

Political Prison Camps in North Korea Today



Database Center for North Korean Human Rights
North Korean Human Rights Archives

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Dedication

We dedicate this book, with full respect, to our mentor, Sang Hun Kim, who prays, even at this very moment, for those sacrificed in political prison camps and detention facilities in North Korea and those still suffering there,

who constantly leads us to rescue those living in endless darkness, who still strides like a young lad.

We wish to follow your steps in this meaningful journey for a long time to come.

Preface

We live in a high-tech era in which we encounter all the happenings, big and small, around the world through a small smart phone. As citizens' awareness of a society becomes elevated, just like our living standards, we make sincere efforts to take care of the disadvantaged and protect their human rights. Apart from protecting human rights of the disadvantaged, we also show consistent interest in animal abuse used for medical experimentations or in brutality against livestