice Working Group, 2026).

## **Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG)**

Seoul, Republic of Korea  
Website: [en.tjwg.org](http://en.tjwg.org) (English) / [www.tjwg.org](http://www.tjwg.org) (Korean)  
Email: [info@tjwg.org](mailto:info@tjwg.org)  
Tel: +82-2-722-1162  
Fax: +82-2-722-1163

ISBN 979-11-989878-5-3

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This project is made possible through funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). This report is endorsed by the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP). The research contained in this report would not have been possible without advice, assistance, and technical support from a number of individuals.

### **External Review**

Kyu-chang Lee | Senior Research Fellow, Korea Institute for National Unification

Ji-Won Jeong | Head of Research, DailyNK's AND Center

Sang Yong Lee | Director, DailyNK's AND Center

Sarah A. Son | Senior Lecturer in Korean Studies, University of Sheffield

Dan Bielefeld | Advisor, NetFreedom Pioneers

### **Report Design**

Eui Hwan Cho

Sook Yi Oh

### **Graphic Design**

Heejoon Yang

Eunji Jang

**TJWG is indebted to numerous free and open-source software and data projects. For this mapping project, in particular, TJWG would like to thank:**

QGIS and OSGEO

PostGIS and PostgreSQL

OpenStreetMap

Global Administrative Areas (GADM)

---

# CONTENTS

## **Introduction** 08

## **Key Findings** 12

## **Data Overview** 18

TJWG's interview data 18

Data from five North Korea-focused news outlets 23

Data integration through standardization 25

## **North Korea's Response to International Criticism of Public Executions and Excessive Use of the Death Penalty** 28

Condemnations in the 24 consecutive annual UN DPRK human rights resolutions 28

Admission and downplaying of public executions in Universal Periodic Reviews 29

## **Executions during Kim Jong-un's 13-Year Rule** 41

Periods of frequent executions 41

Nationwide distribution of documented executions 42

Execution types and sites 45

Execution methods 72

Capital offenses 75

## **Executions Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic** 92

Increase in documented executions and death sentences 99

Shifting priorities in capital offenses 99

Nationwide expansion of documented executions 100

## **Going Forward** 104

## **Appendix** 117

Details of 144 documented executions and death sentences by capital offense before and after the COVID-19 border closure: year, number of condemned persons, execution type, method, and locality

---

# TABLES, CHARTS, MAPS, AND SATELLITE IMAGES

---

<b>Tables</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Gender and age of 880 interviewees 18</li><li>2 UN member states that discussed or made recommendations regarding public executions and the death penalty in the DPRK UPRs 30</li><li>3 The annual number of documented executions and death sentences under Kim Jong-un's rule 42</li><li>4 List of 46 execution sites and coordinates for 40 sites 68</li><li>5 Methods of 111 executions 73</li><li>6 Classification of reported capital offenses in North Korea using the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS) 76</li><li>7 144 documented executions and death sentences by capital offense before and after the COVID-19 border closure: execution type and number of condemned persons 93</li></ol>
<b>Charts</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 880 interviewees' year of final escape from North Korea 21</li><li>2 Number of cases documented from TJWG's interviews and five North Korea-focused news outlets' reporting 26</li><li>3 Types of 129 executions 47</li><li>4 16 reported capital offenses 78</li><li>5 Comparison of reported capital offenses before and after the COVID-19 border closure (Adjusted to equal periods of 4 years and 10.6 months) 99</li></ol>
<b>Maps</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Distribution of 880 interviewees' primary residence in North Korea 19</li><li>2 Distribution of primary residence of 265 interviewees who had lived under Kim Jong-un's rule 22</li><li>3 The nationwide distribution of 144 documented executions and death sentences under Kim Jong-un's rule 44</li><li>4 46 execution sites by execution type 67</li><li>5 Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ① Acts violating controls on freedom of expression concerning foreign culture, religion, and "superstition" 80</li><li>6 Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ② Criminal acts not elsewhere classified in the ICCS, mostly political offenses, such as violating Kim Jong-un's orders and policies and criticizing Kim Jong-un, the Party, and the Ministry of State Security 82</li><li>7 Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ③ Intentional homicide 84</li><li>8 Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ④ Drug trafficking and use 86</li><li>9 Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ⑤ Acts violating COVID-19 and foot-and-mouth disease control measures 88</li><li>10 Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ⑥ Embezzling and illegally amassing wealth 90</li><li>11 Comparison of localities before and after the COVID-19 border closure (Adjusted to equal periods of 4 years and 10.6 months) 101</li></ol>
<b>Satellite Images</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Hyesan (Ryonbong) Airfield in Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 51</li><li>2 Susong Riverside in Sunam District, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province 51</li><li>3 Magnetite mine in Pyoksong County, South Hwanghae Province 53</li><li>4 Rice paddy in Taesong Neighborhood, Sariwon City, North Hwanghae Province 53</li><li>5 Firing range of the Kang Kon Military Academy, Sunan District, Pyongyang 55</li><li>6 Ministry of State Security Bureau 10 (Radio Frequency Surveillance Bureau's Detection Department's outdoor field, Ryongsong District, Pyongyang 55</li><li>7 The province-level Social Security Bureau building in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province 59</li><li>8 The city-level State Security Department in Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province 59</li><li>9 The locations of summary executions of escapees at <i>Kwanliso</i> No. 25 in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province (2012 and 2016) 63</li><li>10 12 execution sites within Pyongyang and in the adjacent areas by execution type 72</li></ol>

---

## Introduction

14 years have passed since Kim Jong-un's rise to power in December 2011 and 12 years since the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (COI DPRK) urged accountability for North Korea's leadership in February 2014. The COI DPRK concluded that the systematic, widespread, and gross human rights violations occurring in North Korea amount to crimes against humanity. In particular, the COI DPRK made clear that public executions and enforced disappearances are the core means supporting North Korea's totalitarian system based on a reign of terror:

“The keystone to the political system is the vast political and security apparatus that strategically uses surveillance, coercion, fear and punishment to preclude the expression of any dissent. Public executions and enforced disappearance to political prison camps serve as the ultimate means to terrorize the population into submission.”<sup>1</sup>

Following the 2014 COI DPRK report, TJWG began documenting and mapping North Korea's mass atrocities in 2015.<sup>2</sup> This report is TJWG's fourth mapping report on executions in North Korea, following previous reports published in

---

<sup>1</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Twenty-fifth session, “Report of the detailed findings of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,” A/HRC/25/CRP.1, February 7, 2014, para. 1214, <https://undocs.org/a/hrc/25/crp.1>

<sup>2</sup> For an article describing the research methodology to identify the people, places and institutions associated with human rights violations by pairing remote sensing (RS) technologies with testimonial data, see Sarah A. Son, “Watching North Korea from the sky: Remote sensing and documenting human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,” *Political Geography* 92 (January 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102525>

2017, 2019, and 2021.<sup>3</sup> Compared to the 2021 report entitled *Mapping Killings Under Kim Jong-un*, this report presents and visualizes more information on executions under Kim Jong-un's rule, with a particular focus on analyzing the change that occurred after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, TJWG's mapping project on North Korea's executions faced an obstacle when the outbreak of COVID-19 in China prompted North Korea to completely close its borders. Over the following five years, the number of North Koreans escaping to China declined drastically, along with the number of escapees arriving in South Korea, most of whom had escaped from North Korea to China before January 2020. Even after COVID-19 became endemic in 2023 and the need for strict border control subsided, North Korean authorities continued to keep the borders closed. Consequently, opportunities to interview North Korean escapees about the recent executions in North Korea have been diminished for a prolonged period of time.<sup>4</sup>

To overcome this challenge, TJWG decided to maintain its existing documentation methodology while expanding the scope of information collection, integrating data from its own documentation with other sources. As part of this effort, TJWG signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DailyNK in

---

<sup>3</sup> *Mapping Crimes Against Humanity in North Korea: Mass Graves, Killing Sites and Documentary Evidence* (2017), *Mapping the fate of the Dead* (2019), and *Mapping Killings Under Kim Jong-un: North Korea's Response to International Pressure* (2021). On North Korea's enforced disappearances, TJWG published a fact-finding report entitled *Existing "Nowhere": Looking into North Korea's Crime of Enforced Disappearance* in October 2024 and an advocacy report entitled *Documentation and Accountability for North Korea's Crime of Enforced Disappearance: Stock-taking and Recommendations* in April 2025. TJWG's reports are available at <https://en.tjwg.org/mapping-project-north-korea>

<sup>4</sup> The number of North Korean escapees who entered South Korea in 2019 was 1,047, but the number declined sharply to 229 in 2020, 63 in 2021, and 67 in 2022. The number bounced back slightly to 196 in 2023 and 236 in 2024, but the number in 2025 decreased to 223. Ministry of Unification, "Settlement Support for North Korean Defectors," [https://unikorea.go.kr/web/unikorea/contents/status\\_lately](https://unikorea.go.kr/web/unikorea/contents/status_lately) (accessed on March 4, 2026). Most North Korean escapees who entered South Korea since 2020 had either escaped from North Korea to China before North Korea's border lockdown or had stayed in China, Russia, and other countries as personnel dispatched overseas before escaping to South Korea. North Korean personnel dispatched overseas under the guise of students studying abroad are known to work mostly in the construction and IT industries in the case of men, and in the service industries like restaurants or seafood processing industry in the case of women. Some North Korean escapees have succeeded in escaping directly from North Korea to South Korea by crossing the inter-Korean maritime boundary or the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) since 2020. Unusually, for two years, men outnumbered women among the North Korean escapees who entered South Korea in 2021 (40 men and 23 women) and in 2022 (35 men and 32 women) for the first time in 20 years since 2001 (294 men and 289 women).

April 2021 to promote freedom of information for the North Korean people and to investigate human rights violations. Since then, the organizations have been cooperating not only to improve the North Korean people's access to external information but also to share materials and information on grave human rights violations, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.<sup>5</sup>

This report contains three key new features. The first is the expansion and integration of data. A major aspect of this expansion involved reviewing reporting by North Korea-focused news outlets since 2010 to generate a new dataset. The information TJWG has gathered through in-person interviews with North Korean escapees is referred to as the “closed-source dataset,” while data from other organizations, such as news reports, is referred to as the “open-source dataset.” The research team standardized the data attributes to ensure compatibility between the two datasets with a view to integrated analysis.

Second, this report places emphasis on observing and analyzing annual trends to deduce their causes and to suggest their implications.

Third, this report adopts an internationally used crime-classification system for categorizing and analyzing the incidents documented. This allows observation of patterns around particular crimes and the implementation of the death penalty or executions by the Kim Jong-un regime for the said crimes.

This report begins with the key findings, followed by an overview of the North Korean escapees who participated in the investigation and the data collected through reports from North Korea-focused news outlets. It then discusses the issues raised in the international criticism of North Korea's public executions, excessive use of the death penalty, and the regime's response. Central to this report is an analysis of executions and death sentences under Kim Jong-un's rule, specifically examining annual trends, nationwide distribution, execution

---

<sup>5</sup> Mun Dong Hui, “DailyNK and Transitional Justice Working Group sign agreement to enhance cooperation,” *DailyNK*, April 12, 2021, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/daily-nk-transitional-justice-working-group-sign-agreement-enhance-cooperation>

types, execution sites, execution methods, and capital offenses. Furthermore, the report compares patterns of executions before and after the COVID-19 pandemic before concluding with a roadmap for future research and reports.

---

## Key Findings

### Notes

This report examines cases of executions carried out by state organs in North Korea, as well as cases in which death sentences were imposed but remains unknown whether they were carried out. For the purpose of its analysis, TJWG uses the term “death sentencing” instead of “death sentence” to include a death sentencing where multiple individuals were sentenced to death (see p.41).

The information in this report should be viewed as an ongoing development rather than a definitive account. All figures presented herein are considered tentative or minimum figures. Cases that can be identified and documented from outside North Korea depict a fraction of the real scale.

North Korea renamed the Ministry of State Security as the “National Intelligence Bureau” in March 2026 and signaled that the Ministry of Social Security may also be renamed. In September 2025, it was confirmed that the Reconnaissance General Bureau had been renamed the “Reconnaissance Intelligence General Bureau.” However, the cases examined in this report were conducted by the relevant bodies under their former names, and TJWG retains the former institutional and position titles for accurate documentation.

Since 2015, TJWG’s Mapping Project for North Korea’s executions has:

- Interviewed 880 North Korean escapees who lived in 87 cities/counties across North Korea.
- Documented 1,008 statements concerning executions and death sentences since 1956, covering three generations of rule by Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un.
- Identified 44 unique cases of executions and death sentences that occurred after Kim Jong-un’s rise to power on December 17, 2011, from statements by 265 escapees from 51 cities/counties in North Korea (closed-source dataset).
- Identified 101 unique cases of executions and death sentences from the news reports of five North Korea-focused news outlets with sources

inside North Korea (open-source dataset).

- Identified one overlapping case between the two datasets and analyzed the overall patterns under Kim Jong-un's rule (until December 16, 2024) based on the 144 documented executions and death sentencings.

According to analysis of the 144 documented executions and death sentencings during the Kim Jong-un period (December 17, 2011 – December 16, 2024):

- In 136 executions, at least 358 individuals were executed. The average number of persons executed per execution was 2.6.
- During the same time period, there were 8 death sentencings in which 9 individuals were sentenced to death but were taken away without being executed on the spot in public show trials.
- The highest number of documented executions, including mass executions, were reported as having occurred in 2020 with 24 executions. The highest number of executed persons was reported in 2013 with 80 individuals.
- The annual number of documented executions exceeded 10 cases from 2012 to 2014 and from 2020 to 2021. The first three years coincided with the start of Kim Jong-un's inheritance of power and the latter two years with the beginning of the measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. During these five years, there were 87 executions, representing 64.0% of the 136 cases documented over 13 years, while the 268 individuals executed accounted for 74.9% of the 358 total.

For the 111 executions with known localities:

- They were documented in 34 of North Korea's 167 cities/counties (20.4%).
- The top five localities by number of documented executions were:
  1. Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province with 23 executions (20.7%)
  2. Pyongyang (province-level city) with 22 executions (19.8%)
  3. Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province with 17 executions (15.3%)
  4. Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province with 5 executions (4.5%)
  4. Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province with 5 executions (4.5%).
- In terms of key regions:
  1. The northern cities/counties adjacent to the Chinese and Russian

- border had 42 executions (37.8%)
- 2. Inland cities/counties had 34 executions (30.6%)
- 3. Cities/counties adjacent to the East Sea had 27 executions (24.3%)
- 4. Cities/counties adjacent to the West Sea had 6 executions (5.4%)
- 5. Southern cities/counties adjacent to the military demarcation line with South Korea had 2 executions (1.8%).

129 executions can be categorized into the following types:

- Type 1-A (public executions where the masses are mobilized to observe): 66 executions (51.1%)
- Type 1-B (public executions where specific groups are targeted to observe): 28 executions (21.7%)
- Type 2 (non-public executions): 29 executions (22.5%)
- Type 3 (extrajudicial summary executions carried out without even a perfunctory trial): 6 executions (4.7%)
- The highest number of public executions was carried out in 2013 at the start of Kim Jong-un's rise to power and the most non-public executions occurred in 2020 when the measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic began to be implemented.

According to the analysis of executions where both the type and the location were documented:

- Type 1-A executions (public executions where the masses are mobilized) were documented at 24 sites in 17 cities/counties in open grounds, such as defunct airfields, riversides, open-storage yards for mine waste, and farmland.
- Type 1-B executions (public executions where specific groups are targeted for mobilization) were documented at 13 sites in five cities/counties, mostly in Pyongyang and its vicinity and primarily at universities run as the educational institutions for senior cadres by the military, intelligence, public security sectors' special organs, and military firing ranges.
- Type 2 executions (non-public executions) were documented at 8 sites or competent organs in 8 cities/counties, primarily at locations where the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Social Security could control information leaks.
- For the sites of Type 3 executions (extrajudicial summary executions

carried out without even a perfunctory trial), geolocation information has been documented for the summary executions of inmates who attempted to escape from *Kwanliso* (political prison camp) No. 25 in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province in 2012 and 2016. There is information indicating that, in 2023, inmates at a *kwanliso* were executed for resisting punishment.

- TJWG created a map displaying the nationwide distribution of the 46 execution sites with a list of coordinates for 40 of them.
- A map displaying 12 execution sites in Pyongyang and its vicinity shows that 5 of the 10 execution sites within the city limits of Pyongyang were concentrated within a 10-kilometer radius north of Kim Jong-un's office.

Of the 111 executions where the execution methods were known:

- Executions using firearms such as rifles and machine guns were typical with 107 cases (96.4%) followed by two cases of executions each by hanging and by the use of blunt instruments.
- The two hangings, which occurred in Musan County, North Hamgyong Province in 2012 and in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province in 2014, were Type 1-A (public executions where the masses are mobilized to observe).
- The two blunt-force executions, one using an iron mace in 2012 and the other a hammer in 2020, were both Type 2 (non-public executions) and were reported by North Korea-focused media.

For the 144 documented executions and death sentencings by capital offense:

- The top 6 capital offenses with 10 or more documented executions or death sentencings under Kim Jong-un's rule were:
  1. Violating controls on freedom of expression such as the use, introduction or dissemination of foreign culture and information—including South Korean movies, dramas, and music—as well as religious and “superstitious” acts with 29 cases (20.1%)
  2. Criminal acts not elsewhere classified, mostly political offenses, such as violating Kim Jong-un's orders and policies; criticizing Kim Jong-un, the Party and the Ministry of State Security; forming a private group; slaughtering and consuming cattle; eating human flesh, with

- 26 cases (18.1%)
- 3. Intentional homicide with 19 cases (13.2%)
- 4. Drug trafficking and use with 16 cases (11.1%)
- 5. Violating COVID-19 and foot-and-mouth disease control measures with 12 cases (8.3%)
- 6. Embezzling and illegally amassing wealth with 11 cases (7.6%).
- TJWG created a map displaying the nationwide distribution of executions for each of the top 6 capital offenses.

To analyze the changes in the patterns of documented executions in North Korea before and after the COVID-19 pandemic:

- TJWG created Table 7 and the Appendix categorizing 144 documented executions and death sentences by capital offense, year, number of condemned persons, execution type, method, and locality. There were 79 cases before and 65 cases after North Korea's COVID-19 border closure on January 30, 2020.
- Under the identical time spans of 1,783 days each, TJWG found 30 cases before and 65 cases after the COVID-19 border closure on January 30, 2020 (Chart 5).
- The number of documented executions and death sentences in the equal time periods before and after the border closure increased by 116.7% (from 30 to 65), while the number of condemned persons increased by 247.7% (from 44 to 153).
- Prior to the border closure, murder was the most frequently cited capital offense (9 cases). Following the border closure, the focus shifted toward offenses involving foreign culture and information, such as South Korean movies, dramas, and music, as well as religion and "superstitions," becoming the most common charges (14 cases).
- Following the border closure, death penalty cases for murder declined by 44.4% (from 9 to 5), while the number of condemned persons decreased by 10.0% (from 10 to 9). In contrast, offenses related to foreign culture, religion, and "superstition" experienced the largest growth. These cases increased by 250% (from 4 to 14), while the number of condemned persons increased by 442.9% (from 7 to 38).
- Executions and death sentences for political prisoners, such as those who violated Kim Jong-un's orders or criticized Kim Jong-un, the

Party, and the Ministry of State Security, surged following the border closure. Cases increased by 225% (from 4 to 13), while the number of condemned persons grew by 600% (from 4 to 28). This sharp escalation suggests that the regime may be responding to growing internal dissatisfaction or intensifying state violence to suppress political discontent.

- There were 12 executions (28 persons) for violations of movement control measures, including the COVID-19 restrictions, making it the third most common capital offense after the border closure.
- These findings suggest that following the border closure, North Korea's death penalty priorities focused on enforcing ideological control and political dominance.
- The number of localities with documented executions expanded from 8 (province-level city Pyongyang and 7 other cities/counties) to 19 localities (province-level cities, namely Pyongyang, Nampo, Kaesong, and Rason, along with 15 other cities/counties) in the equal time periods before and after the border closure. At the province level, this expanded from Pyongyang and 3 northeastern provinces (North and South Hamgyong Provinces and Ryanggang Province) to all 4 province-level cities (Pyongyang, Nampo, Kaesong, and Rason) and 8 provinces.

---

## Data Overview

### TJWG’s interview data

The mapping interviews are conducted with the participation of North Korean escapees who have arrived in South Korea. Interviewees either volunteer to participate or are recommended by previous interviewees using snowball sampling or convenience sampling.

During the interviews, information on executions, trials, related institutions, and individuals are documented and the coordinates for future field investigations are acquired by markings on satellite photos. The interviews focus on three main types of locations: ① sites where the North Korean regime is known or presumed to have carried out public or non-public executions, ② sites where bodies were disposed of or discovered, and ③ sites of state institutions that are likely to hold documentary evidence related to these events.

From April 2015 to December 2024, over a span of 9 years and 9 months, a total of 880 North Korean escapees participated in this project. Their gender and age distribution at the time of the TJWG interviews is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 | Gender and age of 880 interviewees

		Total number of interviewees (880)	Number of interviewees from the Kim Jong-un era (265)
Gender	Female	683	182
	Male	195	83
Age	10s	10	8
	20s	81	60
	30s	82	28
	40s	164	50
	50s	218	59
	60s	169	36
	70s	139	21
	80s	11	2
	Undisclosed	4	1
Withdrawn		2	-



Two of the 880 interviewees' records were deleted upon requests, and five interviewees did not disclose their primary residence in North Korea. Excluding these 7 individuals, the primary residence of the remaining 873 interviewees encompassed 87 of 167 cities and counties in North Korea (52.1%), as shown in Map 1.<sup>7</sup>

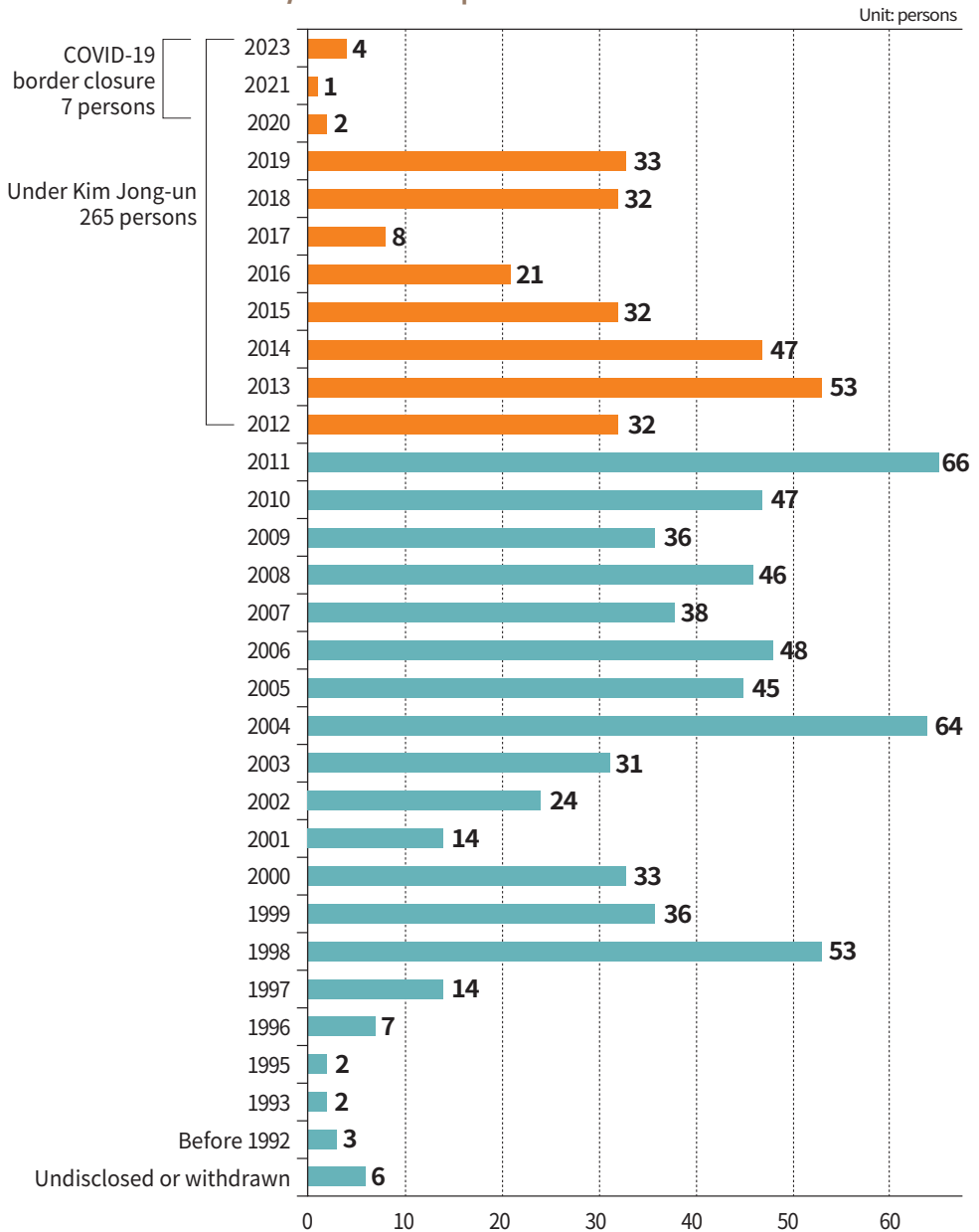
Province-level administrative unit	Number of interviewees	Breakdown by city/county
North Hamgyong Province	431	Hoeryong City (103), Chongjin City (86), Onsong County (86), Musan County (74), Kyonghung County (16), Kimchaek City (15), Kyongwon County (14), Kyongsong County (10), Kilju County (9), Myongchon County (5), Yonsa County (5), Puryong County (3), Hwaedae County (2), Orang County (2), Myonggan County (1)
South Hamgyong Province	68	Hamhung City (23), Tanchon City (10), Kumya County (6), Sinpo City (4), Chongpyong County (4), Hamju County (4), Hongwon County (4), Pukchong County (3), Kowon County (2), Sinhung County (2), Yodok County (2), Hochon County (1), Riwon County (1), Toksong County (1), Yonggwang County (1)
Rygang Province	215	Hyesan City (177), Kimjongsuk County (13), Pochon County (8), Unhung County (4), Kapsan County (3), Taehongdan County (3), Samjiyon City (2), Paekam County (2), Pungso County (2), Kimhyongjik County (1)
Chagang Province	7	Kanggye City (2), Manpo City (2), Chunggang County (1), Hyangsan County (1), Jonchon County (1)
North Pyongan Province	13	Sinuiju City (4), Sakju County (3), Pakchon County (2), Kujang County (1), Nyongbyon County (1), Sonchon County (1), Yumju County (1)
South Pyongan Province	37	Pyongsong City (8), Sunchon City (8), Pukchang County (6), Sinyang County (4), Tokchon City (3), Anju City (2), Mundok County (2), Maengsan County (1), Sukchon County (1), Taedong County (1), Unsan County (1)
Kangwon Province	16	Wonsan City (6), Chonnae County (3), Tongchon County (2), Munchon City (1), Hoeyang County (1), Ichon County (1), Kosong County (1), Pyonggang County (1)
North Hwanghae Province	17	Sariwon City (9), Songrim City (2), Hwangju County (2), Sohung County (2), Pongsan County (1), Pyongsan County (1)
South Hwanghae Province	11	Haeju City (4), Pyoksong County (2), Ryongyon County (2), Paechon County (1), Sinchon County (1), Yonan County (1)
Pyongyang	39	
Nampo	12	
Kaesong	2	
Rason	5	
Miscellaneous	7	Undisclosed (5), Withdrawn (2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>880</b>	

**Notes** The administrative names in this report used the North Korean naming convention, which does not apply the initial-sound rule (*dueum beopchik*), without modification. See the names in the standard language used in South Korea, which applies the initial-sound rule in parentheses: Rygang Province (Yanggang Province), Riwon County (Iwon County), Nyongbyon County (Yongbyon County), Ryongyon County (Yongyon County), and Rason (Nason).

<sup>7</sup> For the number of cities and counties under North Korea's administrative division, the most up-to-date information (December 23, 2025) provided by the Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS) was referenced. [https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=101&tblId=DT\\_1ZGA15A&conn\\_path=l2](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=101&tblId=DT_1ZGA15A&conn_path=l2) (accessed on March 13, 2026). Pyongyang Directly-Governed City, Rason Special City, Nampo Special City, and Kaesong Special City are province-level administrative units larger than ordinary cities, but they were treated as cities.

Of the 880 interviewees, 265 (30.1%) made the final escape from North Korea during the Kim Jong-un era. 7 interviewees had escaped from North Korea after the government closed the border in response to COVID-19 on January 30, 2020; the interviewee who escaped most recently from North Korea left the country in October 2023.

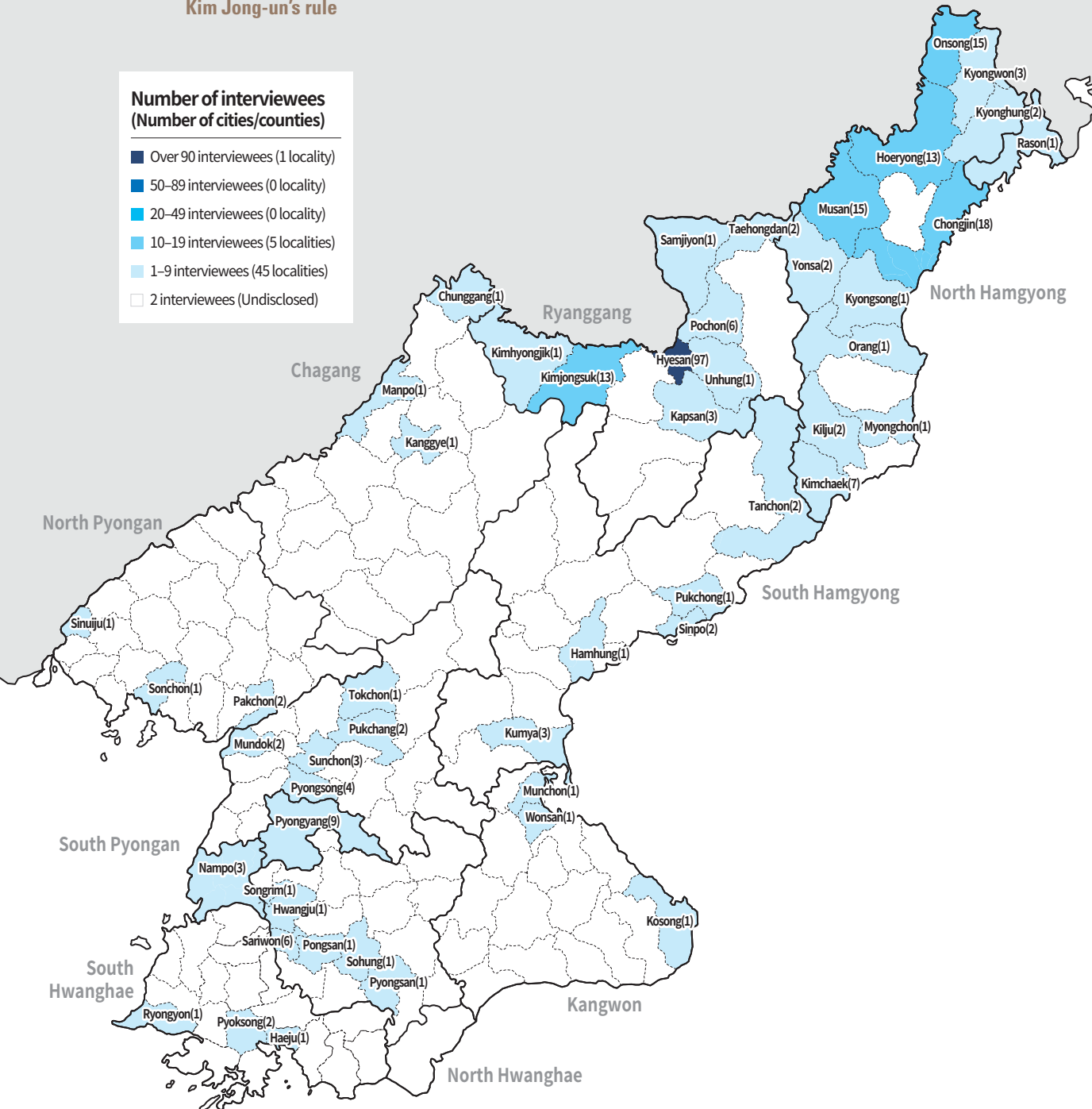
Chart 1 | 880 interviewees' year of final escape from North Korea



Map 2 | Distribution of primary residence of 265 interviewees who had lived under Kim Jong-un's rule

**Number of interviewees  
(Number of cities/counties)**

- Over 90 interviewees (1 locality)
- 50–89 interviewees (0 locality)
- 20–49 interviewees (0 locality)
- 10–19 interviewees (5 localities)
- 1–9 interviewees (45 localities)
- 2 interviewees (Undisclosed)



As shown in Map 2, the primary residence of 265 interviewees who had lived under Kim Jong-un’s rule covered 51 of 167 cities and counties in North Korea (30.5%). Many were from Ryanggang Province and North Hamgyong Province bordering China.

Province-level administrative unit	Number of interviewees	Breakdown by city/county
North Hamgyong Province	80	Chongjin City (18), Musan County (15), Onsong County (15), Hoeryong City (13), Kimchaek City (7), Kyongwon County (3), Kilju County (2), Kyonghung County (2), Yonsa County (2), Kyongsong County (1), Myongchon County (1), Orang County (1)
South Hamgyong Province	9	Kumya County (3), Sinpo City (2), Tanchon City (2), Hamhung City (1), Pukchong County (1)
Ryanggang Province	124	Hyesan City (97), Kimjongsuk County (13), Pochon County (6), Kapsan County (3), Taehongdan County (2), Samjiyon City (1), Kimhyongjik County (1), Unhung County (1)
Chagang Province	3	Kanggye City (1), Manpo City (1), Chunggang County (1)
North Pyongan Province	4	Pakchon County (2), Sinuiju City (1), Sonchon County (1)
South Pyongan Province	12	Pyongsong City (4), Sunchon City (3), Mundok County (2), Pukchang County (2), Tokchon City (1)
Kangwon Province	3	Munchon City (1), Wonsan City (1), Kosong County (1)
North Hwanghae Province	11	Sariwon City (6), Songrim City (1), Hwangju County (1), Pongsan County (1), Pyongsan County (1), Sohung County (1)
South Hwanghae Province	4	Pyoksong County (2), Haeju City (1), Ryongyon County (1)
Pyongyang	9	
Nampo	3	
Kaesong	0	
Rason	1	
Miscellaneous	2	Undisclosed (2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	

## Data from five North Korea-focused news outlets

Since 2021, TJWG has been collecting and categorizing information from other sources. One of these sources is news reports from North Korea-focused news outlets that have sources inside North Korea. We have generated a dataset using news reports from five such outlets: DailyNK (South Korea), Radio Free Asia

(RFA) (United States), Asia Press (Japan), Freedom Chosun and NK Times (both founded by North Korean escapees who have resettled in South Korea).<sup>8</sup>

The selected news reports fall under three categories: ① cases in which death sentences were carried out, ② cases in which the North Korean authorities issued death sentences in public show trials or public criticism sessions, but did not carry out the execution on the spot, and ③ cases in which the authorities did not publicly specify the type of punishment, but were reported as highly likely to have resulted in executions. Reports that did not originate from inside North Korea—such as those citing “according to South Korean government officials”—or did not specify the location of the incident within North Korea were excluded.

TJWG extracted news reports under these three categories where executions or death sentences occurred between December 17, 2011, the date of Kim Jong-il’s death and Kim Jong-un’s immediate succession as the Supreme Leader, and December 16, 2024.

For each extracted report, information was broken down into 32 attributes, including the date of the incident, location, alleged crime, number of people punished, and source of information. It took approximately one year to conduct multiple close readings of each report, which were in both written and spoken forms, to extract relevant attribute information for review, standardization, and categorization.

Even when reports mentioned names of places, they rarely included geographic coordinates. TJWG was able to get coordinates to many of these locations.

---

<sup>8</sup> These news outlets were founded or began North Korea-focused reporting as follows:

**DailyNK** was founded as an online news service in December 2004 and reports on North Korean news through sources based in various regions of North Korea.

**Radio Free Asia (RFA)** is an international broadcaster established in 1996 with funding from the U.S. Congress, based on the United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994. It began with the Chinese-language service in September 1996, followed by the Vietnamese-language service in February 1997, and the Korean-language service in March 1997.

**Asia Press** was founded in October 1987 and began reporting on North Korea in 1993. Since 2002, it has had undercover reporters operating inside North Korea.

**Freedom Chosun** was founded in January 2023 and began reporting on North Korean internal news.

**NK Times** was founded in February 2023 and began its coverage of North Korean internal news in April 2023.

When a specific site or building in North Korea was mentioned in news reports, TJWG used its geospatial database of various institutions and facilities across North Korea, developed over the past decade, to locate these references. For a few locations where TJWG did not have the coordinates, TJWG obtained the information with the cooperation of DailyNK. When only administrative names, such as city, county, district, neighborhood, or village, were mentioned without a specific name of location, the central coordinates for the respective administrative units were temporarily assigned. By geolocating incident data, it became possible to observe capital offenses across the country by region, including border, coastal, inland, urban, and rural areas, or concentrated areas of military units, factories, and enterprises.

It also took a considerable amount of time to determine whether multiple news outlets had reported on the same incident and to document the similarities and differences among those reports. When different outlets had sources in the same region of North Korea, it was useful for cross-checking. When they had sources in different regions, it was helpful for comparing situations across multiple regions and examining the broader context.

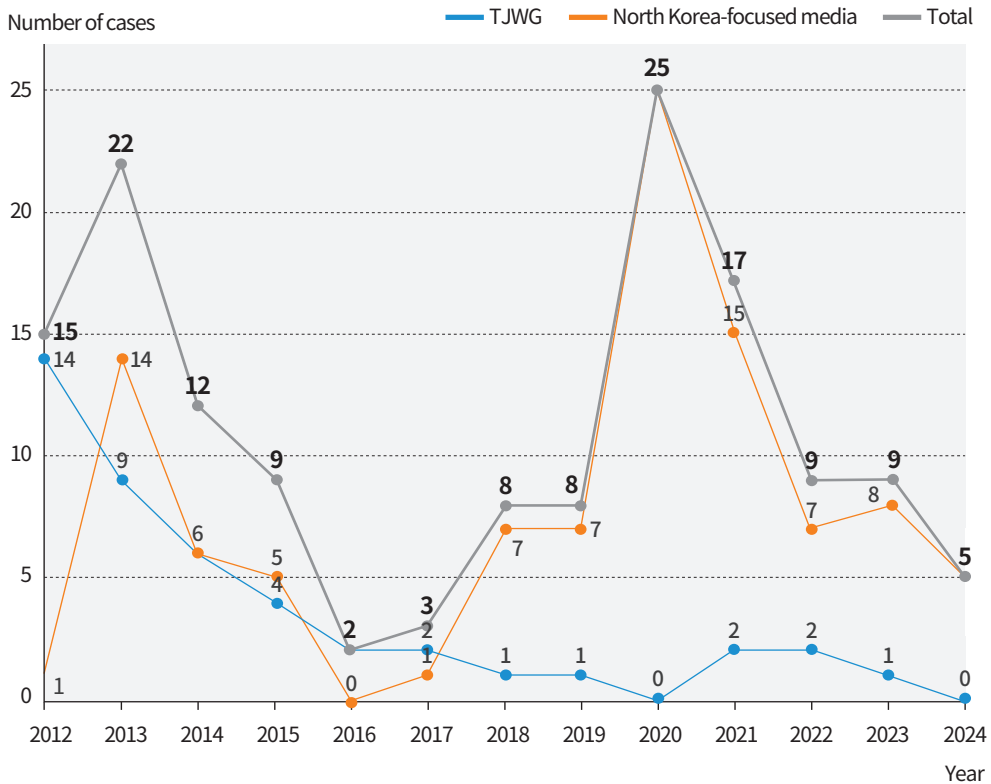
### **Data integration through standardization**

From the interviews with 880 North Korean escapees, TJWG documented a total of 1,008 statements on executions and death sentences from 1956 to March 2023 spanning three generations of ruling by Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un.

The five North Korea-focused news outlets reported a total of 170 articles on executions and death sentences from December 2010 to December 2024, mainly falling under the Kim Jong-un era. TJWG structured these articles into a dataset, including those on specific incidents, as well as closely related contextual information.

From the two structured datasets, TJWG extracted all incidents that occurred during the Kim Jong-un era. After eliminating duplicates from overlapping reports, TJWG identified a total of 144 unique cases.

Chart 2 | Number of cases documented from TJWG's interviews and five North Korea-focused news outlets' reporting



- From the interviews, TJWG identified 44 unique cases during the Kim Jong-un era.<sup>9</sup>
- Reporting of five North Korea-focused news outlets identified 101 unique cases during the same period.<sup>10</sup>
- One identical case in 2013 was identified from both TJWG's interviews and the five North Korea-focused news outlets' reporting.

<sup>9</sup> In the interviews, 7 cases were testified by two or more escapees. The largest number of witnesses for a single incident was three people. 10 statements from 10 escapees were excluded from this analysis because it was unclear whether the executions occurred before or after December 17, 2011, the date of Kim Jong-il's death and the transition of power to Kim Jong-un.

<sup>10</sup> In the news outlets' reporting, three cases were reported by two or more outlets, citing different sources inside North Korea.

- Therefore, TJWG identified and analyzed a combined total of 144 unique cases.

Chart 2 illustrates ① the number of cases documented from TJWG’s interviews (blue), ② the number of cases from the five North Korea-focused news outlets’ reporting (orange), and ③ the combined number of cases from TJWG’s interviews and North Korea-focused news outlets’ reporting (gray) organized by year.

The line chart displaying the number of cases identified from TJWG’s in-person interviews with escapees shows that recent incidents are increasingly difficult to track as escaping from North Korea becomes harder and fewer people are able to reach South Korea. In contrast, North Korea–focused news outlets, which monitor conditions inside North Korea through other communication means such as mobile phones, were able to consistently track incidents and situations within the country even after the border closures in 2020.

During the 5-year period from 2013 to 2017, the number of cases identified from TJWG’s interviews and the North Korea-focused news outlets’ reporting displayed a similar trend. However, a striking contrast emerged from 2018. While TJWG was not able to identify cases in 2020 when the border was closed, the five North Korea-focused news outlets reported 25 cases from their sources inside North Korea.

This demonstrates that generating a big dataset by reviewing reports by the North Korea-focused news outlets, who can identify cases through their sources in North Korea, can be an alternative for overcoming the challenges of in-person interviews in a context where escaping from North Korea has become more difficult. TJWG aimed to understand the situation in North Korea more broadly and accurately by extracting, refining, and standardizing shared attribute information and expanding the analysis.

---

# North Korea's Response to International Criticism of Public Executions and Excessive Use of the Death Penalty

## Condemnations in the 24 consecutive annual UN DPRK human rights resolutions

The issue of executions has been raised for 24 consecutive years in UN resolutions on the human rights situation in North Korea from 2003 to 2026. The former Commission on Human Rights, the precursor to the Human Rights Council, identified public executions and the death penalty for political reasons as “systemic, widespread and grave violations of human rights,” along with torture, political prison camps, and forced labor, in its first resolution on North Korea in 2003.<sup>11</sup>

The UN General Assembly has also consistently expressed concerns about public executions and the death penalty for political reasons in its annual resolutions on the human rights situation in North Korea since 2005.<sup>12</sup> The General Assembly resolutions have referred to “the death penalty for political and religious reasons” from 2007.<sup>13</sup>

North Korea's treatment of escape from the country as an act of treason punishable by death has also been raised in the former Commission on Human Rights resolutions since 2003 and the General Assembly's resolutions since 2005.<sup>14</sup> As concerns mounted about the resumption of forcible repatriation of North

---

<sup>11</sup> UN Commission on Human Rights, “Resolution on situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,” E/CN.4/RES/2003/10, April 16, 2003, para. 1(a).

<sup>12</sup> UN General Assembly, Sixtieth session, “Resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 16 December 2005,” A/RES/60/173, March 14, 2006, para. 1(b)(i).

<sup>13</sup> UN General Assembly, Sixty-second session, “Resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 18 December 2007,” A/RES/62/167, February 28, 2008, para. 1(b)(i).

<sup>14</sup> UN Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/RES/2003/10, para. 2(d); UN General Assembly, A/RES/60/173, para. 1(b)(ii).

Korean refugees and escapees detained in China during the COVID-19 border closure, the General Assembly's resolution in December 2022 and the Human Rights Council's resolution in April 2023 urged North Korea to ensure that they are treated humanely and not subjected to human rights violations, including arbitrary execution.<sup>15</sup>

However, on the night of October 9, 2023, China forcibly repatriated hundreds of North Korean detainees overnight, drawing widespread condemnation from the international community.<sup>16</sup>

A reference to extrajudicial, summary, and arbitrary executions was first included in the 2013 General Assembly resolution.<sup>17</sup> Since 2015, the Human Rights Council resolutions urged the North Korean government "to immediately cease the practice of the arbitrary [and summary] execution of persons in custody" ("and summary" was added since 2018).<sup>18</sup>

The General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions have yet to address the non-public executions, including secret executions, in North Korea.

## **Admission and downplaying of public executions in Universal Periodic Reviews**

North Korea claims to reject the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council's North Korean human rights resolutions, but despite its initial reluctance, it has engaged with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the Human Rights Council. The UN member states have raised the issue of public

---

<sup>15</sup> UN General Assembly, Seventy-seventh session, "Resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 15 December 2022," A/RES/77/226, para. 18(g); UN Human Rights Council, Fifty-second session, "Resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 4 April 2023," A/HRC/RES/52/28, January 9, 2023, para. 2(m).

<sup>16</sup> Lina Yoon, "China Forcibly Returns More than 500 to North Korea," *Human Rights Watch*, October 12, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/12/china-forcibly-returns-more-500-north-korea>

<sup>17</sup> UN General Assembly, Sixty-eighth session, "Resolution on situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 18 December 2013," A/RES/68/183, February 4, 2014, para. 1(a)(i).

<sup>18</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Twenty-eighth session, "Resolution on situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 27 March 2015," A/HRC/RES/28/22, April 8, 2015, para. 2(e); UN Human Rights Council, Thirty-seventh session, "Resolution on situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 23 March 2018," A/HRC/RES/37/28, April 9, 2018, para. 2(e).

executions and the death penalty through their recommendations as well as advance questions and oral statements during the interactive dialogues during DPRK UPRs.

From the 1st cycle of the UPR in 2009 to the 4th cycle in 2024, a total of 44 countries discussed or made recommendations regarding public executions and the death penalty (see Table 2).

**Table 2 | UN member states that discussed or made recommendations regarding public executions and the death penalty in the DPRK UPRs**

	1st UPR cycle (2008-2011) <sup>19</sup>	2nd UPR cycle (2012-2016) <sup>20</sup>	3rd UPR cycle (2017-2022) <sup>21</sup>	4th UPR cycle (2022-2027) <sup>22</sup>
<b>Advance questions</b>	UK, Netherlands	Belgium, Czechia, USA	Germany, Belgium, Australia, Angola	Germany, Lichtenstein, South Korea, USA
<b>Statements during interactive dialogues</b>	Brazil, Japan, USA, France, Netherlands, Chile, Italy, New Zealand, Lithuania	Hungary, Israel, Italy, Slovakia, North Macedonia	Montenegro	Georgia
<b>Recommendations</b>	Brazil, Chile, Italy, Spain, Lithuania, New Zealand, France, Israel, Norway, Canada	Portugal, Latvia, Uruguay, Namibia, Slovakia, Spain, Macedonia, Italy, Sierra Leone, Turkey, Ecuador, Belgium, Costa Rica, Lithuania, France, Hungary, Montenegro, Germany, Chile, Iceland, Greece	Latvia, Portugal, Togo, Italy, Belgium, Ukraine, France, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Spain, East Timor, Czechia, Australia	Spain, Portugal, Slovenia, Iceland, France, Albania, Italy, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Montenegro, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Croatia, Chile, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Czechia
<b>Total</b>	14	24	20	24
	<b>44 (without duplicates)</b>			

<sup>19</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Thirteenth session, “Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” A/HRC/13/13, January 4, 2010, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g10/101/75/pdf/g1010175.pdf>

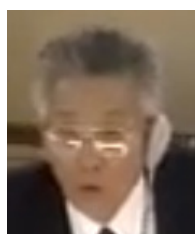
<sup>20</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Twenty-seventh session, “Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” A/HRC/27/10, July 2, 2014, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g14/072/22/pdf/g1407222.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Forty-second session, “Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” A/HRC/42/10, June 25, 2019, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g19/184/10/pdf/g1918410.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Fifty-eighth session, “Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” A/HRC/58/11, December 19, 2024, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/224/17/pdf/g2422417.pdf>

## 1st UPR cycle (2008-2011)

At the interactive dialogue of the 1st UPR, held on December 7, 2009, under Kim Jong-il's rule, North Korea stated that non-public execution is the rule and that public executions had occurred only once or twice in extremely rare cases when residents with resentments requested to witness them. It also claimed that "death penalty cases themselves are extremely few" because the number of death penalty provisions had been greatly reduced. Notably, North Korea acknowledged that public executions had taken place and used the term "executions."



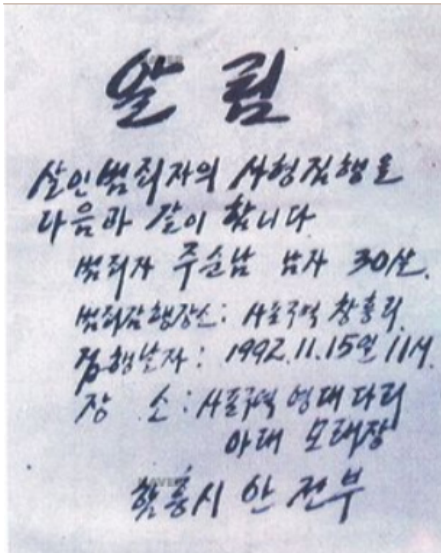
"The issue of public execution has now been raised, but all expertly answers have already been given specifically at our Covenant review. However, this issue is raised in various occasions, but public execution is not the rule. **Non-public execution is the rule. However, in extremely exceptional cases, the law enforcement organs' personnel, that is...in heinous crimes, these sparsely, extremely rarely occurring crimes...victims, these people with enmity asking that residents are able to confirm...such issues frequently being raised...in relation to such matter, there are one or two instances of public executions.** However, non-public execution is the rule. Our country in the past had about 30-40 provisions prescribing the death penalty. **With the recent deep cut, only six provisions are left. Therefore, death penalty cases themselves are extremely few.**"<sup>23</sup>

– Sim Hyong-il [심형일], then-Chief of Legal Bureau of the Central Court

In its national report submitted prior to the 1st UPR, North Korea claimed that death penalty is imposed in only five categories of extremely serious penal offenses; however, this is inconsistent with its assertion that there are six provisions prescribing the death penalty.<sup>24</sup> The national report made no

<sup>23</sup> TJWG has produced its own English translation of Sim Hyong-il's statement because the English interpretation provided by North Korea at the time contains numerous omissions and misinterpretations. The original interpretation is as follows: "Some questions were raised concerning public execution. I must tell you that executing people in public is not our principle, but in some very exceptional cases, there are public executions for those criminals who committed very brutal, violent crimes. Often, these requests...these demands are made by the relatives and families of the victims. So, I must tell you that these public executions that take place in very exceptional cases at the request of the demand of the victims of the families and their relatives. In our country, the death penalty is imposed on strictly limited crimes." UN Human Rights Council, "Democratic People's Republic of Korea Review - 6th Session of Universal Periodic Review," *UN Web TV*, video, December 7, 2009, <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1m/k1my0mblbg> (timestamp 03:07:56-03:09:03). For the original Korean statement, see UN Human Rights Council, "Democratic People's Republic of Korea Review - 6th Session of Universal Periodic Review," *UN Web TV*, video, December 7, 2009, <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1u/k1udc646jy> (timestamp 03:07:45-03:08:58).

<sup>24</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Sixth session, "National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1: Democratic People's Republic of Korea," *A/HRC/WG.6/6/PRK/1*, August 27, 2009, para. 34, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/6/PRK/1>



## Notice

Execution of death sentence of murder offender is as follows:

Criminal: Chu Sun-nam / male / age 30.

Location of the Crime:

Changhung Village, Sapo District.

Execution Date: Nov. 15, 1992, 11 o'clock

Execution Site: Sand ground under  
Yondae bridge in Sapo District

Hamhung City Social Security Department

mention at all about public executions.

North Korea's reference to "one or two instances of public executions" appears to be an attempt to minimize the scale of public executions by limiting consideration to cases with physical evidence.

Amnesty International report<sup>25</sup> cited a public execution that occurred in November 1992 in Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province. The execution was announced on posters for the crimes of "hooliganism" and "ideological divergence." Ri Chol, North Korea's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, immediately sent a response disclosing the name of the person "publicly executed in November [1992] at the request of the crowd" on charge of murder.<sup>26</sup> This was the first time that North Korea officially acknowledged the occurrence of public executions. In August 1994, South Korean intelligence revealed that the name of the man who was publicly executed in Hamhung City was Chu Sun-nam [주순남] and released a photo of the public execution notice

<sup>25</sup> Amnesty International, *North Korea: Summary of Amnesty International's concerns*, ASA 24/003/1993 (London: Amnesty International, October 13, 1993), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa24/003/1993/en>

<sup>26</sup> Amnesty International, *North Korea: Government replies to Amnesty International's report*, ASA 24/006/1993 (London: Amnesty International, September 30, 1993), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa24/006/1993/en>



of the public trial and execution by shooting of a female factory worker named Yu Bun-hui [유분희] in Hamju County, South Hamgyong Province.<sup>32</sup>

## 2nd UPR cycle (2012-2016)

At the interactive dialogue of the 2nd UPR on May 1, 2014, which was the first following Kim Jong-un's rise to power in 2011, North Korea adopted a more cautious stance. North Korea's statement on the death penalty, which was the shortest among all UPRs, made no mention of the number of provisions prescribing the death penalty and replaced the term "public execution" with "public death penalty"—all to be repeated in the 3rd and 4th UPRs.



"I will speak about the issue of **public death penalty**. Expertly answers have already been given to this issue in our country's 1st cycle report review in the past period. This issue was raised again this time, but the death penalty being non-public is the rule in our country. However, when the criminal act is extremely severe, some executions of death sentences are sparsely made public, but the rule remains **non-public death penalty**."<sup>33</sup>

– Pak Su-jong [박수중], then-Councilor of the Supreme Court

In the national report submitted prior to the 2nd UPR, North Korea claimed that even for crimes that harm a person's life, the death penalty is imposed only for extremely heinous and grave cases and that death sentences are not imposed on crimes committed by legal minors below 18 years of age nor carried out on pregnant women as provided in article 29 of the Criminal Law; however, the national report made no mention at all about public executions.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Yang Jung-a, "[포토] 7월 北 여성 노동자 공개총살 현장" [[Photo] Scene of North Korean female worker's public execution by shooting in July], *DailyNK*, September 20, 2006, <https://www.dailynk.com/%5B포토%5D-7월-北-여성-노동자-공개총살>

<sup>33</sup> TJWG has produced its own English translation of Pak Su-jong's statement because the English interpretation provided by North Korea at the time contains numerous omissions and misinterpretations. The original interpretation is as follows: "Speaking of alleged public executions, sufficient explanations were provided by our experts during the first cycle review. This question was again raised by some delegates, and I would like to make it clear again that in principle, we don't open executions to [the] public. However, we carry out public executions in some exceptional cases where the committed crime is extremely grave. Allow me to repeat that we maintain the principle of not carrying out executions in public." UN Human Rights Council, "DPRK Review - 19th Session of Universal Periodic Review," *UN Web TV*, video, May 1, 2014, <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1h/k1hipg1bl7> (timestamp 03:02:04-03:02:58). For the original Korean statement, see UN Human Rights Council, "DPRK Review - 19th Session of Universal Periodic Review," *UN Web TV*, video, May 1, 2014, <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k12/k120a4aoql> (timestamp 03:02:05-03:02:50).

<sup>34</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Nineteenth session, "National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21: Democratic People's Republic of Korea," *A/HRC/WG.6/19/PRK/1*, January 30, 2014, paras. 31-32, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/19/PRK/1>

### **3rd UPR cycle (2017-2022)**

Ahead of the 3rd UPR for North Korea, TJWG and other North Korean human rights groups submitted a report on the death penalty in North Korea to the UN Human Rights Council in October 2018. The report highlighted serious violations of international human rights norms, including the lack of due process and fair trial in the process of handing down death sentences and the forcible witnessing of executions by others in public executions. The UN member states were asked to recommend, among other things, North Korea's submission of statistics on death sentences and their execution.<sup>35</sup>

At the interactive dialogue of the 3rd UPR on May 9, 2019, North Korea repeated its line from the first UPR in 2009 that public executions take place in extremely rare cases where victims and inhabitants strongly demand it. North Korea further emphasized that non-public execution is the rule by stating that "death sentences are carried out in designated, non-public sites"; however, it did not offer an explanation about the execution sites.

For the first time in UPRs, North Korea stated that the death penalty applies to the two categories of "anti-state crimes" and "heinous crimes" under the Criminal Law and elaborated that provincial courts hand down death sentences and that the death sentences undergo two levels of review and approval by the Central Court and the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly.

However, North Korea was silent about capital offenses under its law other than the Criminal Law and again failed to provide basic data on the death penalty at the 3rd UPR. Moreover, despite North Korea's claim that the death penalty cannot be imposed for crimes committed by legal minors below 18 years of age and cannot be carried out on pregnant women, the 2023 Report on North Korean Human Rights, published by the Ministry of Unification (MOU) documented statements by North Korean escapees that they witnessed public

---

**35** TJWG, Korean War Abductee's Family Union, and NK Watch, "The Need to Clarify the Procedure and Government Organs responsible for the Executions of Capital Punishment, the Disposal of Bodies of Executed Persons, and the Notification of the Cause and Manner of Death to Their Family Members in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) - Joint Submission to the Human Rights Council at the 33rd Session of the Universal Periodic Review," October 4, 2018, [https://en.tjwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/TJWG\\_KWAFU\\_NKWATCH-Joint-Submission-to-the-UNHRC-at-the-33rd-UPR-for-the-DPRK.pdf](https://en.tjwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/TJWG_KWAFU_NKWATCH-Joint-Submission-to-the-UNHRC-at-the-33rd-UPR-for-the-DPRK.pdf)

executions of legal minors in 2015 and 2018 and of pregnant women in 2017.<sup>36</sup>



“Next, I would like to discuss the death penalty system. The Republic’s Criminal Code stipulates that the death penalty shall be applied only to anti-state criminals and those who commit heinous crimes that are utterly intolerable under our system. **Trials of criminal cases that may be punished by death are handled by provincial courts, and even if provincial courts hand down judgments, death sentences may be carried out only after undergoing two levels of review and endorsement by the Central Court and the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly.** The death penalty cannot be imposed on individuals below 18 years of age at the time of the commission of crimes and cannot be carried out on pregnant women. **Death sentences are carried out in designated, non-public sites.** However, in extremely rare cases where victims and inhabitants strongly demand public death penalty, upon careful consideration of their wishes, public death penalty has been carried out.”<sup>37</sup>

– Pak Kwang-ho [박광호], then-Councilor of the Central Court

In the national report submitted prior to the 3rd UPR, in addition to its assertions in the 2nd UPR national report, North Korea added that the right to life is guaranteed by the Socialist Constitution, the Criminal Law, and other laws concerned and protected by the prosecutorial, judicial, and public security organs; and that in accordance with article 51 of the Criminal Procedure Law, criminal cases to which the death penalty is applicable fall under the jurisdiction

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Unification (Republic of Korea), *2024 Report on North Korean Human Rights*, pp. 226-227, [https://www.unikorea.go.kr/web/unikorea/bbs/bbs\\_000000000000011/53992](https://www.unikorea.go.kr/web/unikorea/bbs/bbs_000000000000011/53992)

<sup>37</sup> TJWG has produced its own English translation of Pak Kwang-ho’s statement because the English interpretation provided by North Korea at the time contains numerous omissions and misinterpretations. The original interpretation is as follows: “In accordance with the Criminal Law of the DPRK, [the] death penalty is imposed on those who committed crimes against the State and those who committed extremely serious crimes that are unpardonable in our socialist system. Criminal cases that are so serious as to be punished by [the] death penalty are tried at the provincial courts. Death penalty verdicts rendered at the provincial courts should be brought first before the Central Court, and then the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly for review and approval before being finally executed. Death penalty is not imposed on those who are under 18 years of age at the time they committed offenses, nor executed against pregnant women. [The] death penalty is, in principle, executed at designated places behind closed doors. However, very rarely, they are executed in public in serious consideration of the strong requests of the victim’s family and people concerned that the criminal be executed in their presence.” UN Human Rights Council, “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Review - 33rd Session of Universal Periodic Review,” *UN Web TV*, video, May 9, 2019, <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1a/k1ap2my6ml> (timestamp 01:45:46 - 01:47:17). For the original Korean statement, see UN Human Rights Council, “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Review - 33rd Session of Universal Periodic Review,” *UN Web TV*, video, May 9, 2019, <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1g/k1gp86p4ck> (timestamp 01:45:45-01:47:15).

of provincial or above-provincial level courts, while article 418 of the same law requires that the death penalty should be executed subject to the final approval of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly.<sup>38</sup> This national report again made no mention at all about public executions.

#### **4th UPR cycle (2022-2027)**

At the interactive dialogue of the 4th UPR on November 7, 2024, North Korea delivered an unusually long response. North Korea repeated its claim from the 3rd UPR that the death penalty applies to “anti-state crimes” and “heinous crimes” under the Criminal Law and that death sentences may be carried out only after undergoing review by the Central Court and approval by the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly. North Korea also claimed that executions of death sentences in principle is not made public, but there was no mention of any law or legal provision to support this claim.

The standards for “exceptional” public executions were further elaborated: committing murder despite previously committing many crimes against many victims and the demand for public executions from the murder victims’ families. However, North Korea offered no examples of prior crimes committed by executed individuals or written requests for public executions from murder victims’ families or explanation for reported public executions for crimes other than murder.

North Korea also cited “the special circumstances of ongoing hostile acts by external forces” and prevention of “crimes that gravely violate our socialist system and people’s lives” as reasons for retention of the death penalty. However, North Korea did not offer concrete examples of “hostile acts by external forces” or “crimes that gravely violate our socialist system” resulting in executions.

Notably, for the first time in UPRs, North Korea officially denied numerous reports of extrajudicial executions, citing the criminal procedure law.

---

<sup>38</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Thirty-third session, “National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21: Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” A/HRC/WG.6/33/PRK/1, February 20, 2019, paras. 20-22, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/33/PRK/1>



---

“Lastly, I will talk about the death penalty system. The Republic’s Criminal Law stipulates that the death penalty shall be applied only to anti-state criminals and those who commit heinous crimes that are utterly intolerable under our system. Also, regarding the execution of death sentences, strict procedures are established. In other words, even if death sentences handed down by relevant courts are final, they may be carried out only after undergoing review by the Central Court and approval by the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly. Not making the execution of death sentences public is the rule set by the law, and death sentences are carried out in designated, non-public sites. However, there are exceptional cases where executions of the death penalty are made public. **If a criminal, despite having caused harm to many people by committing criminal acts many times in the past, stubbornly commits again even the crime of killing another person instead of reforming, and if the victim’s family strongly demands public death penalty to resolve enmity, their wishes may be taken into consideration to carry out public death penalty.** In the Republic, the death penalty is not applied to minors below 18 years of age and cannot be carried out on pregnant women. **We still maintain the death penalty system because of the special circumstances of ongoing hostile acts by external forces against our Republic,** and to prevent crimes that gravely violate our socialist system and people’s lives. In our country, **there is no extrajudicial death penalty, as some people claim, nor can there be. Concluding a case without a trial is not only a violation of the criminal procedure law but also defies common sense.** In our country, every case raised is thoroughly handled through trial hearings.”<sup>39</sup>

– Pak Kwang-ho [박광호], then-Director of the Central Court

---

**39** TJWG has produced its own English translation of Pak Kwang-ho’s statement because the English interpretation provided by North Korea at the time contains numerous omissions and misinterpretations. The original interpretation is as follows: “Lastly, on [the] death penalty, according to the criminal law, [the] death penalty is imposed on those who committed crime[s] against the State and those who committed extremely serious crimes that are unpardonable in our socialist system. Regarding the execution of [the] death penalty, we have a strict set of procedures. In other words, even when a death penalty judgment has been rendered by the competent courts, it should be brought first before the Central Court for review and then to the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly for approval before being executed. In principle, [the] death penalty is executed behind closed doors at a designated place. However, there may be exceptions. Those are when the criminal committed repeated crimes in the past, causing serious harm to others, and, again, committed heinous murder without repenting himself, and the victim’s family strongly requested that [the] death penalty be executed in public to settle their old scores. In the DPRK, [the] death penalty is not imposed on those who were under 18 years of age at the time they committed offenses nor executed against pregnant women. We still have [the] death penalty in place in consideration of specific environments surrounding us, where the wholesale acts of outside forces persist, and for the purpose of preventing such crimes as inflicting serious harm upon lives of the people and the socialist system. There is no such a thing as extrajudicial execution as was alleged by some. Concluding a case without a trial not only constitutes a breach of the criminal procedure law but also an inconceivable idea. All criminal cases are being dealt with from A to Z, through court hearing[s] in the DPRK.” UN Human Rights Council, “Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Review - 47th Session of Universal Periodic Review,” *UN Web TV*, video, November 7, 2024, <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1s/k1siu17x8h> (timestamp 02:05:54-02:08:17). For the original Korean statement, click the musical note icon (Audio) on the bottom right of video footage and clicking “Original” instead of the default “English” setting.

In the national report submitted prior to the 4th UPR, in addition to its assertions in the previous UPR national reports, North Korea added that even heinous murders are in general sentenced to reform through labor of 5 to 10 years without offering the relevant legal provisions or court decisions and that those sentenced to death can apply for extraordinary appeal to the Central Court through the President of the Central Court or the Prosecutor General of the Central Public Prosecutors' Office without offering the relevant provisions in the Criminal Procedure Law or examples or number of cases where the extraordinary appeal was accepted.<sup>40</sup> The 4th UPR national report again made no mention at all about public executions.

As seen above, North Korea acknowledged the existence of public executions during the UPRs and appears to recognize that it cannot completely ignore the international community's concerns about the death penalty in North Korea. However, the Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un regimes do not differ in their efforts to deny human rights violations and to conceal the actual practices and scale of the death penalty system, including public executions, in North Korea.

### **Five key issues**

TJWG identified the following five key issues from the four UPRs for North Korea:

First, North Korea stated that the death penalty applies to “anti-state crimes” and “heinous crimes” under the Criminal Law, but it was silent about capital offenses under other laws and failed to provide basic information including the contents and number legal provisions prescribing the death penalty, the number of death sentences and their executions.

Second, North Korea stated that provincial courts hand down death sentences, the Central Court review these sentences, and the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly give the approval for the death sentences to be carried out. This is a useful reference in identifying institutions and positions responsible for

---

<sup>40</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Forty-seventh session, “National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21: Democratic People's Republic of Korea,” A/HRC/WG.6/47/PRK/1, August 29, 2024, paras. 17-20, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/47/PRK/1>

crimes against humanity of murder and realizing accountability. To be certain, the accuracy of the procedures and institutional roles, indicated by North Korea, requires careful examination. Kim Jong-un and other state organs and officials who are actually involved in death sentences and their executions may be shifting the legal and political responsibility to provincial courts, the Central Court, and the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, to which they are not officially affiliated.<sup>41</sup>

Third, North Korea stated that non-public execution is the rule set by the law and that death sentences are carried out in “designated, non-public sites” without offering specific details or additional explanation for the “designated, non-public sites.” It is important to obtain information on the names, locations, and operating organizations of these “designated, non-public locations.” Moreover, the legal basis that allegedly makes non-public executions the rule but permits “exceptional” public executions needs to be clarified.

Fourth, North Korea claimed that it carries out public executions of heinous murderers only at the request of the murder victims' families. However, according to TJWG's in-depth interviews with 880 North Korean escapees in the past 10 years, there were no reports of public executions being carried out at the request of the victims' families and public executions for crimes other than murder were reported numerous times.

Fifth, North Korea claims there are no extrajudicial executions without trial, but this is at odds with the known accounts of the reality in *kwanliso* (political prison camps) and labor camps. North Korean escapees have stated that prisoners caught attempting to escape are summarily executed.

---

<sup>41</sup> The Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly was Kim Yong-nam from September 5, 1998 to April 11, 2019, and Choe Ryong-hae thereafter. On March 22, 2026, the position was replaced by Jo Yong-won (reported by the Korean Central News Agency on March 23, 2026).

---

## Executions during Kim Jong-un's 13-Year Rule

### Periods of frequent executions

Table 3 provides the annual breakdown of the 144 documented executions and death sentences from the Kim Jong-un period, extracted from TJWG's interviews and the five North Korea-focused news outlets' reporting.

Among the 144 cases, there were 136 executions, where a total of at least 358 individuals were executed.<sup>42</sup> The average number of persons executed per execution was 2.6.

In the other 8 death sentences, 9 individuals were sentenced to death in public show trials, but they were taken away without being executed on the spot. For these 8 death sentences and 9 condemned persons, the types and locations of executions and execution methods were classified as "unknown."

The highest number of documented executions occurred in 2020 with 24 executions.

The highest number of executed persons was reported in 2013 with 80 individuals. This finding aligns with the survey result of the South Korean government think tank Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU)'s *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2015*, which documented 21 executed

---

<sup>42</sup> The number of executed persons in this report indicates the minimum. For example, if an interviewee recalls three to four persons being executed, the number of executed individuals is recorded as three. If news reporting did not specify the number of executed persons, the number was recorded as one.

persons in 2012, 82 in 2013 and 5 in 2014 based on in-depth interviews of North Korean escapees conducted over several years.<sup>43</sup>

**Table 3 | The annual number of documented executions and death sentencings under Kim Jong-un's rule**

Year		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
Executions	Case	14	22	12	9	2	3	6	8	24	15	9	9	3	136 cases 358 persons
	Person	34	80	55	21	2	3	6	9	54	45	15	29	5	
Death sentencings (Implementation unknown)	Case	1						2		1	2			2	8 cases 9 persons
	Person	1						3		1	2			2	

The annual number of documented executions exceeded 10 cases from 2012 to 2014 and from 2020 to 2021. The first three years coincided with the start of Kim Jong-un's inheritance of power and the latter two years with the beginning of the measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It appears that internal control and punishment peaked during these two time periods. During these five years, there were 87 executions, representing 64.0% of the 136 cases documented over 13 years, while the 268 individuals executed accounted for 74.9% of the 358 total.

### Nationwide distribution of documented executions

The nationwide distribution of documented executions and death sentencings

<sup>43</sup> Based on its in-depth interviews of North Korean escapees accumulated over time, the KINU reported a total of 1,382 North Koreans executed in public executions from 2000 to 2014. Do Kyung-ok et al., *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2015* (Seoul, KINU, 2015), p. 67, [https://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/module/report/view.do?idx=113754&nav\\_code=eng1674806000](https://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/module/report/view.do?idx=113754&nav_code=eng1674806000); At the time, a KINU researcher explained that the number of North Korean escapees who could participate in the in-depth interviews in 2014 was relatively small and that the number of executed persons could increase with additional interviews. Park Byung-yong, "북한인권백서 '북한, 2000년 이후 공개처형 1300명 넘어'" [Over 1,300 people executed in public in North Korea since 2000 according to North Korean Human Rights White Paper], VOA, July 1, 2015, <https://www.voakorea.com/a/2844247.html>

under Kim Jong-un's rule compiled by TJWG is shown in Map 3. Of the 144 cases, 111 occurred in locations that could be specified or classified by cities/counties. The executions took place in 34 of North Korea's 167 cities/counties (20.4%).

The top five localities by number of documented executions were Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province with 23 executions (20.7%), Pyongyang with 22 executions (19.8%), Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province with 17 executions (15.3%), Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province with 5 executions (4.5%), and Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province with 5 executions (4.5%).

When comparing the occurrence of executions in the areas adjacent to the international border and the military demarcation line, the inland areas, and the coastal areas, the northern areas adjacent to the Chinese and Russian border had 42 executions (37.8%),<sup>44</sup> the inland areas, including Pyongyang, had 34 executions (30.6%),<sup>45</sup> the areas adjacent to the East Sea had 27 executions (24.3%),<sup>46</sup> the areas adjacent to the West Sea had 6 executions (5.4%),<sup>47</sup> and the southern areas adjacent to the military demarcation line with South Korea had 2 executions (1.8%).<sup>48</sup>

---

**44** Areas adjacent to the Chinese and Russian border: Rason [province-level special city] (1 case); Onsong County, North Hamgyong Province (2 cases); Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province (5 cases); Musan County North Hamgyong Province (2 cases); Taehongdan County, Ryanggang Province (2 cases); Samjiyon City, Ryanggang Province (1 case); Pochon County, Ryanggang Province (1 case); Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province (23 cases); Kimjongsuk County, Ryanggang Province (1 case); Kimhyongjik County, Ryanggang Province (1 case); Chosan County, Chagang Province (1 case); Sinuiju City, North Pyongan Province (1 case); Ryongchon County, North Pyongan Province (1 case).

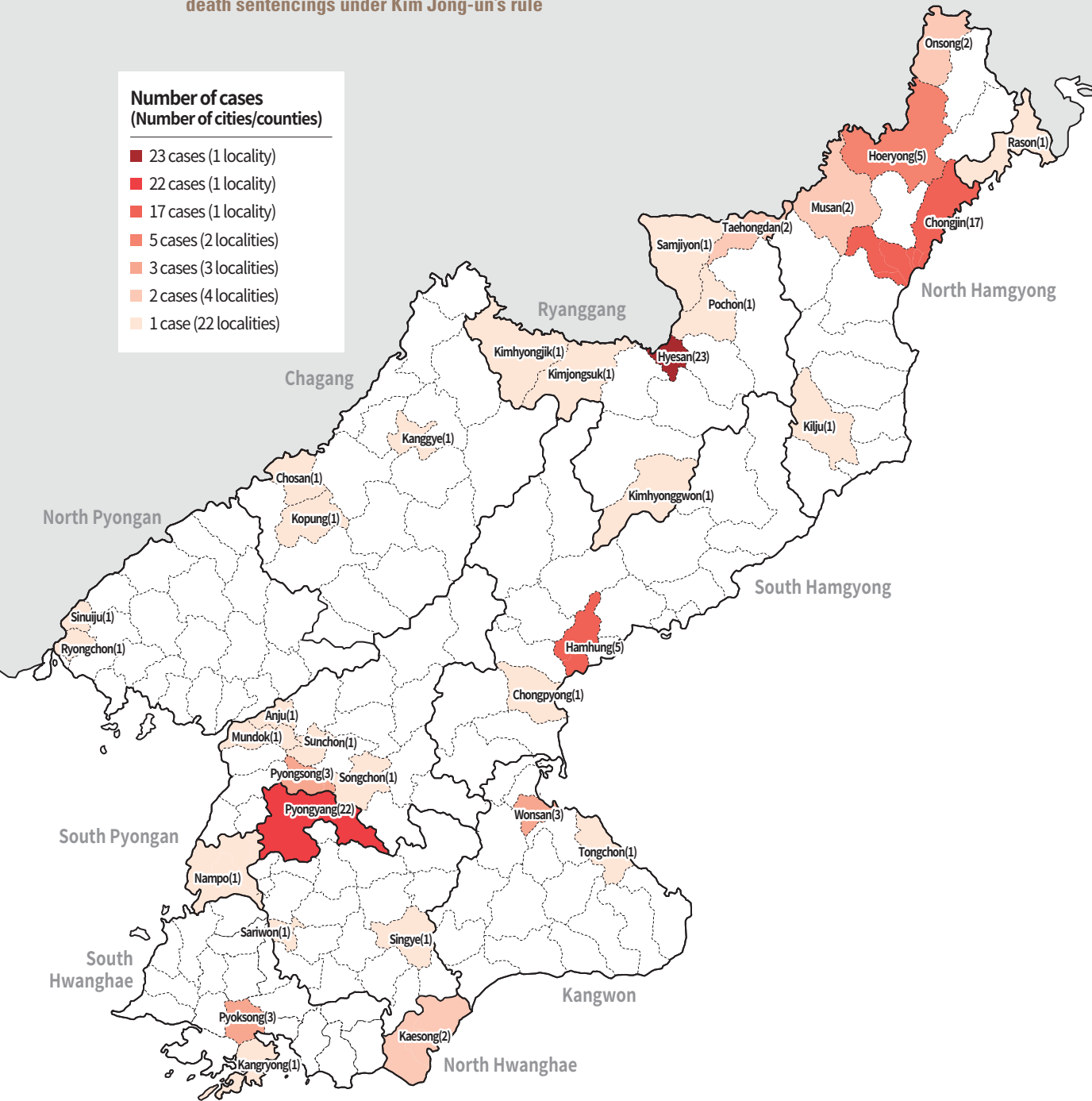
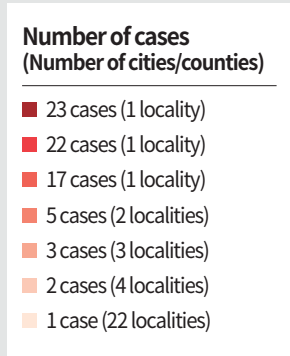
**45** Inland areas: Kilju County, North Hamgyong Province (1 case); Kimhyonggwon County, Ryanggang Province (1 case); Kanggye City, Chagang Province (1 case); Kopung County, Chagang Province (1 case); Anju City, South Pyongan Province (1 case); Sunchon City, South Pyongan Province (1 case); Pyongsong City, South Pyongan Province (3 cases); Songchon County, South Pyongan Province (1 case); Pyongyang [province-level directly-governed city] (22 cases); Sariwon City, North Hwanghae Province (1 case); Singye County, North Hwanghae Province (1 case).

**46** East Sea areas: Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province (17 cases); Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province (5 cases); Chongpyong County, South Hamgyong Province (1 case); Wonsan City, Kangwon Province (3 cases); Tongchon County, Kangwon Province (1 case).

**47** West Sea areas: Mundok County, South Pyongan Province (1 case); Nampo [province-level special city] (1 case); Pyoksong County, South Hwanghae Province (3 cases); Off the coast of Kangryong County, South Hwanghae Province (1 case).

**48** Areas adjacent to the military demarcation line with South Korea: Kaesong [province-level special city] (2 cases).

Map 3 | The nationwide distribution of 144 documented executions and death sentencings under Kim Jong-un's rule



Province-level administrative unit	Cases and persons	Breakdown by city/county (Cases and persons)
North Hamgyong Province	27 cases / 65 persons	Chongjin City (17/46), Hoeryong City (5/9), Musan County (2/6), Onsong County (2/3), Kilju County (1/1)
South Hamgyong Province	6 cases / 11 persons	Hamhung City (5/10), Chongpyong County (1/1)
Ryanggang Province	30 cases / 95 persons	Hyesan City (23/80), Taehongdan County (2/6), Kimjongsuk County (1/3), Pochon County (1/3), Samjiyon City (1/1), Kimhyonggwon County (1/1), Kimhyongjik County (1/1)
Chagang Province	3 cases / 4 persons	Kanggye City (1/2), Chosan County (1/1), Kopung County (1/1)
North Pyongan Province	2 cases / 2 persons	Sinuiju City (1/1), Ryongchon County (1/1)
South Pyongan Province	7 cases / 16 persons	Pyongsong City (3/8), Mundok County (1/3), Sunchon City (1/2), Songchon County (1/2), Anju City (1/1)
Kangwon Province	4 cases / 11 persons	Wonsan City (3/4), Tongchon County (1/7)
North Hwanghae Province	2 cases / 4 persons	Sariwon City (1/3), Singye County (1/1)
South Hwanghae Province	4 cases / 4 persons	Pyoksong County (3/3), Off the coast of Kangryong County (1/1)
Pyongyang	22 cases / 73 persons	
Nampo	1 case / 1 person	
Kaesong	2 cases / 3 persons	
Rason	1 case / 1 person	
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>111 cases / 290 persons</b>	
Unknown	33 cases / 77 persons	
<b>Total</b>	<b>144 cases / 367 persons</b>	

## Execution types and sites

Executions in North Korea can be categorized into four categories based on their public visibility and the presence of a trial: Type 1-A (public executions where the masses are mobilized), Type 1-B (public executions where specific groups are targeted for mobilization), Type 2 (non-public executions), and Type 3 (extrajudicial summary executions carried out without even a perfunctory trial).

**Type 1. Public executions**, which North Korea has officially recognized at the UN since the 1990s, can be divided into the following two types depending on who

are mobilized:

**Type 1-A. Public executions where the masses are mobilized:** The general population is mobilized to observe the executions, which are carried out in open places. The executed individuals' families are also forced to observe, but the bodies are generally not returned to the families. The main purpose is to instill fear throughout society.

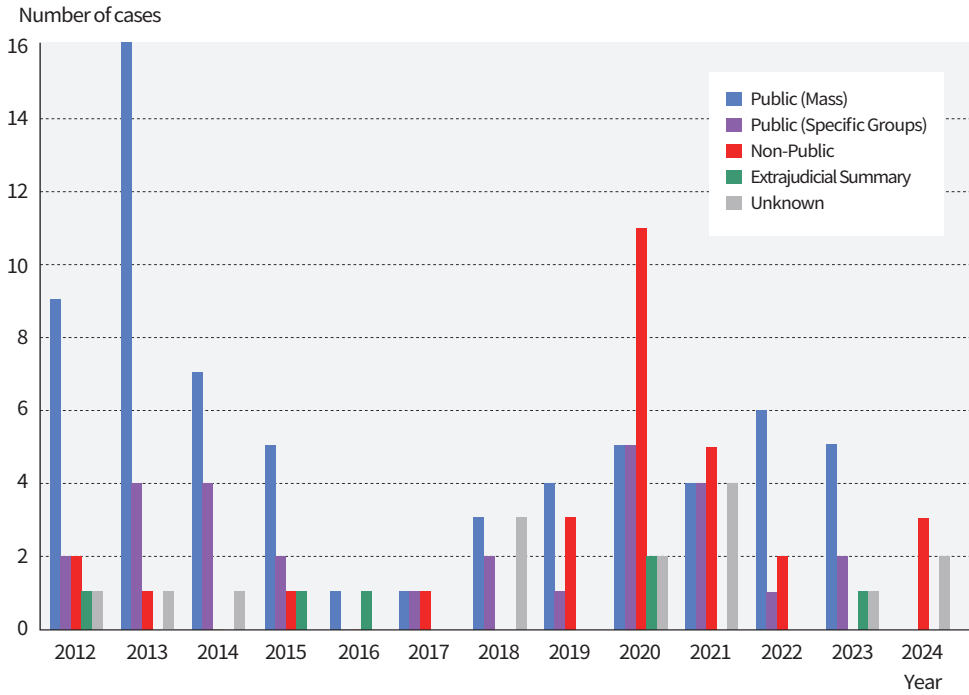
**Type 1-B. Public executions where specific groups are targeted for mobilization:** Only select groups of people who share common attributes or connections, such as occupation, institutional affiliation, class or rank, are mobilized to observe the executions, which are carried out in places where access can be restricted. The main purpose is to instill fear in the targeted groups only.

**Type 2. Non-public executions:** During the UPR interactive dialogues, North Korea claimed that, as a matter of principle under the law, death sentences are not carried out in public, but rather in designated non-public places. This implies that death sentences are carried out privately in the presence of a few judicial personnel, without the mobilization of the general population or specific groups. This category includes secret executions, where the person's identity, the legal grounds, the timing, the location, and the methods used are strictly withheld.

**Type 3. Extrajudicial summary executions carried out without even a perfunctory trial:** In UPR interactive dialogues, North Korea denied the existence of extrajudicial summary executions, arguing that "In our country, there are no death sentences outside the trial process, as claimed by some people, nor can there be one" and that "concluding a case without trial is not only a violation of the criminal procedure code but also beyond common sense." In practice, there are summary executions by immediately killing those who are found to have violated the directives on border control and disease control, internal regulations of detention facilities, military law or special agencies' rules, etc. Secret executions may also fall under extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions.

Of the 136 executions documented under Kim Jong-un's rule, the breakdown

Chart 3 | Types of 129 executions



Unit: cases (persons)

Type	Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total
1: Public	1-A: Mass	9 (29)	16 (45)	7 (16)	5 (12)	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (3)	4 (5)	5 (13)	4 (12)	6 (9)	5 (17)		<b>66</b> <b>(163)</b>
	1-B: Specific Groups	2 (2)	4 (31)	4 (38)	2 (5)		1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (1)	5 (8)	4 (4)	1 (1)	2 (4)		<b>28</b> <b>(97)</b>
2: Non-Public		2 (2)	1 (3)		1 (3)		1 (1)		3 (3)	11 (28)	5 (24)	2 (5)		3 (5)	<b>29</b> <b>(74)</b>
3: Extrajudicial Summary		1 (1)			1 (1)	1 (1)				2 (2)			1 (5)		<b>6</b> <b>(10)</b>
Unknown		1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)				3 (4)		2 (4)	4 (7)		1 (3)	2 (2)	<b>15</b> <b>(23)</b>

of the 129 cases that could be categorized into the four types is shown in Chart 3. Of the 129 executions, a total of 94 were public executions (72.8%), which combines Types 1-A and 1-B executions.

Notable trends include the following: first, the highest number of public

executions was recorded in 2013, at the start of the Kim Jong-un regime. Second, non-public executions were most frequent in 2020, coinciding with the implementation of COVID-19 restriction measures.

Third, in 2024, there were no public executions documented in escapees' statements from TJWG's interviews or North Korea-focused news outlets' reporting; instead, only non-public executions were reported during this time period. This suggests that North Korea may have reduced or halted public executions momentarily to dismiss the international criticism of public executions ahead of the 4th DPRK UPR in November 2024. The execution data for 2024 will need to be revisited with further escapee statements and information.

### **Type 1-A executions (public executions where the masses are mobilized) and their sites**

Mobilizing the executed persons' families and the general population to observe public executions is a manifest violation of international law. The international community considers it a violation of article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provide that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Human Rights Committee, a body of experts created to oversee the implementation of the ICCPR, commented that when the death penalty is applied, "it must be carried out in such a way as to cause the least possible physical and mental suffering" in its General Comment No. 20 on the interpretation of article 7 of the ICCPR.<sup>49</sup> As a state party to the ICCPR, North Korea is under an obligation to observe the ICCPR.

The 2014 COI report made the case for holding the North Korean leadership, including Kim Jong-un, accountable for North Korea's crimes against humanity and recommended a UN Security Council referral of the North Korean situation

---

<sup>49</sup> Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 20 (1992) in respect of Article 7 CCPR (Prohibition of torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment) in the "Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies," HRI/GEN/1/Rev.9 (Vol. I), May 27 2008, 200, para. 6, [https://docs.un.org/en/HRI/GEN/1/Rev.9\(Vol.I\)](https://docs.un.org/en/HRI/GEN/1/Rev.9(Vol.I))

to the International Criminal Court (ICC) or the establishment of an ad hoc tribunal by the United Nations.<sup>50</sup> As international pressure mounted, there was growing interest in what kind of measures the Kim Jong-un regime would take in response.<sup>51</sup>

In 2015, Radio Free Asia (RFA) and DailyNK reported that the North Korean authorities were refraining from carrying out public executions because of international pressure and alienation of popular support.<sup>52</sup> In 2016, DailyNK cited a source in South Pyongan Province to report that “recently, [Kim Jong-un’s] directive was issued to judicial and prosecutorial organs across the country, including the Ministry of People’s Security (now the Ministry of Social Security), to ‘prohibit public executions.’ The directive included prohibition of ‘mass judgment’ and ‘public shootings’ where crowds are gathered.” However, the source added that “this directive does not mean eliminating or reducing executions by shooting, but rather is like a guideline to handle ‘convicts’ sentenced to death internally, instead of executing them in public.”<sup>53</sup>

The KINU reported in its *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2020* that “it appears that compared to the past, the number of public executions has been decreasing and that less residents are mobilized to execution sites” based on statements from North Korean escapees who had resided in North Korea until 2019. However, it came with the caveat that “it is not clear whether the actual number of public executions has decreased or the number of non-public executions or secret summary executions has increased.”<sup>54</sup>

---

**50** UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/25/CRP.1, paras. 1166-1203 & 1218.

**51** The UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly resolved to support the COI recommendation for the UN Security Council to refer the North Korean situation to the ICC; the UN Security Council could not make an ICC referral because of China and Russia’s veto power, but it has held public debates on the North Korean human rights situation from 2015.

**52** Chung Young, “북, 공개처형과 비밀처형 양면술 구사” [North Korea engages in double act of public executions and secret executions], *RFA*, January 15, 2015. [https://www.rfa.org/korean/in\\_focus/nk\\_nuclear\\_talks/execution-01152015150149.html](https://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/nk_nuclear_talks/execution-01152015150149.html); Kim Chae-hwan, “‘北당국, 최근 공개 재판·총살 자제’…민심 이반 의식?” [North Korean authorities recently refrain from public executions and shootings; in recognition of alienation of public support?], *DailyNK*, May 4, 2017, <https://www.dailynk.com/北당국-최근-공개-재판총살-자제민심>

**53** “김정은, ICC회부 겁났나?... ‘공개처형 금지하라’ 지시” [Is Kim Jong-un afraid of ICC referral? Instructs prohibition of public executions], *DailyNK*, December 13, 2016, <https://www.dailynk.com/김정은-icc회부-겁났나공개처형-금지>

**54** Lee Kyu-chang et al., *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2020* (Seoul: KINU, 2020), pp. 15 & 69-70, [https://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/module/report/view.do?idx=113738&nav\\_code=eng1674806000](https://www.kinu.or.kr/eng/module/report/view.do?idx=113738&nav_code=eng1674806000)

In its report in 2021, TJWG quoted a statement from an interviewee “that public executions are becoming less frequent and people are not as frequently mobilized to attend public executions as they were in the past” in Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province.<sup>55</sup> The interviewee had worked as a prosecutor in Hyesan City from 2011 to 2013 at the start of Kim Jong-un regime and escaped from North Korea in 2019.

The trend shown in Chart 3 above suggests a decrease in public executions between 2014 and 2017, following the publication of the COI report. However, this figure began to rise again in 2018. This aligns with the trajectory of international pressure and coordination building up after the COI report but weakening significantly after 2018.

The Moon Jae-in government, which took office in 2017, held three inter-Korean summits in 2018 without addressing human rights issues. Kim Jong-un, who sought the lifting of the sanctions, met with U.S. President Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019, but left empty-handed.

As the COVID-19 pandemic intensified in early 2020, Kim Jong-un resorted to draconian border closure and other extreme measures. Diplomats residing in Pyongyang returned to their capitals and even international relief organizations departed, leaving no foreigner to gauge the situation within North Korea. Since then, a situation continued where public executions can be carried out without restraint as further escapes from North Korea are blocked by the ongoing border closure and internal control is maintained.

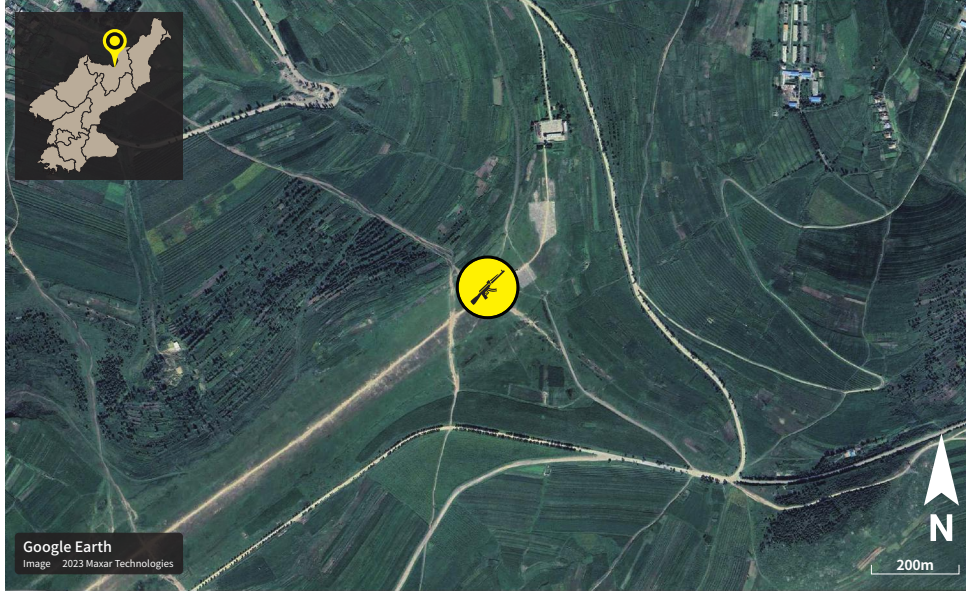
Of the 129 executions that can be classified by execution type, Type 1-A executions (public executions where the masses are mobilized) accounted for a little over half at 66 (51.2%).

The most frequently identified execution sites were Hyesan (Ryonbong) Airfield in Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province and the Susong Riverside in Sunam District, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province. In addition, 24 sites in

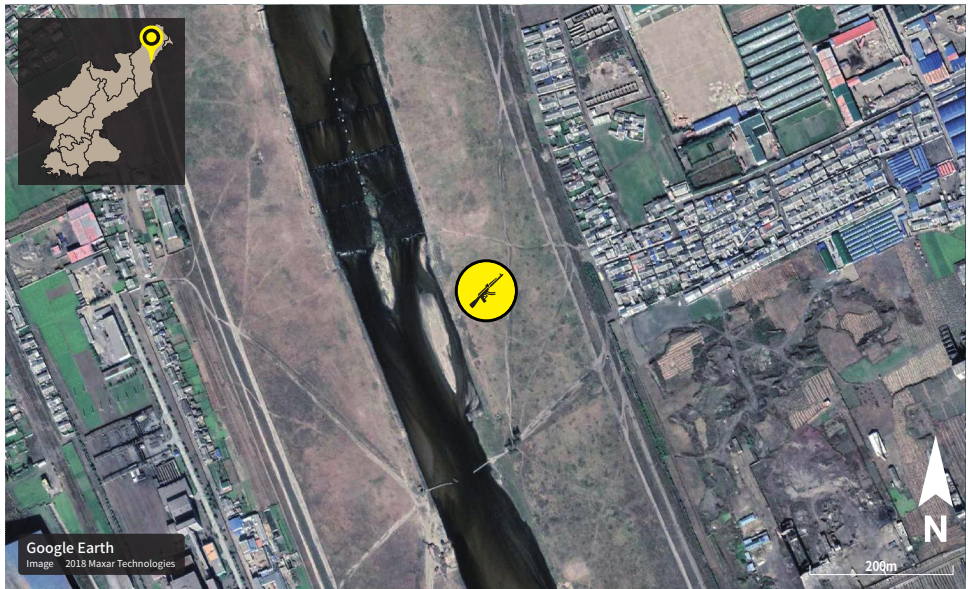
---

<sup>55</sup> TJWG, *Mapping Killings under Kim Jong-un*, p. 31, [https://en.tjwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Report2021\\_MappingKillingsUnderKimJong-un.pdf](https://en.tjwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Report2021_MappingKillingsUnderKimJong-un.pdf)

Satellite Image 1 | Hyesan (Ryonbong) Airfield in Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province



Satellite Image 2 | Susong Riverside in Sunam District, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province



17 cities and counties, including a magnetite mine in Pyoksong County, South Hwanghae Province and a rice paddy in Taesong Neighborhood, Sariwon City, North Hwanghae Province, were identified.<sup>56</sup>

The sites of Type 1-A executions (public executions where the masses are mobilized) exhibit the following characteristics: first, the sites are **open grounds, such as defunct airfields, riverbanks, open-storage yards for mine waste, and farmland**; second, they are large enough to mobilize a vast number of people to observe the executions; and third, in addition to the mobilized population, passers-by and people temporarily visiting the area for business, family visits, etc. also witness the executions.

North Korean escapees who participated in TJWG's interviews stated that it is common for authorities to announce the charges and issuing death sentences before the public executions. Many explained that the prior preparation for execution at the site supports the fact that death sentences had already been decided in advance, with the trial serving only as a mere formality.

Devices such as mobile phones that can record video/audio or take pictures of the scene may be confiscated.<sup>57</sup>

### **Type 1-B executions (public executions where specific groups are targeted for mobilization) and their sites**

Another type of public execution involves mobilizing select groups of people who share common attributes or connections, such as occupation, institutional affiliation, class or rank, to observe executions. It aims to maximize the terror for members of the targeted groups and to reinforce the targeted institution's discipline and obedience of its members. When the executed individuals are

---

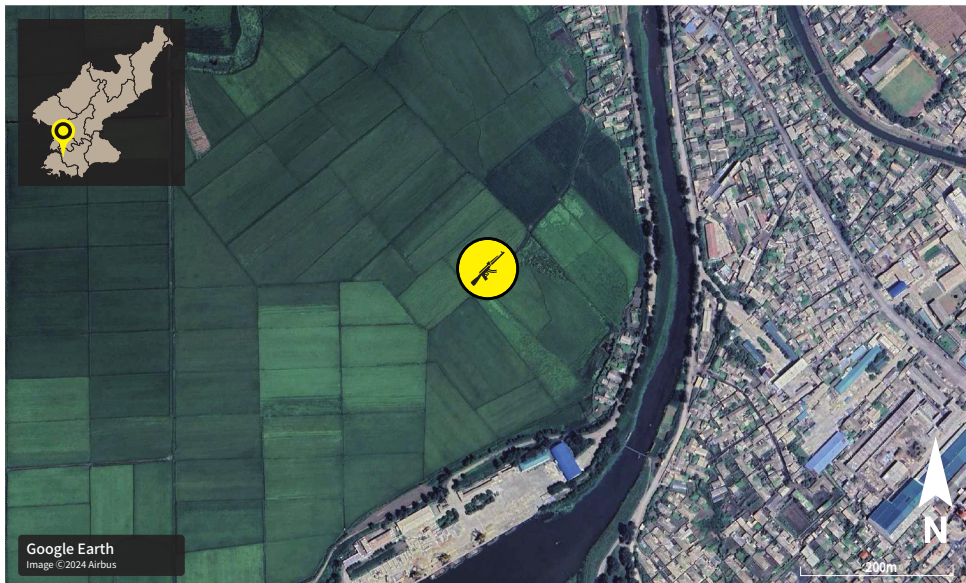
<sup>56</sup> The South Korean Ministry of Unification (MOU)'s Center for North Korean Human Rights Records reported that Ryonbong Airfield, the Pyongsu Market in Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province and Susong Riverside in Sunam District, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province as frequently used as execution sites. Satellite images of the Horyong[ryun] Riverside in Sapo District, Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province were also presented. Ministry of Unification, *2024 Report on North Korean Human Rights*, pp. 223-224.

<sup>57</sup> In its 2019 report, TJWG cited statements from two North Korean escapees that people were "searched using hand-held, airport-style metal detectors when entering the site where an execution was to take place in 2013 or 2014, to check for metal objects on the body such as mobile phones" and that "all metal items including phones, keys and knives were confiscated and put into a container with a name label identifying the owner. After the execution, witnesses could then reclaim their devices." TJWG, *Mapping the Fate of the Dead*, p. 38.

Satellite Image 3 | Magnetite mine in Pyoksong County, South Hwanghae Province



Satellite Image 4 | Rice paddy in Taesong Neighborhood, Sariwon City, North Hwanghae Province



senior cadres<sup>58</sup> or their families, it appears that only the targeted groups are exposed to the execution.

Of the 129 executions that can be classified by execution type, Type 1-B executions (public executions where specific groups are targeted for mobilization) accounted for 28 (21.7%).

This type of public execution was documented in 13 sites in five cities and counties. 9 of the 13 sites were found within Pyongyang and its vicinity. The sites were primarily at the universities run as educational institutions for senior cadres by the military, intelligence, public security sectors' special organs, and military firing ranges. In Pyongyang, the execution sites included the firing range of the Kang Kon Military Academy (Sunan District), Kim Jong-il People's Security University (Sunan District; currently "Kim Jong-il Social Security University"),<sup>59</sup> the Kim Il-sung University of Politics (Hyongjesan District),<sup>60</sup> the Ministry of State Security Bureau 10 (Radio Frequency Surveillance Bureau)'s Detection Department's outdoor field (Snake Valley in Chungi Neighborhood, Ryongsong District), the firing range of the 37th Brigade directly subordinate to the Supreme Guard Command (Samsok District), the Supreme Guard Command's infantry brigade firing range (Samsok District), and the Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB) headquarters firing range (Hyongjesan District). The Mirim plain on the outskirts of Pyongyang, the firing range of the training area for the 3rd Corps based in Nampo, which is adjacent to Pyongyang, and an empty lot of the 56th Brigade in Chongpyong County, South Hamgyong Province were also

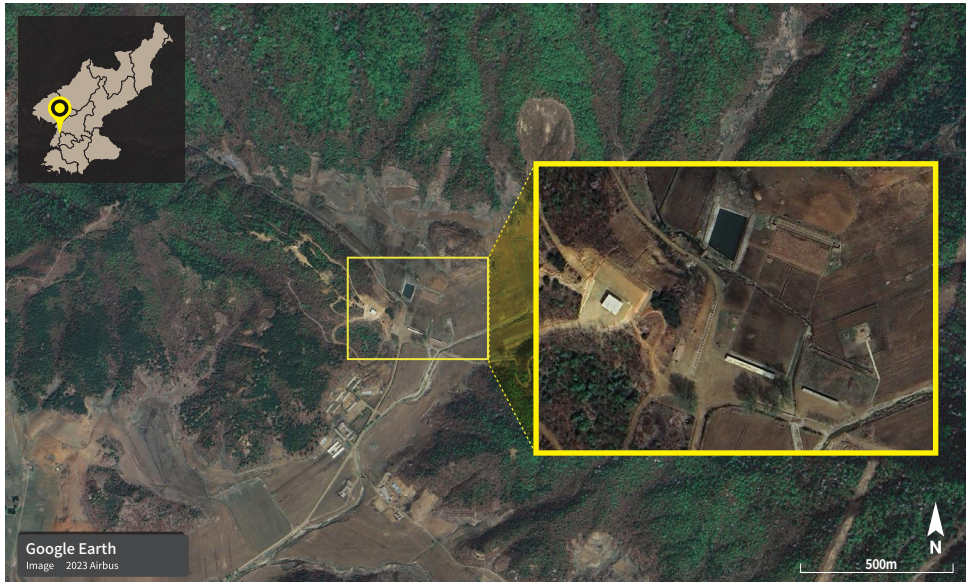
---

**58** In December 2016, the Institute for National Security Strategy (INSS), an organization affiliated with South Korea's National Intelligence Service (NIS), reported that it has identified about 140 Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), government, and the military officials who were executed during the first five years of Kim Jong-un's rule (2012-2016). According to the NISS, the number of officials executed by year increased sharply: three in 2012, about 30 in 2013, about 40 in 2014, and about 60 in 2015. There was a temporary pause in purges following the execution of Hyon Yong-chol, the Minister of the People's Armed Forces, in 2015; however, three senior officials were executed in 2016. INSS, 『김정은 집권 5년 失政 백서』 [White Paper on the Misrule of Kim Jong-un's 5 Years in Power] (Seoul: INSS, 2016) p. 25, <https://www.inss.re.kr/common/viewer.do?atchFileId=F78797&fileSn=0>

**59** Kim Jong-il People's Security University is a special educational institution that trains officials for the Ministry of People's Security ("ordinary" police; currently, the Ministry of Social Security) equivalent to Korean National Police University in South Korea. In 2012, at the start of the Kim Jong-un regime, "the People's Security University" was renamed "Kim Jong-il People's Security University" and again renamed "Kim Jong-il Social Security University" after the Ministry of People's Security was renamed Ministry of Social Security in 2020.

**60** The Kim Il-sung University of Politics (Hyongjesan District), is an institution for training political officers in the Korean People's Army (KPA). It is separate from Kim Il-sung Military University (Mangyongdae District), a re-education institution for officers in the KPA.

Satellite Image 5 | Firing range of the Kang Kon Military Academy, Sunan District, Pyongyang



Satellite Image 6 | Ministry of State Security Bureau 10 (Radio Frequency Surveillance Bureau)'s Detection Department's outdoor field, Ryongsong District, Pyongyang



identified.

On October 7, 2014, a public execution of several individuals by anti-aircraft machine gun fire at Kang Kon Military Academy's firing range was reportedly captured on satellite imagery.<sup>61</sup>

The sites of Type 1-B executions (public executions where specific groups are targeted for mobilization) exhibit the following characteristics: first, **these sites are primarily firing ranges that are strictly controlled by the military**; second, even if the civilian population at homes nearby hear the gunshots, they may assume that a routine shooting practice is taking place; third, these sites are off-limits to all except for the specific groups designated to observe the executions—though since there are many witnesses from the specific groups who observe the executions, those who did not observe the executions may hear about the executions and the criminal charges that were read out by words of mouth or rumors and later reported by North Korea-focused news outlets abroad.

The specific groups mobilized for public executions include the prison population. In various detention facilities, prisoners are assembled to watch together public executions to deter acts such as prison escapes. In TJWG's interviews, a North Korean escapee stated that a prisoner at Chongori *kyohwaso* (reeducation camp) was executed by shooting "with all the inmates watching" after killing a guard and attempting to escape in January 2019. DailyNK reported that a Mr. Shin, formerly a military police agent at the 7th Corp Headquarters, was executed in front of inmates at the labor reeducation camp for the eastern district under the Korean People's Army (KPA) Security Command just days before his release in September 2020, citing a source inside North Korea.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Greg Scarlatoiu and Joseph Bermudez Jr., "Unusual Activity at the Kanggon Military Training Area in North Korea: Evidence of Execution by Anti-aircraft Machine Guns?," *HRNK Insider*, <https://www.hrnkinsider.org/2015/04/unusual-activity-at-kanggon-military.html>

<sup>62</sup> Jeong Tae-joo, "軍 보위국 노동교양소에서 '공개총살'...부적절한 발언 때문?" [Public execution at KPA Security Command labor reeducation camp; because of inappropriate comments?], *DailyNK*, September 4, 2020, <https://www.dailynk.com/軍-보위국-노동교양소에서-공개총살부적절한-발>

## **Type 2 executions (non-public executions) and their sites**

During the UPR interactive dialogues, North Korea has repeatedly claimed that death sentences are carried out in designated places in a non-public manner in accordance with the law. However, North Korea has not disclosed at all the legal regulations and statistics concerning the death penalty or the places where death sentences are carried out.

DailyNK reported in 2016 that Kim Jong-un issued a directive banning public executions to judicial and prosecutorial organs across the country<sup>63</sup> and North Korean escapees have stated that public executions were almost unheard of around this time. However, there has been no escapee claim or North Korean-focused news outlet<sup>64</sup> reporting that Kim Jong-un ordered the elimination of the executions *per se*; therefore, non-public executions, including secret executions, may even have increased.

Of the 129 executions that can be classified by execution type, Type 2 executions (non-public executions) accounted for 29 (22.5%). Notably, the highest number of executions of this type occurred in 2020 when the measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic began to be implemented.

In relation to this, according to DailyNK's reporting in December 2021, the Ministry of Social Security and the Legal Affairs Department of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) Central Committee ordered inserting the point that "all [acts of inflow, dissemination and outflow of information] are to be executed indoors" in the stipulations of the addendum on the method of execution of punishment for each legal provision; this is meant to formalize indoor executions legally and administratively to preclude exposure to the outside world.<sup>64</sup>

Type 2 executions (non-public executions) were documented at 8 sites and

---

<sup>63</sup> "김정은, ICC회부 겁났나?... '공개처형 금지하라' 지시" [Is Kim Jong-un afraid of ICC referral? Instructs prohibition of public executions], *DailyNK*, December 13, 2016, <https://www.dailynk.com/김정은-icc회부-겁났나공개처형-금지>

<sup>64</sup> Jeong Tae-joo, "N. Korea appears to be conducting executions of people accused of leaking or bringing in information," *DailyNK*, December 9, 2021, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/n-korea-appears-to-be-conducting-executions-of-people-accused-of-leaking-or-bringing-in-information>

state organs in 8 cities and counties. Citing the sources inside North Korea, the North Korea-focused news outlets' reporting identified execution sites, including “inside the province-level People’s Security Bureau (currently “the province-level Social Security Bureau”) building in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province” (December 2012),<sup>65</sup> “after moving to Sinpa (Kimjongsuk County)” (April 2015),<sup>66</sup> “the *kuryujang* of the Ministry of State Security in Pyongyang” (December 2019),<sup>67</sup> “the city/county-level People’s Security Station (currently “the city/county-level Social Security Department”) in Samjiyon City, Ryanggang Province” (December 2019),<sup>68</sup> “the city/county-level State Security Department in Anju City, South Pyongan Province” (April 2020),<sup>69</sup> “the *kuryujang* of the province-level Social Security Bureau in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province” (October 2020),<sup>70</sup> “the *kukumso* of the city/county-level State Security Department in Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province” (August 2022),<sup>71</sup> and “the 2nd Corps civil-police unit firing range in Kaepung District, Kaesong” (October 2024).<sup>72</sup>

The sites of Type 2 executions (non-public executions) exhibit a number of characteristics. First, these sites are primarily locations where the Ministry of State Security (“State Security Department” until 2016) and the Ministry

<sup>65</sup> Choi Song-min, “Strong and Prosperous Naysayer Dies after 3 Years,” *DailyNK*, February 25, 2013, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/strong-and-prosperous-naysayer-die>

<sup>66</sup> Kang Mi-jin, “3 executed for watching S. Korean shows,” *DailyNK*, September 11, 2015, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/3-executed-for-watching-s-korean-s>

<sup>67</sup> Ha Yuna, “Alleged leaker of Kim Jong Un’s whereabouts executed,” *DailyNK*, January 14, 2020, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/alleged-leaker-kim-jong-un-whereabouts-executed>

<sup>68</sup> Ha Yuna, “양강도 삼지연서 의료사고 낸 의사 처형...주민들도 ‘화들짝’” [Doctor in Samjiyon, Ryanggang Province executed for medical accident; people also startled], *DailyNK*, January 8, 2020, <https://www.dailynk.com/양강도-삼지연서-의료사고-낸-의사-처형주민들도>

<sup>69</sup> Jeong Seo-yeong, “北, 국가 몰자 횡령 혐의 50대 여간부 재판 없이 무참히 처형” [North Korea brutally executes woman cadre in her 50s without trial on state material embezzlement charge], *DailyNK*, April 10, 2020, <https://www.dailynk.com/北-국가-몰-횡령-혐의-50대-여간부-재판-없이-무참히/>

<sup>70</sup> Jeong Tae-joo, “N. Korea appears to be conducting executions of people accused of leaking or bringing in information,” *DailyNK*, December 9, 2021, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/n-korea-appears-to-be-conducting-executions-of-people-accused-of-leaking-or-bringing-in-information>

<sup>71</sup> Lee Chae-eun, “N. Korea is still carrying out secret executions of alleged spies, other convicts,” *DailyNK*, August 3, 2022, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korea-still-carrying-out-secret-executions-of-alleged-spies-other-convicts>

<sup>72</sup> Jeong Tae-joo, “N. Korean military report exposes foreign media problem, sparks harsh punishments,” *DailyNK*, October 21, 2024, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korean-military-report-exposes-foreign-media-problem-sparks-harsh-punishments>

Satellite Image 7 | The province-level Social Security Bureau building in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province



Satellite Image 8 | The city-level State Security Department in Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province



of Social Security (“Ministry of People’s Security” until 2020) can control information leaks. Second, the execution methods vary depending on the size, location, and structure of the relevant organs. The security organs are mostly located in city centers and people reside within the earshot of gunfire. Therefore, if there is no special space to muzzle gunshots, blunt instruments are more likely to be used or executions may take place at firing ranges elsewhere. Third, while these sites are suited for information control because only those tasked with carrying out executions or other designated personnel have access, but the rumor of executions may spread among the population through the executioners or their superiors. Depending on the regime’s need, the executions may be mentioned subsequently in educational materials for cadres.

Non-public executions appear to be more commonly carried out in the provinces rather than in Pyongyang. In this regard, DailyNK reported in February 2014 that in the mass purge that followed Jang Song-thaek’s execution in December 2013, his associates were initially brought to Pyongyang to be executed but the executions now take place quietly in the provinces.<sup>73</sup> In August 2022, DailyNK cited a source inside North Korea who said that there had been non-public executions for roughly one or two persons per week at the *kukumso* of the city-level State Security Department in Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province—each execution conducted by a team of two officials under the command of a city-level State Security preliminary examiner—since the start of 2022 and that the condemned prisoners are held in solitary confinement segregated from the general prison population to keep their non-public executions a secret.<sup>74</sup>

There has been no escapee claim or North Korean-focused news outlets’ reporting about secret executions taking place in secluded spots like forests or

---

<sup>73</sup> Kang Mi-jin, “People’s Army a Target as Jang Fallout Continues,” *DailyNK*, February 5, 2014, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/peoples-army-a-target-as-jang-fall>

<sup>74</sup> Lee Chae-eun, “N. Korea is still carrying out secret executions of alleged spies, other convicts,” *DailyNK*, August 3, 2022, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korea-still-carrying-out-secret-executions-of-alleged-spies-other-convicts>

mountain valleys under Kim Jong-un's rule.<sup>75</sup> However, it cannot be ruled out that secret executions could be occurring in isolated locations for cases that could weaken the loyalty to Kim Jong-un or to his regime if the word got out to other cadres or raise hostility among the population if rumors spread.

There were 15 cases that could not be categorized by execution type, including 8 cases where death sentences were issued in public show trials but the condemned were taken away without being executed on the spot. Most of them are likely to have ended up in non-public executions and they will be reclassified if further information becomes available.

### **Type 3 executions (extrajudicial summary executions carried out without even a perfunctory trial) and their sites**

Summary executions by immediately killing those who are found to have violated the directives on border control and disease control, internal regulations of detention facilities, military law or special agencies' rules, etc. amount to arbitrary deprivation of life.

The issuance of death sentences and executions without a clear legal basis and a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal violates the right to life, the principle of legality, due process and fair trial rights, and the right to an effective remedy guaranteed in articles 3, 8, 10, and 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and articles 3, 6, 14, and 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Of the 129 executions that can be classified by execution type, Type 3 executions (extrajudicial summary executions carried out without even a perfunctory trial) accounted for 6 cases (4.7%)—one each in 2012, 2015, 2016 and 2023, and two cases in 2020.

The executions in 2012, 2016, and 2023 took place at *Kwanliso* (political

---

<sup>75</sup> In TJWG's interviews, a North Korean escapee who had been a driver in the Social Security Department stated that he witnessed two people being secretly executed in a mountain forest in the late 1990s on charges of murder and human trafficking. He also stated that he heard from his fellow Social Security officers that two additional secret executions took place in 2010 and 2011. However, all three secret executions took place under Kim Jong-il's rule. TJWG, *Mapping the Fate of the Dead*, p. 41.

prison camp) No. 25 in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province. *Kwanliso* No. 25, which has been in operation for about 60 years since the 1960s, is one of North Korea's most notorious political prison camps; no one in fact is known to have escaped successfully.<sup>76</sup>

The 2012 execution involved a man in his 20s who tried to escape being shot on the spot in March-April of that year. According to a local resident who lived nearby and rushed to the scene with other villagers after hearing loud gunshots, a man who was lying near the outermost barbed wire of the *kwanliso*, unable to cross it, received concentrated fire from about 20 guards who found him. The escapee was reportedly so weakened that he had given up trying to flee further and had likely attempted to kill himself before being shot.

“He couldn’t run because he hadn’t eaten. So, he was discovered here, and it felt like a war. About 20 people came and concentrated their fire on him. We weren’t allowed to get too close, but since there were only about 20 of them, they couldn’t block everyone, so we watched from some distance. In North Korea, there’s an L-shaped angle iron. He had sharpened one like a knife and drove it into his heart. He killed himself because torment awaited him back inside. They had to shoot him once they found him, whether he was dead or alive. The body was so small, with only skin left, and since 20 people shot at him, everything blew apart and not even much blood was spilt. Because he was so emaciated.

[at the satellite image] These are houses and this faintly visible part is all mountains. People ran over to see what was happening because the sound could even be heard from their homes. When they ran over,

---

<sup>76</sup> The US-based Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK) has been monitoring and providing updated information on the changes to *Kwanliso* No. 25, including its expansion, through the analysis of satellite imagery. HRNK, “North Korea’s Camp No. 25,” February 25, 2013, <https://www.hrnk.org/documentations/north-koreas-camp-no-25/>; “North Korea’s Camp No. 25, Update,” June 5, 2014, <https://www.hrnk.org/documentations/north-koreas-camp-no-25-update/>; “North Korea’s Camp No. 25 - Update 2,” November 29, 2016, <https://www.hrnk.org/documentations/north-korea-camp-no-25-update-2/>; “North Korea’s Political Prison Camp, *Kwan-li-so* No. 25, Update 3,” September 30, 2021, <https://www.hrnk.org/documentations/north-koreas-political-prison-camp-kwan-li-so-no-25-update-3/>; “North Korea’s Political Prison Camp *Kwan-li-so* No. 25, Update 4,” February 17, 2024, <https://www.hrnk.org/documentations/north-koreas-political-prison-camp-kwan-li-so-no-25-update/>

Satellite Image 9 | The locations of summary executions of escapees at *Kwanliso* No. 25 in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province (2012 and 2016)



they saw this scene unfold. The trees are thick, and here are the barbed wires. It is all double or triple layers of barbed wires. Since he was trying to run toward the outside, he must have been around here.”

As shown in the bottom right of Satellite Image 9, the distance between the

execution site in front of the *kwanliso*'s outer barbed wires, marked by the interviewee, and the cell block's wall was measured to be approximately 300 meters. About 50 houses are visible within the 400-meter radius of the execution site, and about 100 houses within the 500-meter radius and about 200 houses within the 600-meter radius. TJWG classified this case as an extrajudicial summary execution carried out without even a perfunctory trial while the cause of death was recorded as unclear whether it was a suicide or the concentrated fire directed at him.

The same interviewee gave a statement about another case that was witnessed in September 2016. A woman in her early 30s escaped from *Kwanliso* No. 25 and sought food at a house in the woods, but was beaten to death by agents who were dispatched after she was reported.

“This person was caught inside the house. She went over the barbed wires and came down to a mound. The electricity (from barbed wires) left holes this big on her palm and sole. These people can't eat so they need at least one meal. If they don't, they can't move. They usually assign houses at places like this. The houses for former military officers who are past their service age are assigned at locations like this. Entire families are assigned there, but this is not known. They don't wear uniforms—that's why. Honestly, when you are so hungry, would you recognize uniforms? No, not recognizable. So while she was fed, she was reported. She could not be shot because this was inside someone's house. No beating inside the house because it would damage the house. The house lady reported to the authorities and prison guards arrived. There are lots of guards here. Probably several hundreds of them. They arrived and beat the escapee outside (house yard) so badly that she couldn't walk, everything broken, not even human anymore. She couldn't even crawl and was unconscious, being dragged away. They beat her to death.

[at the satellite image] It's around here. Here. It's only one house uncannily situated by itself—a house that can be seen in a forest. Such houses are built there on purpose. (When prisoners attempt an escape) run, if they fail to capture them, they have to disappear. That's

how [*Kwanliso*] No. 22 in Hoeryong [in North Hamgyong Province] disappeared. [Houses] are sparsely placed here to avoid that fate.”

As shown in the top left of Satellite Image 9, the execution site at a covert facility disguised as a private residence, marked by the interviewee, is located approximately 1.65 kilometers from the cell block’s wall and 1.15 kilometers from the *kwanliso*’s outer barbed wires. TJWG classified this case as an extrajudicial summary execution carried out without even a perfunctory trial based on the interviewee’s explanation that she died from collective beatings in the yard of the house where she was arrested, without ruling out the possibility that she was dragged away alive to be executed in a different manner.

In 2023, there were reports that five inmates at *Kwanliso* No. 25 were executed after resisting punishment during outdoor labor.<sup>77</sup>

The victim of the extrajudicial summary execution in 2015 was the manager of a terrapin factory in Taedonggang District, Pyongyang, and this case was reported by several news outlets. According to these reports, in May 2015, Kim Jong-un visited the terrapin farm for “on-site guidance” and became enraged upon learning that all baby terrapins had died, holding the manager responsible and having him shot. The deaths of baby terrapins were caused by the shortage of electricity that made supplying water to the farm difficult and the inability to properly procure feed, but the execution took place to “set an example” during Kim Jong-un’s on-site guidance.<sup>78</sup> In fact, the North Korean state media reported that Kim Jong-un while inspecting the factory was “enraged” by “the ridiculous whimpering about the production not being normalized because of electricity, water, and facility issues” and said that it could “result in grave consequences of damaging the Party’s authority”—though no mention is made about the

---

**77** Mun Dong Hui, “청진 수성관리소 수감자 5명 공개처형...집단 소요 일으켰다?” [Five inmates at Chongjin Susong *Kwanliso* publicly executed...for allegedly inciting a group disturbance?], *DailyNK*, June 19, 2023, <https://www.dailynk.com/20230619-1/>; While *DailyNK* reported this case as a public execution on the grounds that other inmates were able to witness the execution, the article further states that security officials immediately appeared with machine guns and carried out the execution on the spot at the outdoor work site. Based on this account, TJWG classified the case as an extrajudicial summary execution rather than a public execution.

**78** Kang Mi-jin, “김정은 ‘격노’ 현지지도 자라공장 지배인 총살” [Kim Jong-un enraged and has manager of terrapin factory shot during on-site guidance], *DailyNK*, July 6, 2015, <https://www.dailynk.com/김정은-격노-현지지도-자라공장-지배>

execution.<sup>79</sup> This case is significant as a summary execution carried out without even a perfunctory procedure by Kim Jong-un's direct, impulsive order.<sup>80</sup>

Asia Press reported that another extrajudicial summary execution occurred immediately after the COVID-19 border closure in February 2020. According to Asia Press, its source in Hoeryong, North Hamgyong Province heard the news from foreign-currency dealers from nearby Rason that “In Rason, where there are frequent exchanges with Chinese people because of active trade with China, a trade official who was quarantined after displaying symptoms resembling a cold after coming into contact with Chinese merchants escaped from the quarantine facility. He was arrested by the People's Security Station (currently “the city-level Social Security Department”) and immediately shot.”<sup>81</sup> However, the article stated that the execution's “specific date and site are unknown and the authorities may have spread false information to instill fear among the people” and therefore TJWG also recorded it as a case that requires follow-up information or information from other sources.

In March 2020, Asia Press further reported that the Chinese border guard units notified the Chinese residents not to walk along the Amnok (Yalu) River to avoid getting shot by North Koreans, as the North Korean authorities consider China to be the source of COVID-19 and has given warning about the Chinese dumping of trash and sewage into the river.<sup>82</sup> The notice warned that, according to rumors, North Korea is taking extreme extermination measures against the personnel returning from China and infected individuals so they would be even

---

**79** Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), “김정은 제1비서 대동강자라공장을 현지지도” [First Secretary Kim Jong-un conducts on-site guidance of the Taedonggang terrapin factory], KCNA, May 19, 2015, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/calendardar/2015/05/05-19/2015-0519-003.html>

**80** Joo Sung-ha, a North Korea–specialist reporter at The Dong-A Ilbo, revisited the incident nine years later and reported the process by which the summary execution took place as follows: “Kim Jong-un hurled all kinds of insults at the manager and then shouted that ‘a bastard like this doesn’t deserve to live.’ Then, his bodyguards dragged the manger away and put him into a van that had been waiting nearby. After Kim Jong-un left, the manager was immediately shot. This was because Kim Jong-un said that he did not deserve to live. The officials who witnessed it at the scene were terrified.” Joo Sung-ha, “김정은의 간부 현장 처형 방식” [Kim Jong-un's on-site execution method for cadres], *Donga Ilbo*, September 26, 2024, <https://www.donga.com/news/Opinion/article/all/20200402/100459786/1>

**81** Kang Ji-won, “‘<Inside N. Korea> 3 Smugglers Shot for Treason’: Authorities Instill Fear Among Public to Prevent Infection by Would-be Border Crossers,” *Asia Press*, February 17, 2020, <https://www.asiapress.org/rimjin-gang/2020/02/society-economy/smuggling-military-law>

**82** Kang Ji-won, “N. Korea Notifies Chinese Border Authorities that it Will Shoot ‘Hostile’ Citizens and Smugglers ‘Without Warning,’” *Asia Press*, March 5, 2020, <https://www.asiapress.org/rimjin-gang/2020/03/recommendations/without-warning>



more ruthless to the Chinese.

In late August 2020, the Ministry of Social Security issued a proclamation starting that any personnel approaching the border closure line will be shot unconditionally.<sup>83</sup> Less than a month later, in September 2020, Lee Dae-jun, a first officer from South Korea’s Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF), fell overboard from a fisheries guidance vessel and drifted in the West Sea before the North Korean military shot him and burned his body.<sup>84</sup> This showed that the North Korean authority’s proclamation is applied without mercy regardless of nationality or reason. It appears that many North Koreans were also subjected to extrajudicial summary executions under the measures related to COVID-19, but specific cases have not been identified.

Map 4 shows the nationwide distribution of 46 execution sites identified thus far during Kim Jong-un’s rule by execution type.

Among the 46 execution sites, the coordinates for 40 of them, as listed in Table 4, were obtained by North Korean escapees directly identifying the locations on satellite imagery in the mapping interviews and by locating the place names in the reporting by North Korea-focused news outlets.

**Table 4 | List of 46 execution sites and coordinates for 40 sites**

Administrative unit		Execution site	Execution type	Source	Coordinates	Source of coordinates
North Hamgyong Province	Onsong County	"An empty lot near Kangan Senior Middle School"	1-A: Public (Mass)	DailyNK	N/A	
		Machinery technical school	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	42° 57' 13.78"N 129° 59' 18.43"E	TJWG
		Onsong County Social Security Department	2: Non-Public	DailyNK	42° 57' 34.76"N 129° 59' 11.66"E	TJWG
	Hoeryong City	Stadium	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	42° 25' 40.21"N 129° 45' 23.23"E	TJWG

<sup>83</sup> Ha Yuna, "N. Korea sets up 'strict security zones' on Sino-North Korean border," *DailyNK*, September 7, 2020, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korea-sets-up-strict-security-zones-sino-north-korean-border>

<sup>84</sup> Jang Seulkee, "北 간부 증언 '남측 사무원에 월북 의사 물었지만 살려달라고만'" [North Korean Official Testifies: "He Asked South Korean Official about Defecting but Only Pleaded to Be Spared"], *DailyNK*, July 5, 2022, <https://www.dailynk.com/20220705-2/>

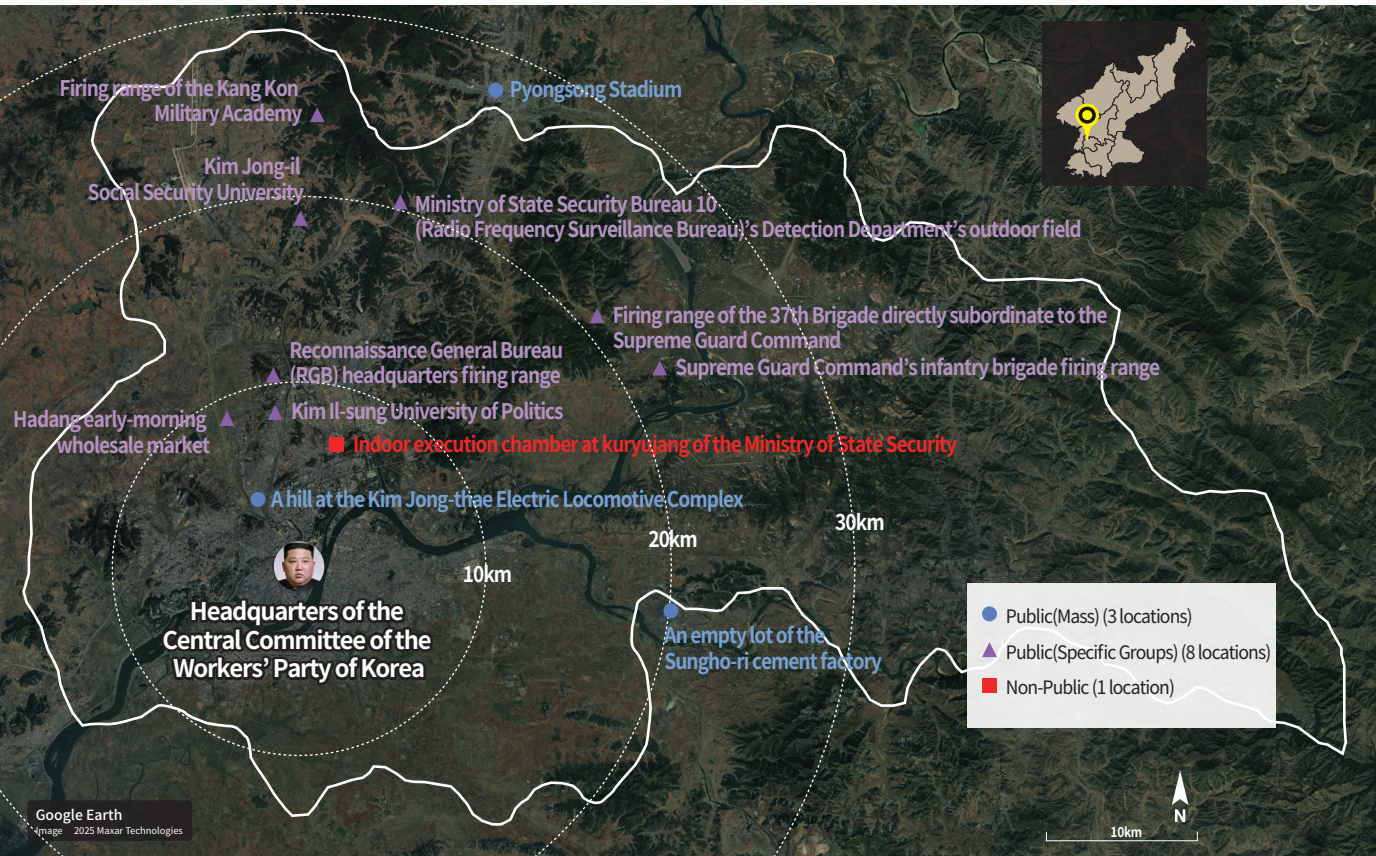
Administrative unit	Execution site	Execution type	Source	Coordinates	Source of coordinates	
North Hamgyong Province	Hoeryong City	Chongori <i>kyohwaso</i>	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	DailyNK	42° 12' 32.79"N 129° 45' 18.22"E	TJWG
		Sand ground near the Chongori <i>kyohwaso</i>	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	TJWG	42° 12' 19.07"N 129° 45' 11.03"E	TJWG
		Hoeryong City State Security Department <i>kukumso</i>	2: Non-Public	DailyNK	42° 26' 16.05"N 129° 45' 19.13"E (Central coordinates of the Hoeryong City State Security Department)	TJWG
	Musan County	Youth park	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	42° 13' 52.90"N 129° 12' 30.37"E	TJWG
		"Mikang mudflat"	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	42° 13' 48.11"N 129° 13' 24.34"E	TJWG
	Chongjin City	Susong-dong Railway Bridge	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	41° 49' 43.87"N 129° 45' 13.89"E	TJWG
		Susong Riverside in Sunam District	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	41° 47' 16.35"N 129° 45' 34.45"E	TJWG
		North Hamgyong Province Social Security Bureau Indoor <i>kuryujang</i>	2: Non-Public	DailyNK	41° 47' 24.05"N 129° 47' 25.75"E (Central coordinates of the North Hamgyong Province Social Security Bureau)	TJWG
		<i>Kwanliso</i> No. 25	3: Extrajudicial Summary	TJWG	41° 50' 00.61"N 129° 43' 34.34"E (Central coordinates of <i>Kwanliso</i> No. 25)	TJWG
	South Hamgyong Province	Tanchon City	Smelter embankment	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	40° 26' 30.43"N 128° 54' 30.71"E
Hamhung City		Pyongsu Market Bridge	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	39° 55' 39.62"N 127° 33' 35.56"E	TJWG
		Horyon Riverside	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	39° 54' 55.57"N 127° 33' 27.89"E	TJWG
		Yongdae Bridge in Sapo District	1-A: Public (Mass)	DailyNK	39° 53' 27.04"N 127° 33' 6.73"E	TJWG
Kumya County		Jinhung Bridge	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	39° 27' 29.96"N 127° 23' 46.75"E	TJWG
Chongpyong County		An empty lot of the 56th Brigade	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	TJWG	N/A	
Ryanggang Province	Taehongdan County	A front yard of No. 5 Middle School	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	42° 0' 0.70"N 128° 51' 0.54"E	TJWG
	Samjiyon City	Samjiyon City Social Security Department	2: Non-Public	DailyNK	41° 48' 37.60"N 128° 19' 12.05"E	TJWG

Administrative unit		Execution site	Execution type	Source	Coordinates	Source of coordinates
Ryanggang Province	Hyesan City	"95 Valley"	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	41° 23' 48.12"N 128° 13' 5.61"E	TJWG
		An empty lot of Bonghung Middle School	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	41° 23' 10.33"N 128° 12' 7.36"E	TJWG
		Hyesan (Ryonbong) Airfield	1-A: Public (Mass) 1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	TJWG, DailyNK	41° 22' 52.47"N 128° 12' 37.36"E	TJWG
Chagang Province	Kopung County	"In front of a market"	1-A: Public (Mass)	DailyNK	N/A	
	Chosan County	"An open lot of the forest management office"	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	DailyNK	N/A	
South Pyongan Province	Anju City	Anju City State Security Department	2: Non-Public	DailyNK	39° 36' 54.51"N 125° 39' 47.50"E	TJWG
	Pyongsong City	Pyongsong Stadium	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	39° 14' 38.32"N 125° 51' 56.57"E	TJWG
	Songchon County	"Riverbank in Songchon Town"	1-A: Public (Mass)	DailyNK	N/A	
Kangwon Province	Wonsan City	Kangwon Province Social Security Bureau underground execution chamber	2: Non-Public	DailyNK	39° 9' 51.69"N 127° 25' 14.83"E (Central coordinates of the Kangwon Province Social Security Bureau)	TJWG
North Hwanghae Province	Sungho County	An empty lot of the Sungho-ri cement factory	1-A: Public (Mass)	DailyNK	38° 59' 46.91"N 125° 58' 26.52"E (Central coordinates of the Sungho-ri cement factory)	MOU NK Information Portal - NK map
	Sariwon City	Rice paddy in Taesong Neighborhood	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	38° 31' 10.24"N 125° 43' 32.01"E	TJWG
South Hwanghae Province	Pyoksong County	Magnetite mine	1-A: Public (Mass)	TJWG	38° 1' 7.22"N 125° 30' 12.91"E	TJWG
Pyongyang		A hill at the Kim Jong-thae Electric Locomotive Complex	1-A: Public (Mass)	DailyNK	39° 2' 55.21"N 125° 43' 9.18"E (Central coordinates of the Complex)	TJWG
		Firing range of the Kang Kon Military Academy	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	TJWG, DailyNK, RFA, Asia Press	39° 13' 48.64"N 125° 45' 29.03"E	HRNK <sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Greg Scarlatoiu and Joseph Bermudez Jr., *Unusual Activity at the Kangwon Military Training Area in North Korea: Evidence of Execution by Anti-aircraft Machine Guns?* (Washington D.C: Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2015), p.1, [https://www.hrnk.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/eng/HRNKInsider\\_Greg\\_Joe\\_4\\_29\\_15.pdf](https://www.hrnk.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/eng/HRNKInsider_Greg_Joe_4_29_15.pdf)

Administrative unit	Execution site	Execution type	Source	Coordinates	Source of coordinates
Pyongyang	Ministry of State Security Bureau 10 (Radio Frequency Surveillance Bureau)'s Detection Department's outdoor field	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	DailyNK	39° 11' 32.23"N 125° 48' 21.56"E	DailyNK
	Kim Jong-il Social Security University (formerly "Kim Jong-il People's Security University")	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	Asia Press	39° 10' 46.39"N 125° 44' 29.71"E	DailyNK
	Firing range of the 37th Brigade directly subordinate to the Supreme Guard Command	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	DailyNK	39° 7' 43.25"N 125° 55' 39.91"E	DailyNK
	Supreme Guard Command's infantry brigade firing range	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	DailyNK	39° 6' 13.67"N 125° 57' 57.17"E	DailyNK
	Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB) headquarters firing range	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	DailyNK	39° 5' 49.81"N 125° 43' 37.60"E	DailyNK
	Kim Il-sung University of Politics	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	DailyNK	39° 5' 11.94"N 125° 43' 47.75"E	MOU NK Information Portal - NK map
	Hadang early-morning wholesale market	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	DailyNK	39° 4' 41.62"N 125° 41' 59.08"E	DailyNK
	Indoor execution chamber at kuryujang of the Ministry of State Security	2: Non-Public	DailyNK, RFA	39° 4' 27.22"N 125° 46' 6.00"E (Central coordinates of the Ministry of State Security)	TJWG
Nampo	Firing range at the 3rd Corps training area	1-B: Public (Specific Groups)	DailyNK	N/A	
Kaesong	"An empty lot in front of Kaesong Station"	1-A: Public (Mass)	DailyNK	37° 58' 9.39"N 126° 32' 32.52"E (Central Coordinates of Kaesong Station)	TJWG
	2nd Corps civil-police unit firing range in Kaepung District	2: Non-Public	DailyNK	37° 56' 53.62"N 126° 24' 58.50"E	DailyNK

Satellite Image 10 | 12 execution sites within Pyongyang and in the adjacent areas by execution type



Satellite Image 10 shows the distribution of 12 execution sites within Pyongyang and in the adjacent areas. All the execution sites are within a 30-km radius of the Workers' Party of Korea Building No.1 (headquarters of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea), which is known to be Kim Jong-un's office. 5 of the 10 execution sites within Pyongyang are concentrated within a 10-km radius to the north of Kim Jong-un's office.

### Execution methods

Article 32 of North Korea's Law on Execution of Judgments and Decisions provides that death sentences shall be carried out by "methods such as

Table 5 | **Methods of 111 executions**

Unit: cases (persons)

Method	Year													Total
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Shooting 96.4%	10 (30)	22 (80)	10 (53)	9 (21)	1 (1)	2 (2)	5 (5)	6 (7)	19 (32)	9 (15)	6 (8)	7 (24)	1 (2)	107 (290)
Hanging 1.8%	1 (1)		1 (1)											2 (2)
Blunt instrument 1.8%	1 (1)								1 (1)					2 (2)
Unknown	3 (3)		1 (1)		1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (4)	2 (2)	5 (12)	8 (32)	3 (7)	2 (5)	4 (5)	33 (73)
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(35)</b>	<b>22</b> <b>(80)</b>	<b>12</b> <b>(55)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>(21)</b>	<b>2</b> <b>(2)</b>	<b>3</b> <b>(3)</b>	<b>8</b> <b>(9)</b>	<b>8</b> <b>(9)</b>	<b>25</b> <b>(55)</b>	<b>17</b> <b>(47)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>(15)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>(29)</b>	<b>5</b> <b>(7)</b>	<b>144</b> <b>(367)</b>

shooting,”<sup>86</sup> but in fact, executions appear to have been carried out by shooting, hanging, and by the use of blunt instruments. Of the 144 documented executions and death sentencings during Kim Jong-un’s rule, the execution methods were known for 111 cases. As seen in Table 5, **107 executions were carried out by shooting, two executions by hanging, and two executions by the use of blunt instruments.** For the remaining 25 executions, no information is available about execution methods. The other 8 cases concern death sentencings without information about the corresponding execution.

## Shooting

Of the 111 cases where the execution methods were known, there were 107 executions using firearms such as rifles and machine guns (96.4%). 61 of 66 Type 1-A executions (public executions where the masses are mobilized) (92.4%), 27 of 28 Type 1-B executions (public executions where specific groups are targeted for mobilization) (96.4%), 11 of 29 Type 2 executions (non-public executions) (37.9%), 5 of 6 Type 3 executions (extrajudicial summary executions carried out without even a perfunctory trial) (83.3%), and 3 of 15 other cases where the execution type is unknown (20.0%) were reportedly

<sup>86</sup> “Law on Execution of Judgments and Decisions of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” adopted by the Permanent Assembly of the Supreme People’s Assembly on January 23, 1997, amended by the Standing Committee of the Supreme People’s Assembly in 『북한법령집 상』[Compilation of North Korea’s legal codes, vol. I] (Seoul: NIS, 2024), p. 634, [https://www.nis.go.kr/AF/1\\_2\\_1.do](https://www.nis.go.kr/AF/1_2_1.do)

carried out by shooting.

## **Hanging**

Two executions by hanging were reported in the autumn of 2012 and November 2014. Both were mentioned exclusively in TJWG's interviews; North Korea-focused news outlets reported none. Both executions were Type 1-A executions (public executions where the masses are mobilized).

The site of the execution by hanging in 2012 was identified as a youth park in Musan County, North Hamgyong Province. According to the interviewee who claimed to have witnessed the execution, a young man who had helped many North Koreans escape from North Korea and go to South Korea was executed on the charge of "human trafficking" which was read out at the scene.

The site of the execution by hanging in 2014 was identified as a place near the Susong-dong Railway Bridge in Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province. The interviewee said a man who had already died from hanging came into view on the way back from the Sunam market. There were reportedly five vehicles from the city/county-level People's Security Station (currently "the city/county-level Social Security Department") and about 20 People's Security agents, five of them in uniform, as well as a crowd of approximately 1,000 people. The executed man's age and name are unknown and the charge against him was "doing drugs."

## **Blunt instruments**

Two executions by the use of blunt instruments both occurred in Type 2 executions (non-public executions). In DailyNK's reporting of "indoor executions" and "in-prison executions," the sources mentioned that "an iron mace" (December 2012) and "a hammer" (April 2020) were used in the two reported cases.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Choi Song-min, "Strong and Prosperous Naysayer Dies after 3 Years," *DailyNK*, February 25, 2013, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/strong-and-prosperous-naysayer-die>; Jeong Seo-yeong, "北. 국가 몰자 횡령 혐의 50대 여 간부 재판 없이 무참히 처형" [North Korea brutally executes woman cadre in her 50s without trial on state material embezzlement charge], *DailyNK*, April 10, 2020, <https://www.dailynk.com/北-국가-몰-횡령-혐의-50대-여간부-재판-없이-무참히>

## Capital offenses

To analyze the grounds for executions during Kim Jong-un's rule, TJWG classified the cases of executions and death sentences by capital offense.

### **International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS)**

For the consistent classification and systematic analysis of capital offenses, TJWG utilized the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS). The ICCS was developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and endorsed by the 46th United Nations Statistical Commission (StatCom) in March 2015 and the 24th Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in May 2015 as an international statistical standard for data collection.<sup>88</sup>

The ICCS groups criminal offenses in homogeneous categories, which are aggregated at four levels: Levels 1 (Sections), 2 (Divisions), 3 (Groups), and 4 (Classes).

11 categories of Level 1 and their 2-digit numerical coding are as follows:

- 01 Acts leading to death or intending to cause death
- 02 Acts leading to harm or intending to cause harm to the person
- 03 Injurious acts of a sexual nature
- 04 Acts against property involving violence or threat against a person
- 05 Acts against property only
- 06 Acts involving controlled psychoactive substances or other drugs
- 07 Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption
- 08 Acts against public order, authority and provisions of the State
- 09 Acts against public safety and state security
- 10 Acts against the natural environment
- 11 Other criminal acts not elsewhere classified

For instance, drink-driving is classified as “02 Acts leading to harm or intending to cause harm to the person” at Level 1, “0207 Dangerous acts” at Level 2,

---

<sup>88</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes*, Version 1.0 (Vienna: UNODC, March 2015), <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics/iccs.html>

“02072 Operating a vehicle under the influence of psychoactive substances” at Level 3, and “020721 Operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol” at Level 4. Every crime has a Level 1 category (2-digit code) and a Level 2 category (4-digit code), but it may have a Level 3 category (5-digit code) without a Level 4 category (6-digit code) or lack both Level 3 and Level 4 categories.

As more UN member states have adopted the ICCS or utilized it while taking into consideration the features of the domestic criminal justice system for their crime policy, statistical international comparative research has become easier.<sup>89</sup>

As shown in Table 6, TJWG classified the capital offenses cited in the 144 documented executions and death sentences during Kim Jong-un’s rule by Level 1 (2-digit codes), Level 2 (4-digit codes), Level 3 (5-digit codes), and Level 4 (6-digit codes) categories of the ICCS.

**Table 6 | Classification of reported capital offenses in North Korea using the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS)**

Level 1 categories (2-digit codes)	Level 2 categories (4-digit codes)	Level 3 categories (5-digit codes)	Level 4 categories (6-digit codes)
01 Acts leading to death or intending to cause death	0101 Intentional homicide		
	0103 Non-intentional homicide	01032 Negligent manslaughter	
02 Acts leading to harm or intending to cause harm to the person	0202 Acts against liberty	02022 Deprivation of liberty	020221 Kidnapping
03 Injurious acts of a sexual nature	0301 Sexual violence	03011 Rape	
	0302 Sexual exploitation	03021 Sexual exploitation of adults	

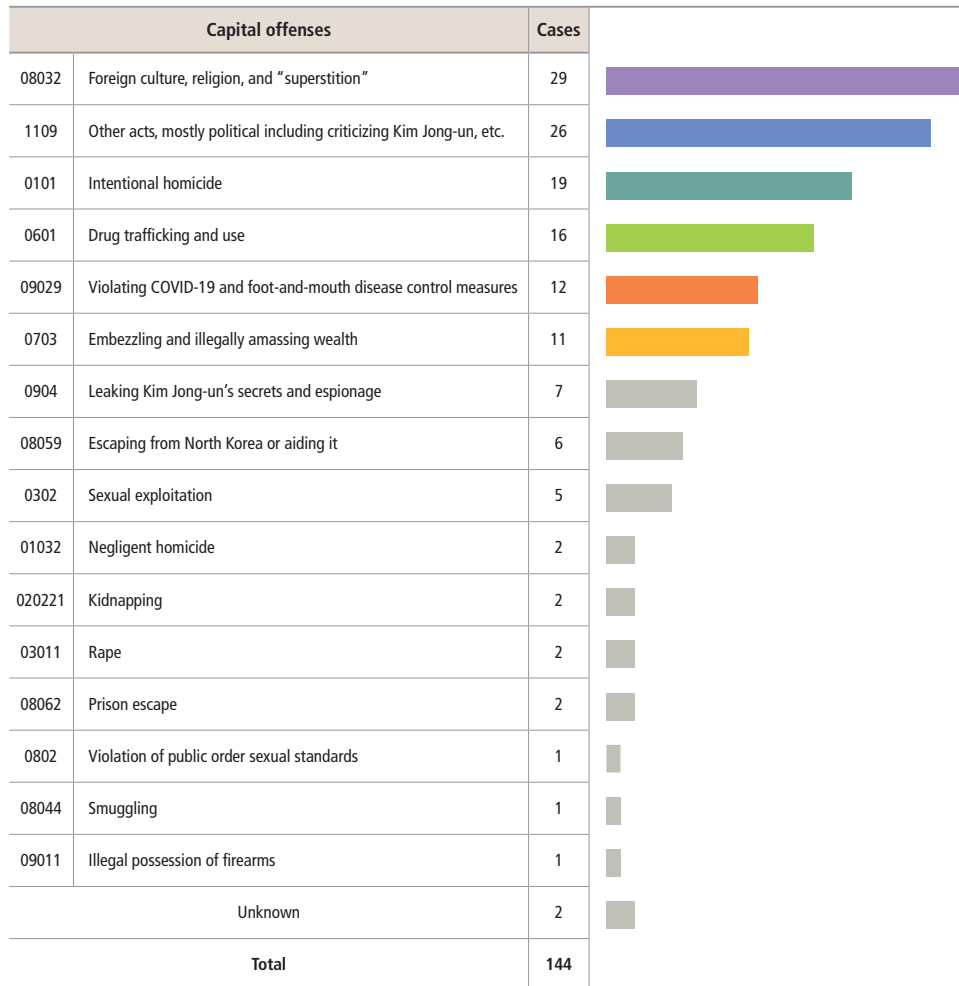
<sup>89</sup> In June 2024, South Korea completed the establishment of the general classification under the ICCS-based Korean Classification of Crime for Statistics Purposes (KCCS). Statistics Korea (KOSTAT), “범죄로부터 안전한 사회 구현, 시작은 한국범죄분류로부터: 통계청, 한국범죄분류 일반분류 제정” [Realizing society safe from crime begins with Korean Classification of Crime for Statistics Purposes: Statistics Korea establishes general classification under the Korean Classification of Crime for Statistics Purposes], press release, June 24, 2024, [https://kostat.go.kr/board.es?mid=a10301010000&bid=246&list\\_no=431421&act=view](https://kostat.go.kr/board.es?mid=a10301010000&bid=246&list_no=431421&act=view). South Korea’s Ministry of Data and Statistics provides the Korean translation of ICCS and KCCS. Ministry of Data and Statistics, “국제범죄분류,” [https://kssc.mods.go.kr:8443/ksscNew\\_web/kssc/common/ClassificationContent.do?strCategoryNameCode=058](https://kssc.mods.go.kr:8443/ksscNew_web/kssc/common/ClassificationContent.do?strCategoryNameCode=058) “한국범죄분류,” [https://kssc.mods.go.kr:8443/ksscNew\\_web/kssc/common/ClassificationContent.do?strCategoryNameCode=067](https://kssc.mods.go.kr:8443/ksscNew_web/kssc/common/ClassificationContent.do?strCategoryNameCode=067)

Level 1 categories (2-digit codes)	Level 2 categories (4-digit codes)	Level 3 categories (5-digit codes)	Level 4 categories (6-digit codes)
06 Acts involving controlled drugs or other psychoactive substances	0601 Unlawful acts involving controlled drugs or precursors [drug trafficking and use]	06011 Unlawful possession, purchase, use, cultivation or production of controlled drugs for personal consumption [drug use]  06012 Unlawful trafficking, cultivation or production of controlled drugs or precursors not for personal consumption [drug trafficking]	
07 Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption	0703 Corruption [embezzling and illegally amassing wealth]	07032 Embezzlement  07035 Illicit enrichment	
08 Acts against public order, authority and provisions of the State	0802 Acts against public order sexual standards  0803 Acts related to freedom of expression or control of expression  0804 Acts contrary to public revenue or regulatory provisions  0805 Acts related to migration  0806 Acts against the justice system	08029 Other acts against public order sexual standards  08032 Acts related to expressions of controlled social beliefs and norms [Use, introduction and dissemination, etc. of foreign culture and information, religious acts, and "superstitious" acts]  08044 Smuggling of goods  08059 Other unlawful acts related to migration [escaping from North Korea or aiding it]  08062 Breach of justice order [prison escape]	080321 Violations of norms on religious beliefs/views [Religious acts and "superstitious" acts]  080329 Other acts related to expressions of controlled social beliefs and norms [Use, introduction and dissemination, etc. of foreign culture, and information]
09 Acts against public safety and state security	0901 Acts involving weapons, explosives and other destructive materials  0902 Acts against health and safety  0904 Acts against state security [leaking Kim Jong-un's secrets and espionage]	09011 Possession or use of weapons and explosives [illegal possession of firearms]  09029 Other acts against health and safety [violating COVID-19 and foot-and-mouth disease control measures]	
11 Other criminal acts not elsewhere classified	1109 Other criminal acts not elsewhere classified [criticizing Kim Jong-un; violating Kim Jong-un's orders and policies; undermining Kim Jong-un's authority; neglecting protection of Kim Jong-un; forming a private group; criticizing and misleading the Party's policies; criticizing the Ministry of State Security; disobeying and protesting court decisions; slaughtering and consuming cattle; eating human flesh, inmate resistance, etc.]		

## Top 6 capital offenses reported under Kim Jong-un’s rule

Chart 4 shows the 16 capital offenses cited in the 144 documented executions and death sentences during Kim Jong-un’s rule.<sup>90</sup>

Chart 4 | 16 reported capital offenses



<sup>90</sup> Although categorizing capital offenses was relatively straightforward, about 20 cases required considerable time. In some instances, the criminal charges were complex, or residents reportedly found it difficult to understand how the crime could warrant a death sentence. In other cases, rumors circulated that the execution had been ordered for different reasons. In such situations, TJWG referred to not only the capital offenses read out by the North Korean authorities but also the contextual information provided in statements from TJWG’s interviews or North Korea-focused media, as well as follow-up information that became known months or years later. The crimes for two death sentences were classified as “unknown” due to insufficient information.

Among the 144 documented executions and death sentencings, the top 6 capital offenses, cited 10 times or more, were: ① acts violating controls on freedom of expression such as the use, introduction, dissemination, etc. of foreign culture and information—including South Korean movies, dramas, and music—as well as religious and “superstitious” acts with 29 cases (20.1%); ② criminal acts not elsewhere classified, mostly political offenses, such as violating Kim Jong-un’s orders and policies; criticizing Kim Jong-un, the Party and the Ministry of State Security; forming a private group; slaughtering and consuming cattle; eating human flesh, etc. with 26 cases (18.1%); ③ intentional homicide with 19 cases (13.2%); ④ drug trafficking and use with 16 cases (11.1%); ⑤ acts violating COVID-19 and foot-and-mouth disease control measures with 12 cases (8.3%); and ⑥ embezzling and illegally amassing wealth with 11 cases (7.6%).

The three key implications of the top 6 reported capital offenses are as follows:

First, the Kim Jong-un regime appears to prioritize ideological and cultural control and punishment of its people. The regime seems to fear foreign culture, including South Korean movies, dramas, and music, as well as religion and “superstition” the most as threats to its survival.

Second, the fact that the category consisting of mostly political offenses (such as violating Kim Jong-un’s orders and policies, and criticizing Kim Jong-un, the Party, and the Ministry of State Security – see near the end of Table 7 for a breakdown of these offenses) is the second most numerous, supports the view that North Korea’s death penalty system is a key means of maintaining Kim Jong-un’s power.

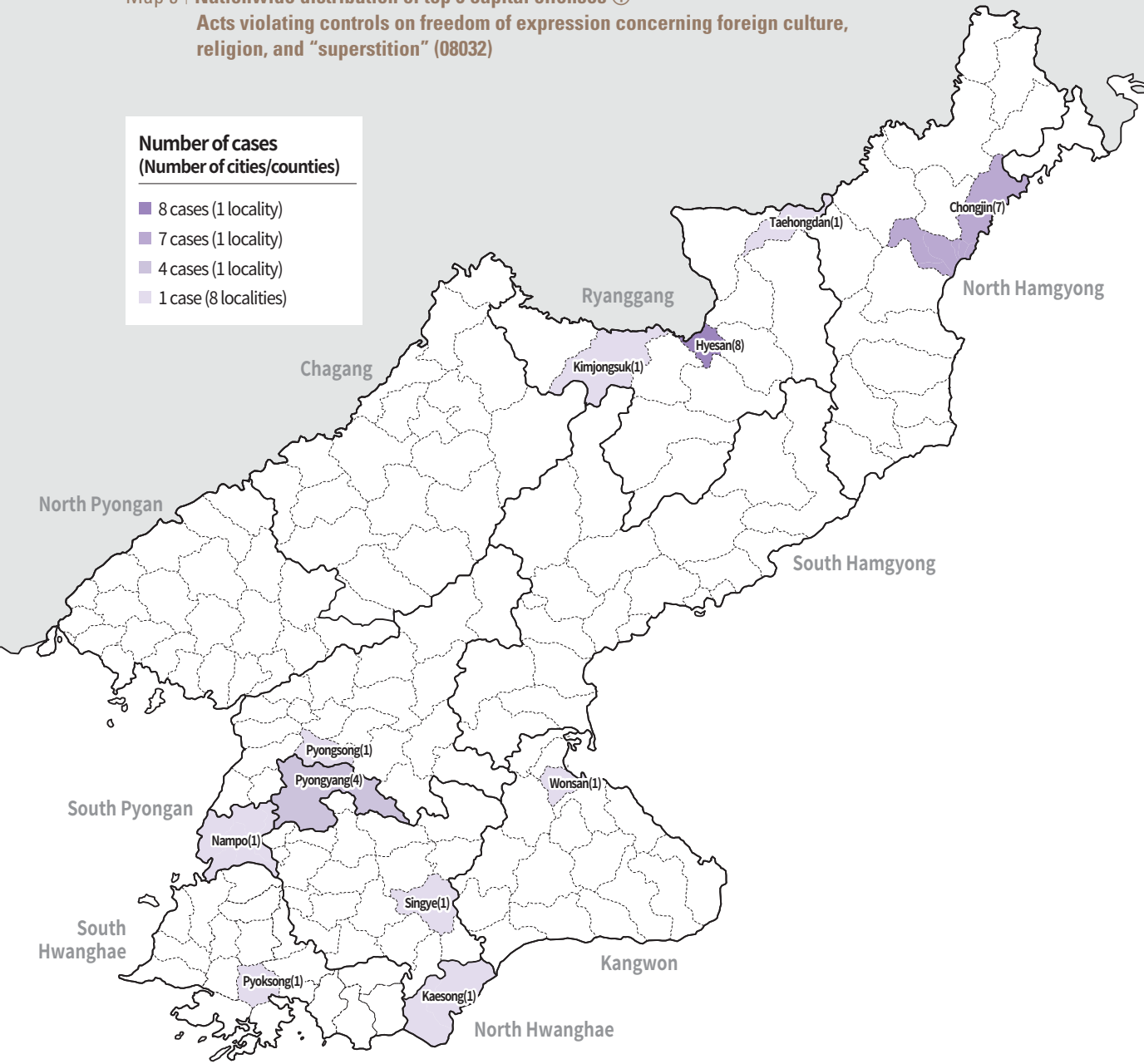
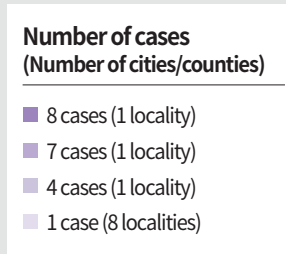
Third, despite the fact that North Korea claimed at the UPRs and other UN forums that it carries out public executions of heinous murderers (only at the request of the murder victims’ families), there were an overwhelming number of capital offenses other than intentional homicide.

### **Regional characteristics of the top 6 capital offenses under Kim Jong-un’s rule**

TJWG created a map showing the nationwide distribution of each of the top 6 reported capital offenses under Kim Jong-un’s rule.

Map 5 | Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ①

Acts violating controls on freedom of expression concerning foreign culture, religion, and “superstition” (08032)



Province-level administrative unit	Cases and persons	Breakdown by city/county
Rygangang Province	10 cases / 46 persons	Hyesan City (8 cases / 42 persons), Kimjongsuk County (1 case / 3 persons), Taehongdan County (1 case / 1 person)
North Hamgyong Province	7 cases / 27 persons	Chongjin City (7 cases / 27 persons)
Pyongyang	4 cases / 15 persons	
South Pyongan Province	1 case / 2 persons	Pyongsong City (1 case / 2 persons)
Kangwon Province	1 case / 1 person	Wonsan City (1 case / 1 person)
North Hwanghae Province	1 case / 1 person	Singye County (1 case / 1 person)
South Hwanghae Province	1 case / 1 person	Pyoksong County (1 case / 1 person)
Nampo	1 case / 1 person	
Kaesong	1 case / 2 persons	
Unknown	2 cases / 2 persons	
<b>Total</b>	<b>29 cases / 98 persons</b>	

As shown in Map 5, 27 of the 29 executions and death sentencings for acts violating controls on freedom of expression such as the use, introduction, dissemination of foreign culture and information, including South Korean movies, dramas, and music, as well as religious and “superstitious” acts were reported in 11 localities (Pyongyang, Nampo, Kaesong, and 8 other cities/counties).

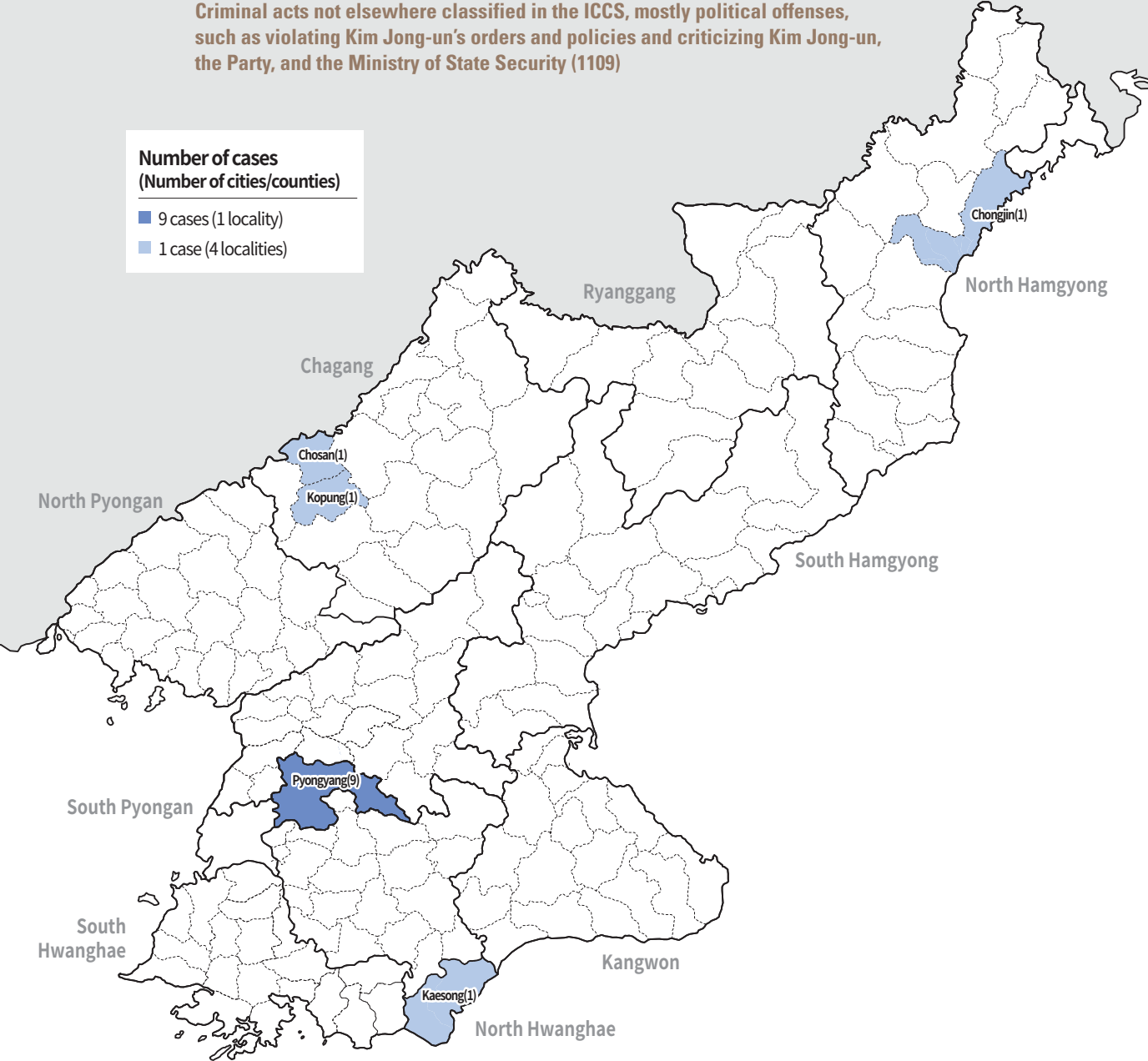
Hyesan City, Rygangang Province, where SD cards, USB drives, and other information storage mediums containing foreign information come and go across the border with China, topped the list with 8 cases while Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province, where the sale of prohibited items is active, followed with 7 cases. It is also noteworthy that Pyongyang, home to elites who have ample access to foreign culture and information and have a strong appetite for it, accounted for 4 cases, and North and South Hwanghae Provinces and Kaesong, adjacent to the Military Demarcation Line with South Korea also accounted for 3 cases.

Map 6 | Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ②

Criminal acts not elsewhere classified in the ICCS, mostly political offenses, such as violating Kim Jong-un's orders and policies and criticizing Kim Jong-un, the Party, and the Ministry of State Security (1109)

**Number of cases**  
(Number of cities/counties)

- 9 cases (1 locality)
- 1 case (4 localities)



Province-level administrative unit	Cases and persons	Breakdown by city/county
Pyongyang	9 cases / 38 persons	
Chagang Province	2 cases / 2 persons	Chosan County (1 case / 1 person), Kopung County (1 case / 1 person)
North Hamgyong Province	1 case / 5 persons	Chongjin City (1 case / 5 persons)
Kaesong	1 case / 1 person	
Unknown	13 cases / 28 persons	
<b>Total</b>	<b>26 cases / 74 persons</b>	

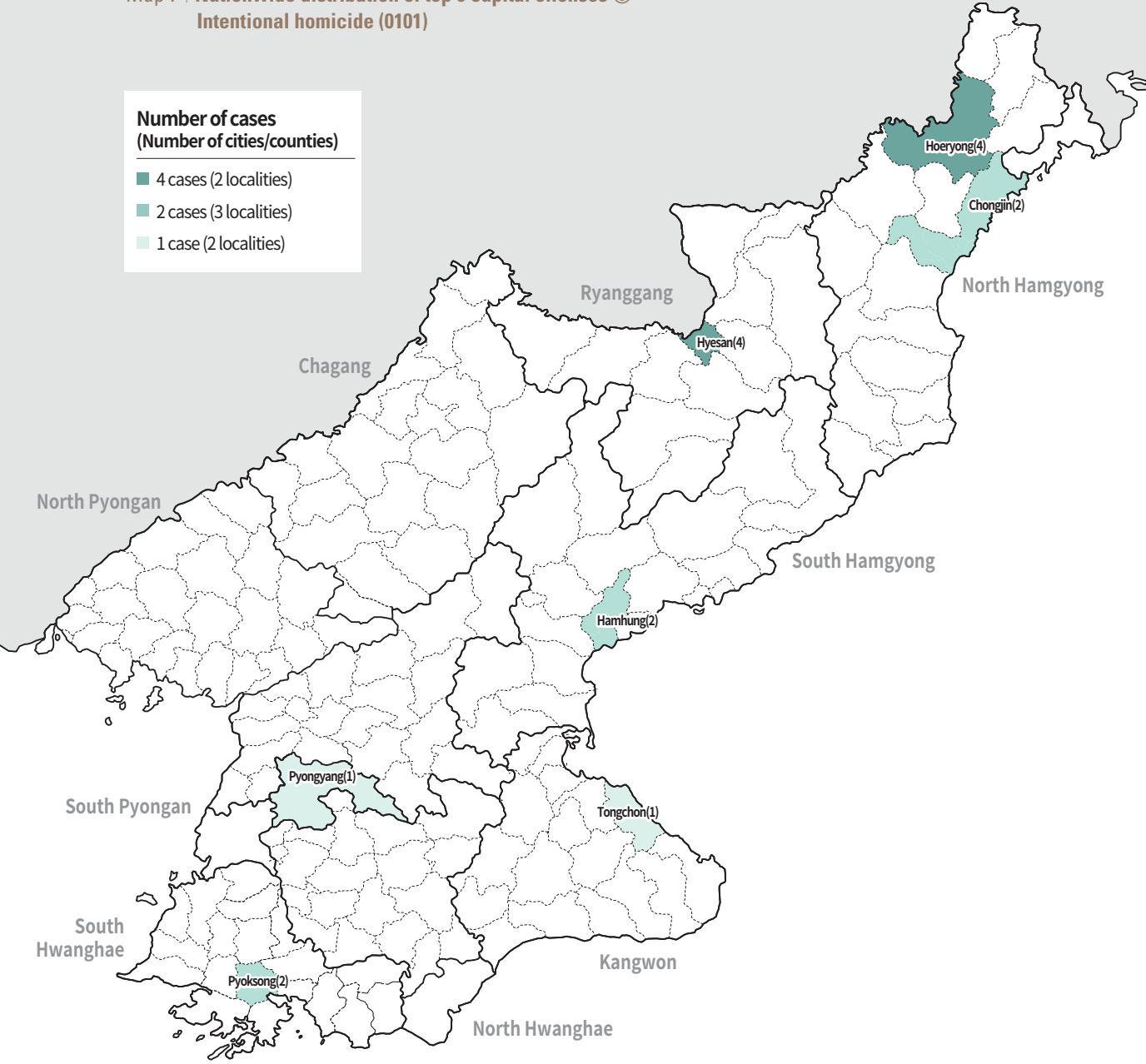
As shown in Map 6, 13 of the 26 executions and death sentencings for criminal acts not elsewhere classified in the ICCS, mostly political offenses, such as violating Kim Jong-un’s orders and policies; criticizing Kim Jong-un, the Party, and the Ministry of State Security; forming a private group; slaughtering and consuming cattle; eating human flesh, etc. were reported in 5 localities (Pyongyang, Kaesong, and 3 other cities and counties).

Map 6 clearly shows that documented executions for political offenses are concentrated in Pyongyang. It is necessary to further analyze how many persons accused of offenses committed outside the capital are transferred to Pyongyang for execution.

Map 7 | Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ③  
 Intentional homicide (0101)

**Number of cases  
 (Number of cities/counties)**

- 4 cases (2 localities)
- 2 cases (3 localities)
- 1 case (2 localities)



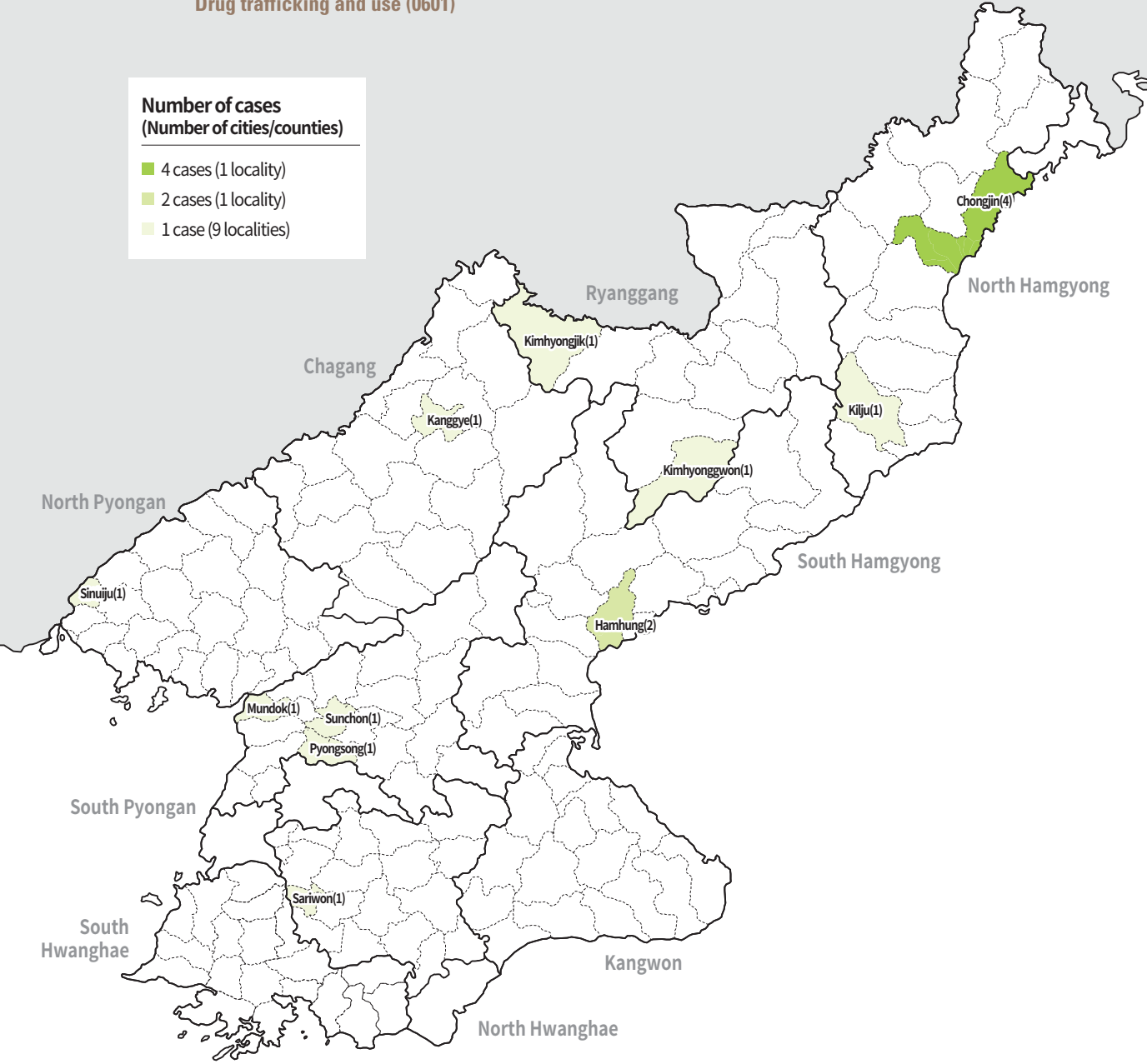
Province-level administrative unit	Cases and persons	Breakdown by city/county
North Hamgyong Province	6 cases / 11 persons	Hoeryong City (4 cases / 5 persons), Chongjin City (2 cases / 6 persons)
Ryanggang Province	4 cases / 4 persons	Hyesan City (4 cases / 4 persons)
South Hamgyong Province	2 cases / 3 persons	Hamhung City (2 cases / 3 persons)
South Hwanghae Province	2 cases / 2 persons	Pyoksong County (2 cases / 2 persons)
Kangwon Province	1 case / 7 persons	Tongchon County (1 case / 7 persons)
Pyongyang	1 case / 1 person	
Unknown	3 cases / 22 persons	
<b>Total</b>	<b>19 cases / 50 persons</b>	

As shown in Map 7, most of the 19 executions and death sentencings for intentional homicide were reported in major cities in North and South Hamgyong Provinces and Ryanggang Province in the north, with only one case reported in Pyongyang.

Map 8 | Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ④  
 Drug trafficking and use (0601)

**Number of cases**  
 (Number of cities/counties)

- 4 cases (1 locality)
- 2 cases (1 locality)
- 1 case (9 localities)



Province-level administrative unit	Cases and persons	Breakdown by city/county
North Hamgyong Province	5 cases / 6 persons	Chongjin City (4 cases / 5 persons), Kilju County (1 case / 1 person)
South Hamgyong Province	2 cases / 4 persons	Hamhung City (2 cases / 4 persons)
South Pyongan Province	3 cases / 7 persons	Mundok County (1 case / 3 persons), Pyongsong City (1 case / 2 persons), Sunchon City (1 case / 2 persons)
Rygang Province	2 cases / 2 persons	Kimhyongjik County (1 case / 1 person), Kimhyongwon County (1 case / 1 person)
Chagang Province	1 case / 2 persons	Kanggye City (1 case / 2 persons)
North Pyongan Province	1 case / 1 person	Sinuiju City (1 case / 1 person)
North Hwanghae Province	1 case / 3 persons	Sariwon City (1 case / 3 persons)
Unknown	1 case / 1 person	
<b>Total</b>	<b>16 cases / 26 persons</b>	

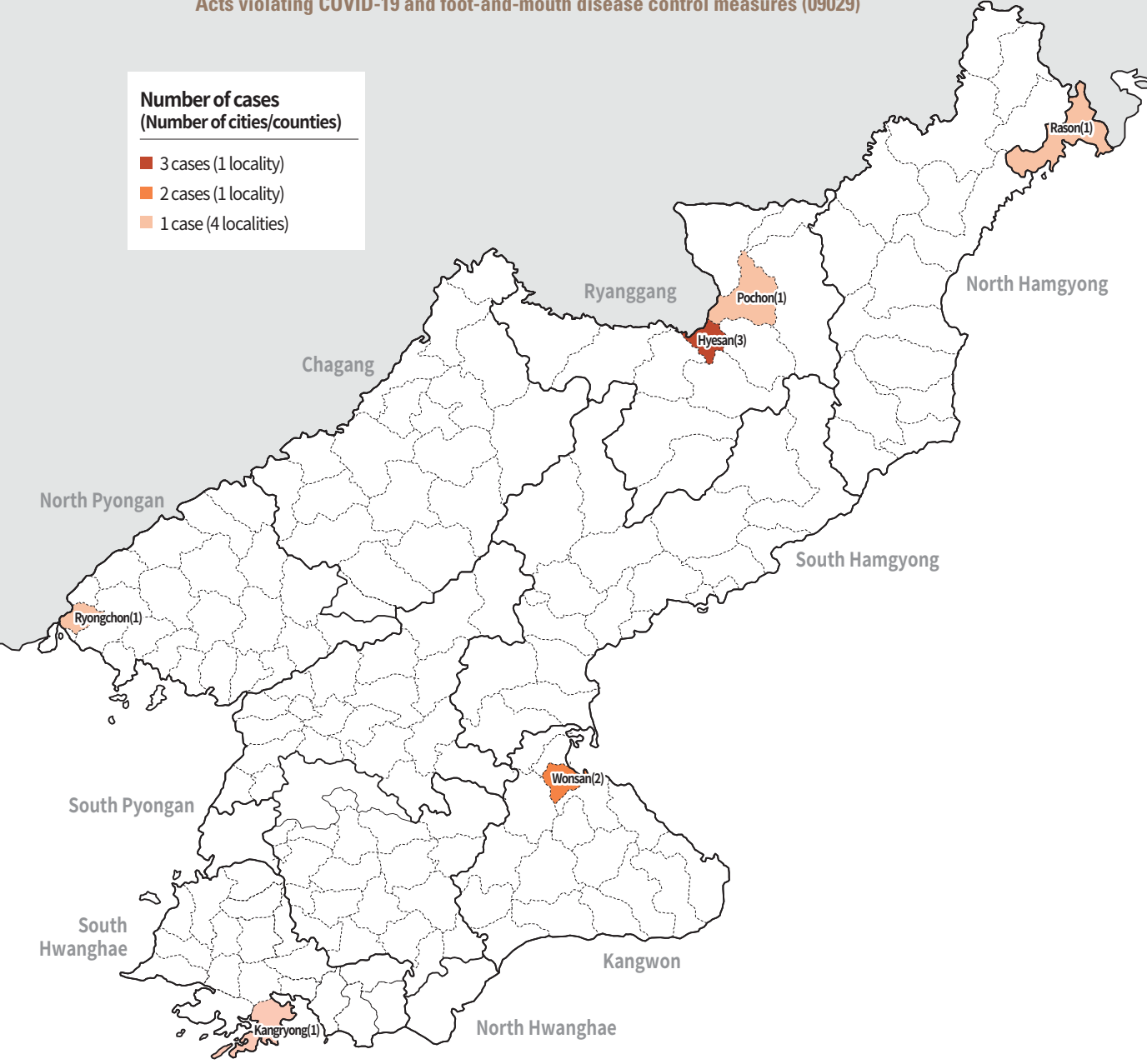
Map 8 shows that the 16 executions and death sentencings for drug trafficking and use were relatively evenly distributed across the country. The fact that these were reported in 11 cities and counties—similar to the count for acts violating controls on freedom of expression concerning foreign culture, religion, and “superstition”—suggests that drugs have spread as nationwide as foreign culture in North Korean society.

All condemned persons in the documented executions and death sentencings for drug trafficking and use were civilians. This shows the duplicity of the Kim Jong-un regime, which produces and smuggles drugs abroad as a means of earning foreign currency while at the same time suppressing private drug distribution and the proliferation of drugs within, viewing them as a threat to the regime.

Map 9 | Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ⑤  
 Acts violating COVID-19 and foot-and-mouth disease control measures (09029)

**Number of cases  
 (Number of cities/counties)**

- 3 cases (1 locality)
- 2 cases (1 locality)
- 1 case (4 localities)



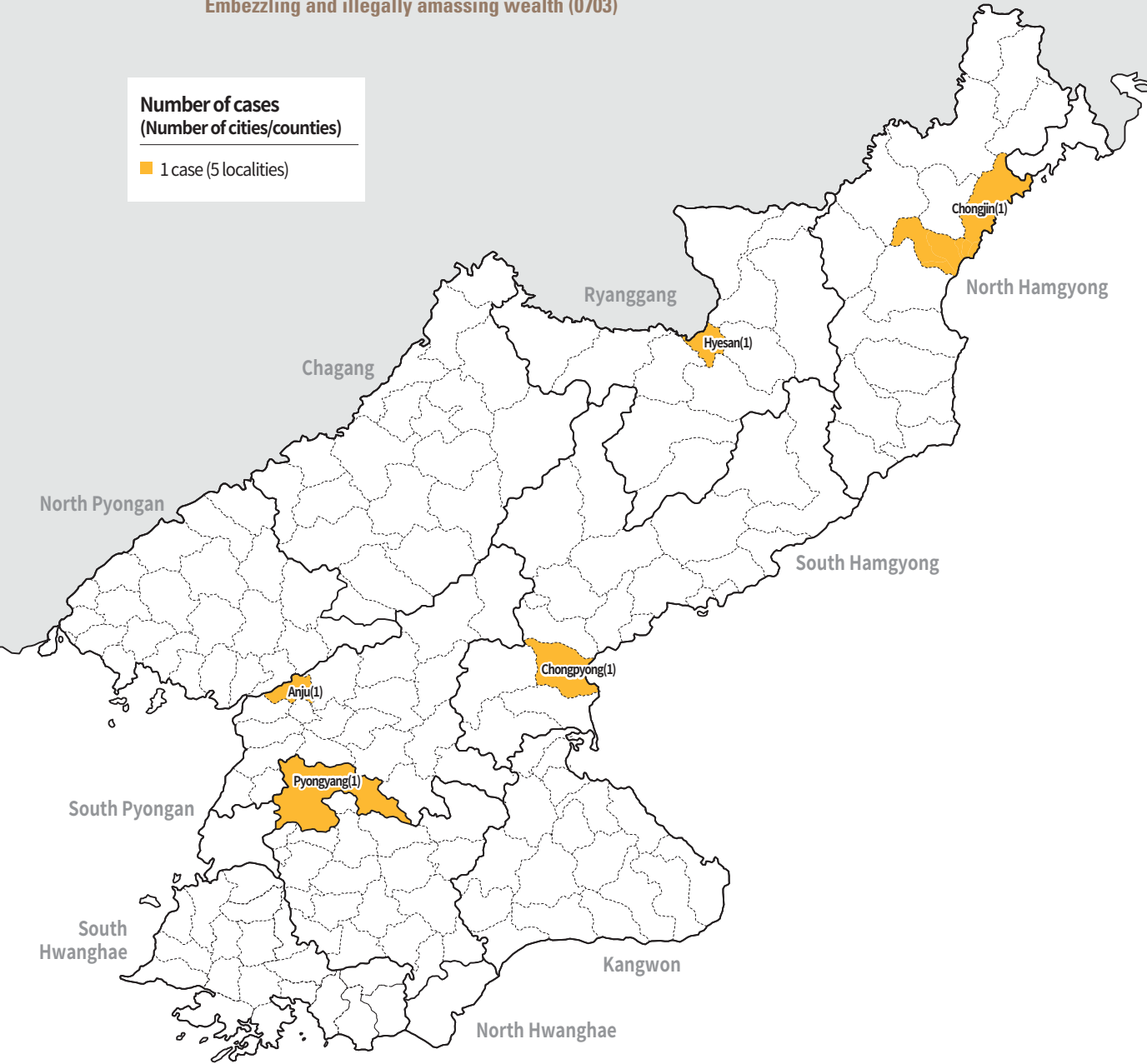
Province-level administrative unit	Cases and persons	Breakdown by city/county
Rygang Province	4 cases / 18 persons	Hyesan City (3 cases / 15 persons), Pochon County (1 case / 3 persons)
Kangwon Province	2 cases / 3 persons	Wonsan City (2 cases / 3 persons)
North Pyongan Province	1 case / 1 person	Ryongchon County (1 case / 1 person)
South Hwanghae Province	1 case / 1 person	Off the coast of Kangryong County (1 case / 1 person)
Rason	1 case / 1 person	
Unknown	3 cases / 4 persons	
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 cases / 28 persons</b>	

As shown in Map 9, the 12 executions and death sentencings for acts violating COVID-19 and foot-and-mouth disease control measures took place in the four northern cities and counties adjacent to the Chinese border, except for Kangryong County, South Hwanghae Province, and Wonsan City, Kangwon Province. The largest number of people (15) were executed in Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province, where border crossings to China and smuggling are frequent.

Map 10 | Nationwide distribution of top 6 capital offenses ⑥  
Embezzling and illegally amassing wealth (0703)

**Number of cases**  
(Number of cities/counties)

■ 1 case (5 localities)



Province-level administrative unit	Cases and persons	Breakdown by city/county
North Hamgyong Province	1 case / 1 person	Chongjin City (1 case / 1 person)
South Hamgyong Province	1 case / 1 person	Chongpyong County (1 case / 1 person)
Ryanggang Province	1 case / 1 person	Hyesan City (1 case / 1 person)
South Pyongan Province	1 case / 1 person	Anju City (1 case / 1 person)
Pyongyang	1 case / 1 person	
Unknown	6 cases / 13 persons	
<b>Total</b>	<b>11 cases / 18 persons</b>	

Map 10 shows that the 11 executions and death sentencings for embezzling and illegally amassing wealth took place across the country without any particular regional concentration. This may appear as a sign of widespread corruption in the North Korean regime, but some were scapegoats for policy failures.

---

## Executions Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

The human rights situation in North Korea appears to have worsened further since the COVID-19 pandemic. The Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU)'s *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2024* assessed that the North Korean authorities are rigorously implementing ideological and social control over its population by adopting new laws such as the Reactionary Thought and Culture Rejection Law in 2020, the Youth Education Guarantee Law in 2021, and the Pyongyang Cultural Language Protection Law in 2023 to strengthen punishment for viewing and disseminating foreign cultur, especially South Korean broadcasts and recordings.<sup>91</sup> Previously, North Korea's legal system contained provisions concerning criminal sanctions, including the death penalty, in the Criminal Law and its Addendum (General Crimes), but since 2020, such legal provisions were added to other laws, including the Emergency Quarantine Law, the Reactionary Thought and Culture Rejection Law, the Pyongyang Cultural Language Protection Law, the Drug Crime Prevention Law, the Enemy Area Material Disposal Law, and the Disaster Prevention, Rescue and Recovery Law.<sup>92</sup> North Korea also added capital offenses in the Criminal Law in 2023.<sup>93</sup> Table II-2 and Table II-3 of the *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2024* succinctly summarize the legal provisions prescribing the death penalty in laws other than the Criminal Law and those added to the Criminal Law in 2023.<sup>94</sup>

Table 7 below lists the execution type and number of condemned persons of the

---

<sup>91</sup> Lee Moo-chul et al., *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2024* (Seoul: KINU, 2020), p. 57, [https://www.kinu.or.kr/main/module/report/view.do?idx=128277&nav\\_code=mai1674786121](https://www.kinu.or.kr/main/module/report/view.do?idx=128277&nav_code=mai1674786121)

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-75.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-78.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75 and 77-78.

144 documented executions and death sentencings, 79 cases before and 65 cases after North Korea's COVID-19 border closure on January 30, 2020 in separate columns, by capital offense.<sup>95</sup>

**Table 7 | 144 documented executions and death sentencings by capital offense before and after the COVID-19 border closure: execution type and number of condemned persons**

Capital offenses	Pre-border closure: 79 cases						Post-border closure: 65 cases					
	Dec. 17, 2011 ~ Jan. 29, 2020  (8 years and 1.5 months / 2,966 days)	Cases (persons)					Jan. 30, 2020 ~ Dec. 16, 2024  (4 years and 10.6 months / 1,783 days)	Cases (persons)				
		1 Public		2 Non- Public	3 Extra- judicial Summar	Type unknown		1 Public		2 Non- Public	3 Extra- judicial Summary	Type unknown
		1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups					1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups			
46 (112)	16 (80)	8 (12)	3 (3)	6 (7)	20 (51)	12 (17)	21 (62)	3 (7)	9 (16)			
01 Acts leading to death or intending to cause death	0101 Intentional homicide	Homicide between civilians	4 (4)				Robbery homicide	4 (8)				
		Homicide committed by civilians against State Security personnel	1 (2)				Homicide committed by a teenager against stepmother	1 (1)				
		Homicide	2 (3)									
		Homicide committed by military personnel against traffic Social Security personnel and civilians										
		Homicide committed by military personnel against superior		1 (1)								
		Homicide committed by military personnel against Social Security personnel		1 (19)								

<sup>95</sup> On January 30, 2020, North Korea's Non-Permanent Central Public Health Guidance Committee declared the hygienic and anti-epidemic system's switch to the state emergency anti-epidemic system, which was followed by the complete closure of the border, including suspension of all train and air travel between North Korea and China. Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), "Hygienic and Anti-epidemic System Turned into State Emergency Anti-epidemic System," January 30, 2020; Oh Seung-jun and Ha Seung-hee, "North Korea's Response to COVID-19: Focus on the Rodong Sinmun," *North Korean Studies Review*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2020), p. 16, [https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/landing/article.kci?arti\\_id=ART002674969](https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/landing/article.kci?arti_id=ART002674969) [in Korean].

Capital offenses		Pre-border closure: 79 cases					Post-border closure: 65 cases				
		1 Public		2 Non-Public	3 Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown	1 Public		2 Non-Public	3 Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
		1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups				1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups			
01 Acts leading to death or intending to cause death	0101 Intentional homicide	Homicide committed by Social Security personnel against military personnel	1 (7)								
		Homicide between prison inmates	1 (1)								
		Homicide committed by prison inmates against Social Security personnel	1 (1)								
	01032 Negligent homicide	Negligent homicide from tattoo and cosmetic procedure	1 (1)								
Fatal medical accident caused by shortage of medication				1 (1)							
02 Acts leading to harm or intending to cause harm to the person	020221 Kidnapping	Kidnapping of children of Ministry of State Security cadres by civilians	1 (3)				Kidnapping of children of Ministry of Social Security cadres by civilians	1 (2)			
03 Injurious acts of a sexual nature	03011 Rape	Rape	1 (1)				Rape	1 (4)			
	0302 Sexual exploitation	Prostitution operations in North Korea	3 (4)				Prostitution operations in Pyongyang	1 (6)			
Prostitution operations in China		1 (2)									
06 Acts involving controlled drugs or other psychoactive substances	0601 Drug trafficking and use	Drug trafficking	12 (22)				Drug trafficking				1 (1)
Drug use		3 (3)									
07 Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption	07032 Embezzlement	Embezzlement of military supplies (oil)	1 (1)			1 (1)	Embezzlement of food supplies intended as special gifts for Kim Il-sung's birthday (April 15)				1 (3)
		Embezzlement of funds for wiretapping equipment				1 (1)	Embezzlement of supplies from a military store	1 (1)			
		Embezzlement of funds for construction materials			1 (1)		Embezzlement of state trade revenue				2 (7)

Capital offenses		Pre-border closure: 79 cases					Post-border closure: 65 cases						
		1 Public		2 Non-Public	3 Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown	1 Public		2 Non-Public	3 Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown		
		1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups				1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups					
07 Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption	07032 Embezzlement						Embezzlement of wartime pharmaceuticals	1 (1)					
	07035 Illicit enrichment	Illicit enrichment through market stall prices			1 (1)		Illicit enrichment through real estate business		1 (1)				
08 Acts against public order, authority and provisions of the State	0802 Violation of public order sexual standards	Men having sex with dozens of women	1 (4)										
	080321 Religious acts and "superstitious" acts	Underground religion	1 (1)				Owning a Bible			1 (1)			
		"Superstitious" acts	2 (3)										
	080329 Use, introduction and dissemination, etc. of foreign culture and information	Watching South Korean video contents		3 (5)				Watching and owning South Korean video contents	1 (1)	1 (1)			
		Importing and distributing South Korean video contents			1 (2)	1 (3)		Importing and distributing South Korean video contents			1 (18)		
		Distributing South Korean video contents				1 (3)		Distributing South Korean video contents	4 (9)				3 (3)
		Watching pornography	1 (16)	1 (8)				Editing and distributing South Korean and other foreign video materials		1 (2)			
		Watching pornography and having sex	3 (17)					Frequently listening to Radio Free Asia (RFA)		1 (1)			
		Watching pornography and committing rape	1 (2)					Introducing and distributing foreign-produced electronic devices in the military				1 (2)	
	08044 Smuggling	Smuggling in and owning cattle from China										1 (1)	
08059 Escaping from North Korea or aiding it	Aiding escape from North Korea	4 (14)		1 (1)			Aiding escape from North Korea			1 (2)			
08062 Prison escape	Attempting to escape from prison				2 (2)								
09 Acts against public safety and state security	09011 Illegal possession of firearms	Obtaining a firearm of the Social Security Department and demanding money from the Social Security Department			1 (1)								



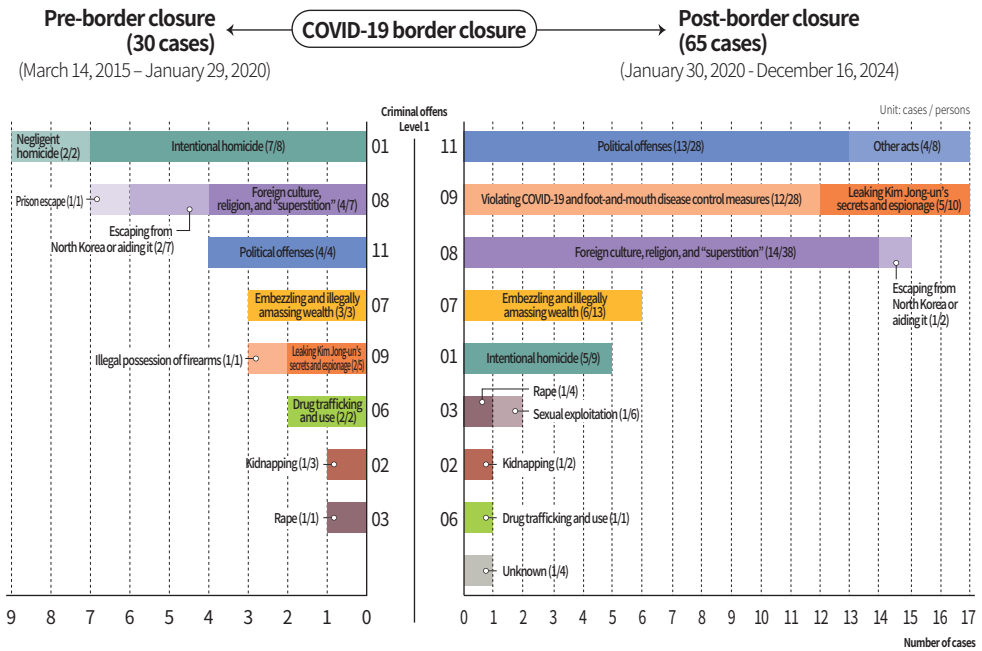
Capital offenses		Pre-border closure: 79 cases					Post-border closure: 65 cases				
		1 Public		2 Non-Public	3 Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown	1 Public		2 Non-Public	3 Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
		1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups				1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups			
09 Acts against public safety and state security	0904 Leaking Kim Jong-un's secrets and espionage	Related to South Korean missionary Kim Kook-kie	1 (4)				Revealing secret blueprints and internal structure of the "historical landmark tunnel" (Underground tunnel connecting the Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il statues on Mansudae Hill in Central District and Taesongsan Revolutionary Martyrs' Cemetery in Taesong District)	1 (1)			
		Revealing secrets about train No. 1 (Kim Jong-un)		1 (1)			Execution of a deserting and defecting soldier to prevent a disclosure of secrets related to the Samjiyon special villa (private residence of the Kim Jong-un family) and the Guard Bureau.	1 (1)			
		Having phone calls with foreign countries via mobile phone					1 (5)				
		Leaking secrets overseas using email and phone					1 (2)				
		Leaking summary of internal materials of the Ministry of State Security to South Korea							1 (1)		
11 Other criminal acts not elsewhere classified	1109 Criticizing Kim Jong-un, etc.	Purge (involvement with Jang Song-thaek)	2 (12)			1 (1)	Violating Kim Jong-un's orders and policies	1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (7)	1 (1)
		Purge (involvement with the Unhasu (Milky Way) Orchestra)	1 (11)				Criticizing Kim Jong-un's orders			1 (1)	
		Undermining Kim Jong-un's authority	1 (1)		1 (1)		Undermining Kim Jong-un's authority			1 (4)	
		Graffiti criticizing Kim Jong-un	1 (1)				Neglecting protection of Kim Jong-un (Mobilizing soldiers of the Guard Bureau for construction work)	1 (1)			
		Forming a private group (violating the 10 Principles)	1 (10)				Criticizing the Party's policies			4 (10)	

Capital offenses		Pre-border closure: 79 cases					Post-border closure: 65 cases				
		1 Public		2 Non-Public	3 Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown	1 Public		2 Non-Public	3 Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
		1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups				1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups			
11 Other criminal acts not elsewhere classified	1109 Critiquing Kim Jong-un, etc.	Misleading the Party's policies	1 (1)				Criticizing the Ministry of State Security	1 (1)			
		Eating human flesh					1 (1)				
		Slaughtering and consuming cattle							1 (1)		
		Disobeying and protesting court decisions								1 (1)	
		Resistance to punishment in detention									1 (5)
Capital offenses unknown			1 (5)						1 (4)		

For reference, in North Korea, acts that are not crimes in other countries or acts protected under international human rights law can be capital offenses and the right to legal counsel or the right to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal is non-existent, making it difficult to determine the guilt of the condemned persons.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup> For example, North Korea punishes acts such as facilitating or assisting escape from North Korea as human trafficking or kidnapping. In the case of a young man hanged in Musan County, North Hamgyong Province in 2012 for aiding a North Koreans escape to South Korea, as described on page 74 of this report, the capital offense read out at the scene was "human trafficking." At the interactive dialogue of the 3rd UPR on 9 May 2019, Pak Kwang-ho, then Councilor of the Central Court of North Korea, made the following statement through English interpretation provided by North Korea: "Human trafficking is a criminal act inconceivable in the DPRK. However, there are abduction cases plotted and masterminded by the hostile forces in an attempt to tarnish the image of the DPRK. To deal with the crime of abduction, the criminal law established a penalty of reforms through labor of not more than 5 years and less than 10 years, and in serious cases a penalty of more than 10 years." UN Human Rights Council, "33rd Session of Universal Periodic Review," <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1a/k1ap2my6ml> (timestamp 01:49:31-01:50:09). This English interpretation contains numerous omissions and misinterpretations. Pak Kwang-ho's original Korean statement was: "인신매매는 공화국에서는 상상조차 할 수 없는 범죄행위로서 공화국에는 존재하지 않습니다. 있다면 이미 널리 알려진 바와 같이 공화국의 영상을 흐리게 하려는 적대세력의 음모책동에 의한 유괴범죄만이 존재할 뿐입니다. 공화국에서는 공민들에 대한 유괴책동에 대하여 공화국 형법에 따라 5년부터 10년 이상까지 형벌을 적용하여 엄중처벌하도록 하고 있습니다." UN Human Rights Council, "33rd Session of Universal Periodic Review," <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1g/k1gp86p4ck> (timestamp 01:49:29-01:50:06).

Chart 5 | Comparison of reported capital offenses before and after the COVID-19 border closure (Adjusted to equal periods of 4 years and 10.6 months)



### Increase in documented executions and death sentencings

A comparison of capital offenses in documented executions and death sentencings before and after the COVID-19 border closure, adjusted to equal periods of 1,783 days (4 years and 10.6 months), is shown in Chart 5.

After the border closure, the number of documented executions and death sentencings increased by 116.7% (from 30 to 65) and the number of condemned persons increased by 247.7% (from 44 to 153).

### Shifting priorities in capital offenses

The following changes were observed in capital offenses before and after the COVID-19 border closure. While murder was the primary capital offense beforehand (9 cases), post-closure focus pivoted toward ideological crimes. Offenses involving foreign culture and information, such as South Korean

movies, dramas, and music, as well as religion and “superstitions” became the most prevalent (14 cases). Following the border closure, death penalty cases for murder declined by 44.4% (from 9 to 5), while the number of condemned persons decreased by 10.0% (from 10 to 9). In contrast, offenses related to foreign culture, religion, and “superstition” experienced the largest growth. These cases increased by 250% (from 4 to 14), while the number of condemned persons increased by 442.9% (from 7 to 38).

Executions and death sentencings for political prisoners, such as those who violated Kim Jong-un’s orders or criticized Kim Jong-un, the Party, and the Ministry of State Security, surged following the border closure. Cases increased by 225% (from 4 to 13), while the number of condemned persons grew by 600% (from 4 to 28). This sharp escalation suggests that the regime may be responding to growing internal dissatisfaction or intensifying state violence to suppress political discontent.

There were 12 executions (28 persons) for violations of movement control measures, including the COVID-19 restrictions, making it the third most common capital offense after the border closure.

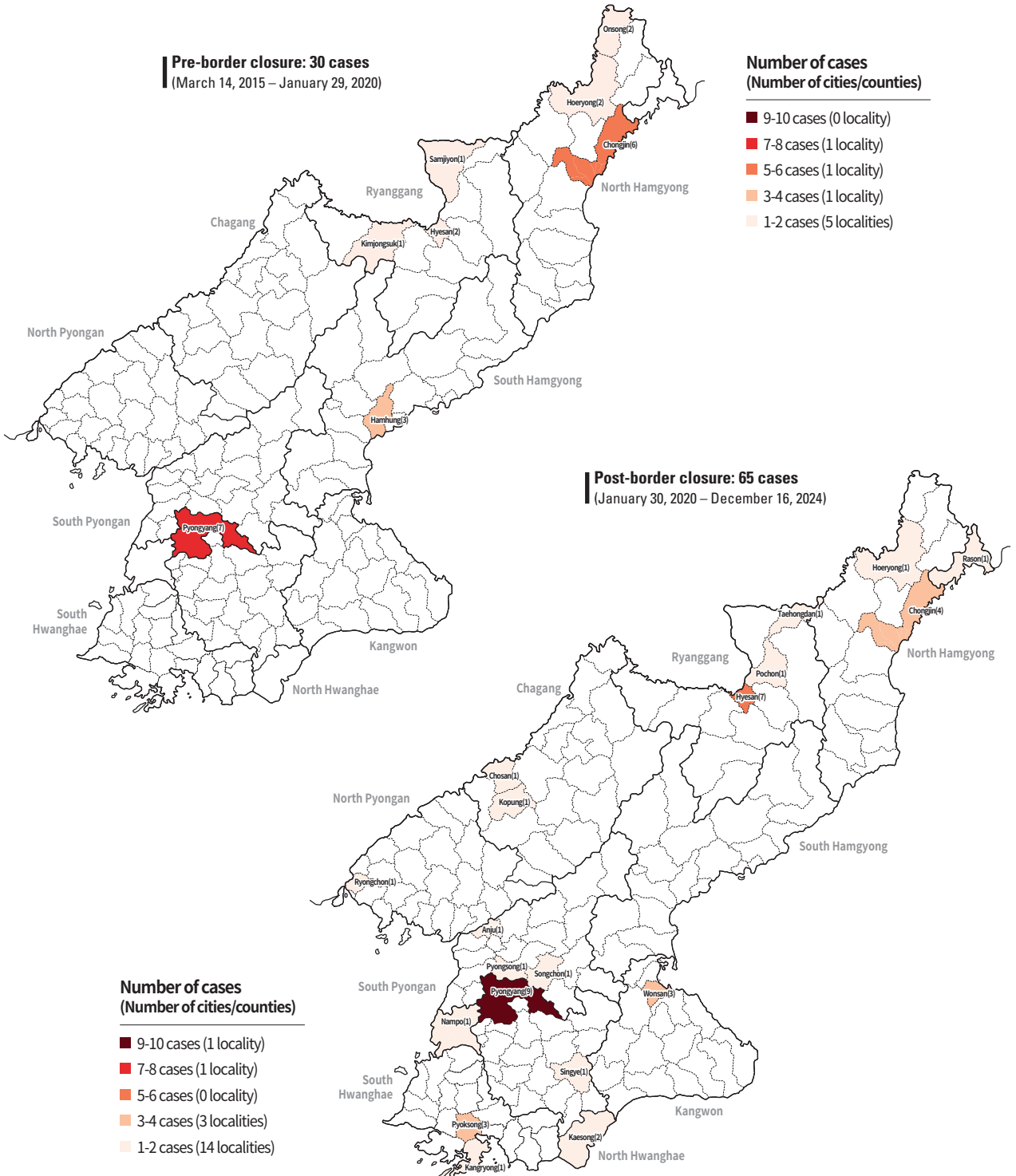
These findings suggest that following the border closure, North Korea’s death penalty priorities focused on enforcing ideological control and political dominance.

## **Nationwide expansion of documented executions**

Map 11 illustrates how the localities with documented executions have expanded since the COVID-19 border closure.

Comparing the equal time periods before and after the border closure, of the 30 cases of executions and death sentencings from the pre-border closure period, 24 executions with known locations were reported in 8 localities (province-level city Pyongyang and 7 other cities/counties); of the 65 cases from the post-border closure period, 41 executions with known locations were reported in 19 localities (province-level cities, namely Pyongyang, Nampo, Kaesong, and Rason, along with 15 other cities/counties).

**Map 11 | Comparison of localities before and after the COVID-19 border closure**  
 (Adjusted to equal periods of 4 years and 10.6 months)



### Pre-border closure (March 14, 2015 – January 29, 2020)

Province-level administrative unit	Cases and persons	Breakdown by city/county
North Hamgyong Province	10 cases / 12 persons	Chongjin City (6 cases / 7 persons), Onsong County (2 cases / 3 persons), Hoeryong City (2 cases / 2 persons)
Pyongyang	7 cases / 10 persons	
Ryanggang Province	4 cases / 10 persons	Hyesan City (2 cases / 6 persons), Kimjongsuk County (1 case / 3 persons), Samjiyon City (1 case / 1 person)
South Hamgyong Province	3 cases / 5 persons	Hamhung City (3 cases / 5 persons)
Unknown	6 cases / 7 persons	
<b>Total</b>	<b>30 cases / 44 persons</b>	

### Post-border closure (January 30, 2020 – December 16, 2024)

Province-level administrative unit	Cases and persons	Breakdown by city/county
North Hamgyong Province	5 cases / 33 persons	Chongjin City (4 cases / 29 persons), Hoeryong City (1 case / 4 persons)
Pyongyang	9 cases / 21 persons	
Ryanggang Province	9 cases / 28 persons	Hyesan County (7 cases / 20 persons), Taehongdan County (1 case / 5 persons), Pochon County (1 case / 3 persons)
Chagang Province	2 cases / 2 persons	Chosan County (1 case / 1 person), Kopung County (1 case / 1 person)
North Pyongan Province	1 case / 1 person	Ryongchon County (1 case / 1 person)
South Pyongan Province	3 cases / 5 persons	Pyongsong City (1 case / 2 persons), Songchon County (1 case / 2 persons), Anju City (1 case / 1 person)
Kangwon Province	3 cases / 4 persons	Wonsan City (3 cases / 4 persons)
North Hwanghae Province	1 case / 1 person	Singye County (1 case / 1 person)
South Hwanghae Province	4 cases / 4 persons	Pyoksong County (3 cases / 3 persons), Off the coast of Kangryong County (1 case / 1 person)
Nampo	1 case / 1 person	
Kaesong	2 cases / 3 persons	
Rason	1 case / 1 person	
Unknown	24 cases / 49 persons	
<b>Total</b>	<b>65 cases / 153 persons</b>	

When comparing at the provincial level, the reporting of executions, previously confined to Pyongyang and three northeastern provinces (North and South Hamgyong Provinces, and Ryanggang Province), has expanded to all four province-level cities (Pyongyang, Nampo, Kaesong, and Rason) and 8 provinces.

---

## Going Forward

TJWG will continue to pursue the documentation and accountability for executions in North Korea in the following directions.

### **1. Time series mapping**

Since launching its mapping project for North Korea's executions in 2015, TJWG has collected more than 1,000 statements from over 880 North Korean escapees over the past decade, detailing executions over a period exceeding seven decades under three generations of Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un's dynastic rule. Based on the accumulated information, TJWG will develop time series mapping for its existing location- and event-based database of executions in North Korea.

Time series mapping requires a substantial amount of time for data cleaning, identification of identical locations and cases, and testing and adopting effective visualization techniques. In doing so, TJWG will compare and verify vast location and case data, categorize and standardize it into detailed information units, and separately preserve sensitive information that requires protection. TJWG plans to seek technical advice from data visualization experts to present the results of time series mapping in a variety of ways.

TJWG will dynamically visualize whether specific sites across North Korea have been repeatedly used as execution sites, whether such locations have changed over time, and what regional distribution patterns emerge based on the capital offenses leading to execution. TJWG will also analyze patterns in executions by season, month, and time of day. The visualizations will be released as a video with an update report.

## **2. Analysis of execution patterns and accountability before and after the addition of capital offenses and issuance of directives from above; consistency in the level of punishment for each capital offense**

In its update report, TJWG will analyze the temporal distribution and patterns of executions before and after the recent addition of legal provisions prescribing the death penalty in the Criminal Law, the Emergency Quarantine Law, the Reactionary Thought and Culture Rejection Law, the Pyongyang Cultural Language Protection Law, the Drug Crime Prevention Law, the Enemy Area Material Disposal Law, the Disaster Prevention, Rescue and Recovery Law, and issuance of directives from above.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, TJWG will collect information on the institutions, its key positions, individuals involved in the addition of capital offenses, and issuance of directives from above to determine their connection to and accountability for the expansion of executions.

In addition, TJWG plans to analyze whether the levels of punishment, such as the death penalty, reeducation through labor, or other punishments, were consistent for each capital crime or whether it varied over time, and if so, the factors that contributed to the difference. It also plans to determine whether an individual's political, economic, or social status was a discriminatory factor in the level of punishment.

## **3. Collection and analysis of information on the decision-making process for public executions and the practice of non-public executions**

On November 7, 2024, a week after the 4th Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for North Korea, DailyNK reported, citing an internal source in North Korea, that “On [November] 13th, No. 1 (President of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong-un)-endorsed task on strengthening law enforcement organs’ criteria

---

<sup>97</sup> According to DailyNK's in-depth interview of North Koreans, four out of five respondents pointed to the existence of directives at the time of the round-up as the criteria for deciding on the death penalty and public executions. DailyNK, *Suppressing Foreign Influence: The Impact of the Reactionary Ideology and Culture Rejection Law on North Korean Society* (Seoul: DailyNK, October 2024), pp. 53-54, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/crushing-dissent-north-korea-anti-reactionary-thought-law-effect-daily-life>

for executions and institutionalizing non-public execution was delivered to the relevant legal bodies under the Ministry of States Security and the Ministry of Social Security.”<sup>98</sup> According to the source, “Decisions on public executions were swiftly approved by the local Party’s safety committees without the central Party’s comprehensive review until now; however, going forward, such decisions must undergo comprehensive endorsement and strengthened deliberation. ... The directives also provided that most executions, except in special cases, are to be carried out in a non-public manner and that supplementary provisions for the endorsement and deliberation should be established accordingly.”

DailyNK subsequently reported that, on February 15, 2025, the Supreme Court had issued revised instructions on carrying out of death sentences, requiring the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Social Security to strictly comply with execution procedures specified by the Supreme Court and to report executions within 48 hours.<sup>99</sup> This reportedly reflects the Party’s intention to reduce the autonomy of the state security and social safety organs in carrying out death sentences while strengthening its authority and control. Previously, once the Supreme Court issued a written death sentence and an execution order, the state security and social safety organs could carry out executions at their discretion, and were only required to report them within 72 hours.

The DailyNK’s reports have the following significant implications. First, it is highly likely that, response to international criticism of public executions, North Korea has sought to strengthen the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK)’s centralized control over public executions and to codify non-public execution as the rule. Of course, North Korea has never officially accepted criticism of public executions or indicated any policy changes in response.

Second, amid discussions about strengthening the central control of the

---

<sup>98</sup> Jeong Tae-joo, “Kim Jong Un orders review of government standards for executions,” *DailyNK*, November 21, 2024, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/kim-jong-un-orders-review-government-standards-executions>. For the Korean original, see 정태주, “北, 공개처형 심의 기준 강화…국제사회 지적 의식했나?,” *데일리NK*, 2024년 11월 18일, <https://www.dailynk.com/20241118-5>

<sup>99</sup> Jeong Tae-joo, “N. Korea tightens central control over executions with new supreme court directives,” *DailyNK*, March 5, 2025, <https://www.dailynk.com/english/north-korea-tightens-central-control-executions-new-supreme-court-directives>. For the Korean original, see 정태주, “이름 바꿔 단 北 최고재판소, 사형 집행에 관한 중앙 통제 ↑,” *데일리NK*, 2025년 2월 20일, <https://www.dailynk.com/20250220-2>

Workers' Party of Korea over public executions and codifying the principle of non-public executions, the absence of any mention of demands from victims' families or residents for public executions may once again serve as evidence that North Korea's references to victims' families and residents in forums such as the UPR were merely an excuse.

Third, DailyNK's reporting suggests that, in addition to the review by the Central Court (now the Supreme Court) and the approval of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, both of which North Korea has officially stated at the UPR are part of the execution process, Kim Jong-un and the Party's safety committees are also involved in establishing and implementing the public executions. This may provide grounds to regard Kim Jong-un and members of the Party's safety committees, in addition to the Supreme Court and the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, as responsible for crimes against humanity involving murder. If Kim Jong-un and the Party's safety committees were involved not only in the execution process but also in the process by which death sentences are issued, then this would violate article 5 of the UN safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, which provides that capital punishment may only be carried out pursuant to a final judgment rendered by a competent court after legal process which gives all possible safeguards to ensure a fair trial, at least equal to those contained in article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).<sup>100</sup>

Accordingly, TJWG will add four specific tasks to its mapping project on North Korea's executions: first, observe whether public executions have in fact been decreasing since 2025; second, obtain and analyze documents on the procedure for carrying out death sentences, including decisions on public executions; third, determine whether capital offenses or the condemned person's political, economic, social status, etc. influences whether executions take place in public; and fourth, collect information on the sites, methods, and practices of non-public executions.

---

**100** UN Economic and Social Council, "Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty adopted on 25 May 1984," E/RES/1984/50, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/safeguards-guaranteeing-protection-rights-those-facing-death>

In this report, TJWG does not examine in detail the specific statements of North Korean escapees on non-public executions that have only recently begun to be obtained. TJWG is expanding in-depth interviews to escapees who have work experience at the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Social Security, and other relevant organs. TJWG also plans to publish a special report by collecting additional statements on the locations of non-public executions and body disposal sites, and synthesizing information from other various sources.

#### **4. Documentation of transnational repression, including arbitrary executions, against soldiers dispatched to Russia and IT professionals sent abroad**

TJWG has launched an investigation into North Korea's transnational repression. North Korea has committed countless human rights violations, including assassinations, abductions, and enforced disappearances, against workers, students, and other personnel sent abroad; North Korean escapees in China, Russia, etc.; escapees who have settled in South Korea, the United States, etc.; and those who assist them. However, there has been a lack of documented investigation into North Korea's transnational repression.

With North Korea's large-scale troop deployment in support of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in late 2024, concerns were raised that deployed North Korean soldiers could be executed for desertion, insubordination, and other acts. In particular, there was speculation that the North Korean military will deploy "execution squads" to shoot soldiers on the spot who showed signs of defection.<sup>101</sup>

In addition, North Korean IT workers dispatched to China, the Russian Far East, Southeast Asia, Africa, etc. to illegally earn foreign currency through financial hacking and cryptocurrency theft could be executed immediately if they attempt to escape. In February 2025, DailyNK reported a source familiar with North Korea saying that, to prevent desertion among North Korean IT

---

**101** YTN New PLUS, "'파병북한군, 도망시 현장 사살'... 김정은이 함께 보낸 '처형조'" [Deployed North Korean forces, to be shot on the spot in case of flight; 'execution squads' sent together by Kim Jong-un], YTN, October 29, 2024, [https://www.ytn.co.kr/\\_ln/0134\\_202410291101245391](https://www.ytn.co.kr/_ln/0134_202410291101245391)

professionals sent abroad to target the US, South Korea, Japan, the UK, and Germany, “there are on-site execution rules for attempted defections, and the fear that their families will also be punished is clearly instilled.”<sup>102</sup>

TJWG will collect and analyze information from various sources on the methods and scale of punishments, including the death penalty, for North Korean soldiers deployed to the Russo-Ukrainian war and IT workers dispatched to China and other countries, and will inform the international community.

## **5. Collection and analysis of information on punishment by association for the families of the executed**

Among the 144 executions and death sentencings analyzed in this report, more than 20 cases had additional information indicating that the families of the executed were subjected to punishment by association. Most of these involved enforced disappearances, with family members sent to *kwanliso* (political prison camps) or exiled to remote mountainous areas.

After first releasing FOOTPRINTS, an online database documenting North Korea’s enforced disappearances, in 2021, TJWG carried out major updates through interviews with North Korean escapees regarding cases of enforced disappearance inside North Korea, and in 2024 released FOOTPRINTS 2.0 in 2024.<sup>103</sup>

Going forward, FOOTPRINTS will also include cases of enforced disappearances identified through the mapping project for North Korea’s executions. If more cases of punishment by association accumulate, TJWG may publish a special report analyzing the scale, pattern, and geospatial data of such cases.

---

**102** “北, IT 노동자 탈북 시 현장 처형 규정” [North Korea sanctions on-site executions if North Korean IT workers attempt escape], *DailyNK*, February 19, 2025, <https://www.dailynk.com/20250219-6>

**103** TJWG, “FOOTPRINTS: Database of those taken by North Korea,” <https://nkfootprints.tjwg.org> See also HURIDOCs, “Footprints 2.0 database (North Korea)” at <https://huridocs.org/resource-library/human-rights-research-databases/north-korea-footprints>

## 6. Strengthening the international community's efforts to promote accountability for North Korea's grave human rights violations, including arbitrary executions

The 2014 Report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry (COI) identified public executions, along with enforced disappearance to political prison camps, as the ultimate means to terrorize the population into submission based on the meticulous documentation of executions in North Korea.<sup>104</sup> The COI report covered not only public executions but also executions in *kwanliso* (political prison camps) and *kyohwaso* (ordinary prisons).<sup>105</sup> The COI determined that North Korea's state security and social safety organs systematically employ violence and punishment that amount to gross human rights violations to create a climate of fear and that the authorities carry out executions—with or without trial; publicly or secretly—to punish political and other crimes that do not amount to the most serious crimes as a matter of state policy.<sup>106</sup> The COI concluded that summary executions in *kwanliso* and *kyohwaso*, the executions of Christians and distributors of foreign films, and the shooting of those who cross the border without permission by border guards constituted crimes against humanity.<sup>107</sup> The COI recommended that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights establish a “field-based” structure to ensure accountability for North Korea's human rights violations that amount to crimes against humanity, in particular by building on the COI's collection of evidence and documentation work and expanding its database.<sup>108</sup>

In accordance with UN Human Rights Council resolution 25/25 that incorporated the recommendations of the COI, the UN Human Rights Office in Seoul was established in June 2015.<sup>109</sup> However, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Seoul's biennial accountability reports have failed to live up to the original purpose of ensuring

---

<sup>104</sup> UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/25/CRP.1, para. 1214.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 729, 758-759, 787, 808 and 823-835.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 838-839 and 845.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 1033, 1047, 1068, 1075, 1093 and 1104.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 1225 (c).

<sup>109</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “UN Human Rights Chief opens new office in Seoul,” June 26, 2015, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2015/06/un-human-rights-chief-opens-new-office-seoul>

accountability for crimes against humanity in North Korea. The 2019 and 2021 reports documented in detail crimes against humanity in a section called “Key findings,” but the subsequent 2023 and 2025 reports replaced this section with a section called “Patterns of violations” that shifted the focus to the listing of general human rights violations, not crimes against humanity.<sup>110</sup>

Moreover, unlike the 2021 report, the 2023 and 2025 reports avoided directly mentioning China, using instead the term “neighbouring State,” when they addressed female victims of trafficking and human rights violations against repatriated North Korean escapees.<sup>111</sup> Despite criticism of the 2023 report from 12 human rights organizations, including TJWG, OHCHR Seoul’s stance remained unchanged.<sup>112</sup> This contrasts with the COI’s publication of the letter of questions that it had sent to the Chinese government concerning China’s forced repatriation of North Korean refugees and the response it received in the COI report and raises questions about the political independence and professionalism of the OHCHR Seoul.<sup>113</sup>

As Song Sang-hyun, Former President of the International Criminal Court (ICC), pointed out, considering that the UN typically creates commissions of inquiries (COIs) for matters like war and massacres that attract international attention, the establishment of the COI DPRK in 2013 in the absence of significant

---

**110** UN Human Rights Council, Fortieth session, “Promoting accountability in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,” A/HRC/40/36, March 7, 2019, paras. 37-45; UN Human Rights Council, Forty-sixth session, “Promoting accountability in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,” A/HRC/46/52, January 11, 2021, paras. 42-67; UN Human Rights Council, Fifty-second session, “Promoting accountability in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,” A/HRC/52/64, January 18, 2023, paras. 21-35; UN Human Rights Council, Fifty-eighth session, “Promoting accountability in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,” A/HRC/58/61, January 14, 2025, paras. 30-43.

**111** UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/46/52, paras. 42-67; UN HRC, A/HRC/52/64, paras. 21-35; UN HRC, A/HRC/58/61, paras. 30-43.

**112** TJWG, “Open letter on OHCHR’s unacceptable silence on China’s forcible repatriation of North Korean refugees,” August 11, 2023, <https://en.tjwg.org/2023/08/11/open-letter-on-ohchrs-unacceptable-silence-on-chinas-forcible-repatriation-of-north-korean-refugees>; Jamey Keaten, “UN affirms concern over forced repatriation of North Koreans following criticism from rights groups,” *Associated Press News*, August 12, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/china-north-korea-un-human-rights-office-refugees-06c1753de9c06d2dab0fdb22bbf0aaba>

**113** UN Human Rights Council, Twenty-fifth session, “Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” A/HRC/25/63, February 7, 2014, annex II.

political upheavals in the country was unusual.<sup>114</sup> The COI DPRK was established in response to proactive demands from international civil society, including Human Rights Watch and the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, and the COI report's publication generated unprecedented international interest in the human rights situation in North Korea. This provides an effective model for raising international awareness about North Korea's atrocious human rights record, which remains largely unknown due to extremely limited information flow.

When the COI report was released in 2014, COIs and independent international fact-finding missions (IIFFM), whose secretariats are staffed by the OHCHR, were typically established as temporary bodies, and there was no independent accountability mechanism that operates separately from the OHCHR. However, the Syria accountability mechanism (IIIM)<sup>115</sup> and the Myanmar accountability mechanism (IIMM)<sup>116</sup> were established in 2016 and 2018 respectively while the mandates of the Ukraine COI<sup>117</sup>, the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) COI<sup>118</sup>, Venezuela IIFFM<sup>119</sup> and Iran IIFFM<sup>120</sup> have been extended every year, effectively making them permanent bodies.

It would be difficult to say that the human rights situation in North Korea is less atrocious than in any of these countries. There is a need to establish a DPRK independent accountability mechanism or a COI or FFM DPRK to promote accountability for crimes against humanity and other grave human rights violations, including arbitrary executions.

---

**114** Song Sang-hyun, "Establish Permanent UN Human Rights Body for North Korea," *Chosun Ilbo*, February 10, 2026, <https://www.chosun.com/english/opinion-en/2026/02/09/IB3LJBMVD5A7HARESQF347UUSA>

**115** International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM), <https://iiim.un.org>

**116** Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), <https://iimm.un.org>

**117** Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iic/hr-ukraine/index>

**118** Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/co-israel/index>

**119** Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffmv/index>

**120** Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/ffm-iran/index>

At the same time, existing UN human rights bodies can also play a key role in ensuring accountability for North Korea's grave human rights violations, including arbitrary executions. In August 2025, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in its concluding observations on North Korea's first periodic report expressed deep concern at the legality and practice of the death penalty in North Korea which "disregard the limits recognized under international law" and "the lack of information provided on the question of its application to persons with disabilities."<sup>121</sup> The CRPD recommended that North Korea "abolish the death penalty and immediately cease imposing and carrying it out in the case of persons with disabilities, in accordance with the limits established under international law."<sup>122</sup>

North Korea has not submitted its third periodic report to the Human Rights Committee (HRC) for 26 years, following the submission of its second periodic report to the HRC in March 2000 and the HRC's consideration of the second periodic report in July 2001.<sup>123</sup> Accordingly, the HRC adopted the list of issues prior to reporting (LOIPR) for the consideration of North Korea's third periodic report, based solely on NGO reports and requested North Korea to submit its third periodic report.<sup>124</sup> The UN General Assembly, in its resolution 80/220 adopted on 18 December 2025 recalled that North Korea is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and that North Korea last submitted periodic reports to the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 20 March 2000 and 12 April 2002 respectively. It also urged North Korea to submit all overdue periodic reports to the respective treaty bodies, including the

---

**121** Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, "Concluding observations on the initial report of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," CRPD/C/PRK/CO/1, October 2, 2025, para. 17(d).

**122** *Ibid.*, para. 18(d).

**123** Human Rights Committee, Seventy-second session, "Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Democratic People's Republic of Korea," CCPR/CO/72/PRK, August 27, 2001.

**124** Human Rights Committee, "List of issues prior to the submission of the third periodic report of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," CCPR/C/PRK/QPR/3, June 22, 2021. Typically, treaty bodies adopt the LOIPR based on reports submitted by the state under review and NGOs; based on the adopted LOIPR, the state under review and NGOs submit reports again, and the treaty bodies hold an interactive dialogue with a delegation from the state under review.

periodic review to the HRC under the LOIPR by the HRC.<sup>125</sup>

Though the 26-year non-submission is extreme, North Korea is not alone in its non-submission of periodic reports to the treaty bodies. This creates a perverse situation where the human rights situation in countries that duly submit periodic reports are regularly reviewed by treaty bodies, while the human rights situation in countries that do not fall through the cracks even though the latter is more dire than the former and in greater need of regular review by treaty bodies.

Therefore, as with the UPR, treaty bodies should set the review schedule for all states parties, regardless of their submission or non-submission of periodic reports, and adopt concluding observations based on NGO reports only, even if the state under review fails to submit periodic reports or to send a delegation to the interactive dialogue. North Korea's third review by the Human Rights Committee, for which the LOIPR has already been adopted, should proceed with the announcement of the review schedule even if North Korea continues to fail to submit the periodic report to induce its participation.

In the 3rd UPR, North Korea accepted the recommendations to ratify the Convention against Torture (CAT) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).<sup>126</sup> The UN Human Rights Council in its resolutions 55/21 of 4 April 2024 and 58/17 of 3 April 2025 encouraged North Korea to provide information detailing progress on the implementation of the recommendations it accepted in UPRs, including with regard to the ratification of the CAT and ICERD.<sup>127</sup> If North Korea becomes a party to the CAT, it will become possible to further hold North

---

<sup>125</sup> UN General Assembly, Eightieth session, "Resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 18 December 2025," A/RES/80/220, December 22, 2025, preambular para. 7.

<sup>126</sup> UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/42/10, paras. 126.11, 126.13 and 126.14; UN HRC, Forty-second session, "Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Addendum: Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review," A/HRC/42/10/Add.1, August 28, 2019, para. 9(a).

<sup>127</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Fifty-fifth session, "Resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 4 April 2024," A/HRC/RES/55/21, April 9, 2024, para. 28; UN Human Rights Council, Fifty-eighth session, "Resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted on 3 April 2025," A/HRC/RES/58/17, April 7, 2025, para. 28.

Korea accountable for its practice relating to the death penalty, including public executions, that amount to intentional infliction of severe physical or mental pain.

While the 5th DPRK UPR is not expected until 2029, it is possible to submit UPR mid-term reports in 2027.<sup>128</sup> Though North Korea has never submitted a UPR mid-term report and is unlikely to do so in the future, NGOs can also submit UPR mid-term reports.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, TJWG will prepare a UPR mid-term report on issues addressed in the fourth UPR, including the death penalty in North Korea.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is another important forum for pursuing accountability for North Korea's crimes against humanity and other grave human rights violations, including arbitrary executions. TJWG discussed North Korean accountability strategies at its side events "Seeking Creative Accountability Pathways for North Korean Human Rights: Documenting Violations and Mapping the Chain of Command" on December 7, 2023 and "Exploring New Opportunities for DPRK Accountability at the ICC and ICJ" on December 4, 2024 during the 22nd and 23rd Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC. TJWG will continue to make efforts to raise awareness among the ICC and international criminal justice NGOs about the importance of holding North Korea accountable by hosting ASP side events and interacting with the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor.

In addition, TJWG became a member of the World Coalition Against Death Penalty (WCADP) in October 2023 and the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) in April 2025. TJWG plans to raise the issue of arbitrary executions in North Korea in the context of the global abolitionist movement. TJWG attended the 5th Regional Congress on the Death Penalty in Tokyo, Japan from November 7 to 9, 2025<sup>130</sup> to inform the public about the situation in North Korea. The 9th World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Paris, France from

---

**128** OHCHR, "UPR Mid-term reports," <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/upr-implementation>

**129** OHCHR, "UPR NGOs Mid-term reports," <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ngos-mid-term-reports>

**130** Ensemble contre la peine de mort (ECPM), "5th Regional Congress on the Death Penalty: Heading for East Asia," October 2025, <https://www.ecpm.org/en/2025/10/15/5th-regional-congress-on-the-death-penalty-heading-for-east-asia>

June 30 to July 2, 2026<sup>131</sup> will present another opportunity to address North Korea together with countries like China and Iran that have grave issues with arbitrary executions both quantitatively (excessive number of death sentences) and qualitatively (severity of violations of human rights such as the right to a fair trial). Moreover, TJWG will make efforts to confirm that the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of life is a peremptory norm (*jus cogens*) of international law.

TJWG will utilize this report and its subsequent documentation work to raise awareness among policymakers, journalists, experts, activists and the public about crimes against humanity and other grave human rights violations, including arbitrary executions, in North Korea and to call for greater efforts to hold North Korea accountable in the forums discussed above.

---

**131** Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, "French diplomacy working to further abolition of the death penalty," October 10, 2025, <https://ambafrance.org/French-diplomacy-working-to-further-abolition-of-the-death-penalty>

# APPENDIX

## Details of 144 documented executions and death sentencings by capital offense before and after the COVID-19 border closure: year, number of condemned persons, execution type, method, and locality

### 1. Pre-border closure: 79 cases

Capital offenses		Dec. 17, 2011 – Jan. 29, 2020 (8 years and 1.5 months / 2,966 days)	Cases (persons)				
			1 Public		2 Non- Public	3 Extra- judicial Summary	Type unknown
			1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups			
			46 (112)	16 (80)	8 (12)	3 (3)	6 (7)
01 Acts leading to death or intending to cause death	0101 Intentional homicide	Homicide between civilians 2016, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2017, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province 2018, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province 2019, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province	4 (4)				
		Homicide committed by civilians against State Security personnel 2012, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province	1 (2)				
		Homicide 2012, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2012, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province 2018, 2 persons, Sentencing, Method unknown, Site unknown	2 (3)				1 (2)

Capital offenses			Public		Non-Public	Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
			Mass	Specific Groups			
01 Acts leading to death or intending to cause death	0101 Intentional homicide	Homicide committed by military personnel against traffic Social Security personnel and civilians 2013, 1 person, Type unknown, Shooting, Pyongyang					1 (1)
		Homicide committed by military personnel against superior 2017, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Site unknown		1 (1)			
		Homicide committed by military personnel against Social Security personnel 2014, 19 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Site unknown		1 (19)			
		Homicide committed by Social Security personnel against military personnel 2014, 7 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Tongchon County, Kangwon Province		1 (7)			
		Homicide between prison inmates 2012, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Method unknown, Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province		1 (1)			
		Homicide committed by prison inmates against Social Security personnel 2019, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province		1 (1)			
01032 Negligent homicide	Negligent homicide from tattoo and cosmetic procedure 2019, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyongyang	1 (1)					
	Fatal medical accident caused by shortage of medication 2019, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Samjiyon City, Ryanggang Province			1 (1)			
02 Acts leading to harm or intending to cause harm to the person	020221 Kidnapping	Kidnapping of children of Ministry of State Security cadres by civilians 2015, 3 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province	1 (3)				
03 Injurious acts of a sexual nature	03011 Rape	Rape 2018, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Onsong County, North Hamgyong Province	1 (1)				
	0302 Sexual exploitation	Prostitution operations in North Korea 2013, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2014, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2014, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	3 (4)				

Capital offenses			Public		Non-Public	Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
			Mass	Specific Groups			
03 Injurious acts of a sexual nature	0302 Sexual exploitation	Prostitution operations in China 2013, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	1 (2)				
06 Acts involving controlled drugs or other psychoactive substances	0601 Drug trafficking and use	Drug trafficking 2012, 3 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Mundok County, South Pyongan Province 2013, 3 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Sariwon, North Hwanghae Province 2013, 3 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province 2013, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyongsong City, South Pyongan Province 2013, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Sunchon City, South Pyongan Province 2013, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Kanggye City, Chagang Province 2013, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Kimhyongjik County, Ryanggang Province 2013, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Kimhyonggwon County, Ryanggang Province 2013, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province 2013, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Kilju County, North Hamgyong Province 2015, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province 2019, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hamhung City, South Hamgyong Province	12 (22)				
		Drug use 2012, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province 2014, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Hanging, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province 2014, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Sinuiju City, North Pyongan Province	3 (3)				
07 Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption	07032 Embezzlement	Embezzlement of military supplies (oil) 2012, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Chongpyong County, South Hamgyong Province 2018, 1 person, Sentencing, Method unknown, Site unknown		1 (1)			1 (1)
		Embezzlement of funds for wiretapping equipment 2018, 1 person, Type unknown, Method unknown, Site unknown					1 (1)
		Embezzlement of funds for construction materials 2019, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Site unknown			1 (1)		
	07035 Illicit enrichment	Illicit enrichment through market stall prices 2012, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Blunt instrument (iron mace), Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province			1 (1)		

Capital offenses			Public		Non-Public	Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
			Mass	Specific Groups			
08 Acts against public order, authority and provisions of the State	0802 Violation of public order sexual standards	Men having sex with dozens of women 2014, 4 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyongsong, South Pyongan Province	1 (4)				
	080321 Religious acts and "superstitious" acts	Underground religion 2014, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province	1 (1)				
		"Superstitious" acts 2018, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province 2019, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province	2 (3)				
	080329 Use, introduction and dissemination, etc. of foreign culture and information	Watching South Korean video contents 2012, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Method unknown, Taehongdan County, Ryanggang Province 2013, 3 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2015, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province	3 (5)				
		Importing and distributing South Korean video contents 2013, 2 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2013, 3 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province		1 (2)	1 (3)		
		Distributing South Korean video contents 2015, 3 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Kimjongsuk County, Ryanggang Province			1 (3)		
		Watching pornography 2012, 16 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2013, 8 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang	1 (16)	1 (8)			
		Watching pornography and having sex 2012, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2013, 10 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2013, 5 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	3 (17)				
		Watching pornography and committing rape 2013, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	1 (2)				
	08044 Smuggling	Smuggling in and owning cattle from China 2012, 1 person, Sentencing, Method unknown, Site unknown					1 (1)

Capital offenses			Public		Non-Public	Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
			Mass	Specific Groups			
08 Acts against public order, authority and provisions of the State	08059 Escaping from North Korea or aiding it	Aiding escape from North Korea 2012, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2012, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Hanging, Musan County, North Hamgyong Province 2014, 6 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2015, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Onsong County, North Hamgyong Province 2015, 5 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	4 (14)		1 (1)		
	08062 Prison escape	Attempting to escape from prison 2012, 1 person, Type 3 (Extrajudicial summary), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province 2016, 1 person, Type 3 (Extrajudicial summary), Group beating, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province				2 (2)	
09 Acts against public safety and state security	09011 Illegal possession of firearms	Obtaining a firearm of the Social Security Department and demanding money from the Social Security Department 2017, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown			1 (1)		
	0904 Leaking Kim Jong-un's secrets and espionage	Related to South Korean missionary Kim Kook- kie 2015, 4 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting (machine gun), Pyongyang		1 (4)			
		Revealing secrets about train No. 1 (Kim Jong-un) 2019, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Pyongyang				1 (1)	
11 Other criminal acts not elsewhere classified	1109 Criticizing Kim Jong-un, etc.	Purge (involvement with Jang Song-thaek) 2013, 10 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang 2014, 1 person, Unknown type, Method unknown, Site unknown 2014, 2 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting (machine gun), Pyongyang		2 (12)			1 (1)
		Purge (involvement with the Unhasu (Milky Way) Orchestra) 2013, 11 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang		1 (11)			
		Undermining Kim Jong-un's authority 2015, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting (anti-aircraft gun), Pyongyang 2015, 1 person, Type 3 (Extrajudicial summary), Shooting, Pyongyang		1 (1)		1 (1)	
		Graffiti criticizing Kim Jong-un 2018, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang		1 (1)			

Capital offenses			Public		Non-Public	Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
			Mass	Specific Groups			
11 Other criminal acts not elsewhere classified	1109 Criticizing Kim Jong-un, etc.	Forming a private group (violating the 10 Principles) 2014, 10 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang		1 (10)			
		Misleading the Party's policies 2018, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang		1 (1)			
Capital offenses unknown		2013, 5 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Musan County, North Hamgyong Province	1 (5)				

## 2. Post-border closure: 65 cases

Capital offenses		Jan. 30, 2020 – Dec. 16, 2024 (4 years and 10.6 months / 1,783 days)	Cases (persons)				
			1 Public		2 Non- Public	3 Extra- judicial Summary	Type unknown
			1-A Mass	1-B Specific Groups			
			20 (51)	12 (17)	21 (62)	3 (7)	9 (16)
01 Acts leading to death or intending to cause death	0101 Intentional homicide	Robbery homicide 2022, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyoksong County, South Hwanghae Province 2023, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyoksong County, South Hwanghae Province 2023, 5 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province 2023, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	4 (8)				
		Homicide committed by a teenager against stepmother 2022, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	1 (1)				
02 Acts leading to harm or intending to cause harm to the person	020221 Kidnapping	Kidnapping of children of Ministry of Social Security cadres by civilians 2021, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Songchon County, South Pyongan Province	1 (2)				
03 Injurious acts of a sexual nature	03011 Rape	Rape 2020, 4 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyongyang	1 (4)				
	0302 Sexual exploitation	Prostitution operations in Pyongyang 2020, 6 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyongyang	1 (6)				
06 Acts against property involving violence or threat against a person	0601 Drug trafficking and use	Drug trafficking 2021, 1 person, Sentencing, Method unknown, Site unknown					1 (1)
07 Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption	07032 Embezzlement	Embezzlement of food supplies intended as special gifts for Kim Il-sung's birthday (April 15) 2020, 3 persons, Type unknown, Shooting, Site unknown					1 (3)
		Embezzlement of supplies from a military store 2020, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Blunt instrument (hammer), Anju City, South Pyongan Province			1 (1)		

Capital offenses			Public		Non-Public	Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
			Mass	Specific Groups			
07 Acts involving fraud, deception or corruption	07032 Embezzlement	Embezzlement of state trade revenue 2021, 4 persons, Unknown type, Method unknown, Site unknown 2023, 3 persons, Unknown type, Method unknown, Site unknown					2 (7)
		Embezzlement of wartime pharmaceuticals 2023, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	1 (1)				
	07035 Illicit enrichment	Illicit enrichment through real estate business 2021, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang		1 (1)			
08 Acts against public order, authority and provisions of the State	080321 Religious acts and "superstitious" acts	Owning a Bible 2020, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown			1 (1)		
	080329 Use, introduction, and dissemination, etc. of foreign culture and information	Watching and owning South Korean video contents 2021, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Nampo 2022, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyoksong County, South Hwanghae Province	1 (1)	1 (1)			
		Importing and distributing South Korean video contents 2021, 18 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province			1 (18)		
		Distributing South Korean video contents 2021, 1 person, Sentencing, Method unknown, Site unknown 2021, 4 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyongyang 2021, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Wonsan City, Kangwon Province 2022, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Pyongsong, South Pyongan Province 2022, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province 2024, 1 person, Sentencing, Method unknown, Pyongyang 2024, 1 person, Sentencing, Method unknown, Singye County, North Hwanghae Province	4 (9)				3 (3)
		Editing and distributing South Korean and other foreign video materials 2023, 2 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang		1 (2)			
		Frequently listening to Radio Free Asia (RFA) 2020, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province		1 (1)			

Capital offenses		Public		Non-Public	Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown	
		Mass	Specific Groups				
08 Acts against public order, authority and provisions of the State	080329 Use, introduction, and dissemination, etc. of foreign culture and information	Introducing and distributing foreign-produced electronic devices in the military 2024, 2 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Kaesong		1 (2)			
	08059 Escaping from North Korea or aiding it	Aiding escape from North Korea 2024, 2 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown		1 (2)			
09 Acts against public safety and state security	09029 Violating COVID-19 and foot-and-mouth disease control measures	Under COVID-19 control measures	Visiting China to smuggle in goods 2020, 3 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Pochon County, Ryanggang Province		1 (3)		
			Escaping while under quarantine for having contact with a Chinese trader 2020, 1 person, Type 3 (Extrajudicial summary), Shooting, Rason			1 (1)	
			Smuggling out gold 2020, 2 persons Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown 2020, 4 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	1 (4)	1 (2)		
			Defection attempts during the period of movement restrictions 2020, 2 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province		1 (2)		
			The shooting and burning of Lee Dae-jun, a South Korean Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries official adrift in the West Sea 2020, 1 person, Type 3 (Extrajudicial summary), Shooting, Off the coast of Kangryong County, South Hwanghae Province			1 (1)	
			Visiting Mt. Kumgang to see the autumn foliage 2020, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Wonsan City, Kangwon Province		1 (1)		
			Smuggling in unapproved goods by an organization 2020, 1 person, Sentencing, Shooting, Site unknown				1 (1)

Capital offenses		Public		Non-Public	Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown	
		Mass	Specific Groups				
09 Acts against public safety and state security	09029 Violating COVID-19 and foot-and-mouth disease control measures	Under COVID-19 control measures	Attempted smuggling from China 2020, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Ryongchon County, North Pyongan Province	1 (1)			
		Under COVID-19 control measures	Illegal manufacturing and selling of pharmaceuticals 2022, 2 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Method unknown, Wonsan City, Kangwon Province	1 (2)			
			Violating movement restrictions to transport by vehicles 2021, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown		1 (1)		
		Under foot-and-mouth disease control measures	Slaughtering cattle and distributing and supplying it to cadres 2023, 9 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Hyesan City, Ryanggang Province	1 (9)			
	0904 Leaking Kim Jong-un's secrets and espionage	Revealing secret blueprints and internal structure of the "historical landmark tunnel" (Underground tunnel connecting the Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il statues on Mansudae Hill in Central District and Taesongsan Revolutionary Martyrs' Cemetery in Taesong District) 2020, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang		1 (1)			
		Execution of a deserting and defecting soldier to prevent a disclosure of secrets related to the Samjiyon special villa (private residence of the Kim Jong-un family) and the Guard Bureau. 2021, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang		1 (1)			
		Having phone calls with foreign countries via mobile phone 2021, 5 persons, Type 1-A (Mass), Method unknown, Taehongdan County, Ryanggang Province	1 (5)				
		Leaking secrets overseas using email and phone 2023, 2 persons, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Method unknown, Site unknown		1 (2)			
		Leaking summary of internal materials of the Ministry of State Security to South Korea 2024, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown			1 (1)		

Capital offenses			Public		Non-Public	Extra-judicial Summary	Type unknown
			Mass	Specific Groups			
11 Other criminal acts not elsewhere classified	1109 Criticizing Kim Jong-un, etc.	Violating Kim Jong-un's orders and policies 2020, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Kopung County, Chagang Province 2020, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Pyongyang 2020, 7 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown 2021, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Chosan County, Chagang Province 2021, 1 person, Unknown type, Method unknown, Site unknown	1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (7)		1 (1)
		Criticizing Kim Jong-un's orders 2021, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Site unknown			1 (1)		
		Undermining Kim Jong-un's authority 2020, 4 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Site unknown			1 (4)		
		Neglecting protection of Kim Jong-un (Mobilizing soldiers of the Guard Bureau for construction work) 2022, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Site unknown		1 (1)			
		Criticizing the Party's policies 2020, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown 2020, 5 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Site unknown 2021, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown 2021, 3 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Shooting, Site unknown			4 (10)		
		Criticizing the Ministry of State Security 2020, 1 person, Type 1-B (Specific Groups), Shooting, Site unknown		1 (1)			
		Eating human flesh 2020, 1 person, Type 1-A (Mass), Shooting, Kaesong	1 (1)				
		Slaughtering and consuming cattle 2020, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown			1 (1)		
		Disobeying and protesting court decisions 2022, 1 person, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Site unknown			1 (1)		
		Resistance to punishment in detention 2023, 5 persons, Type 3 (Extrajudicial summary), Shooting (machine gun), Chongjin City, North Hamgyong Province					1 (5)
Capital offenses unknown	2022, 4 persons, Type 2 (Non-Public), Method unknown, Hoeryong City, North Hamgyong Province			1 (4)			



Project Sponsored By



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR  
DEMOCRACY

SUPPORTING FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD

Report Endorsed By



9 791119 8 987853  
ISBN 979-1-889878-5-3

비매출 / 무료

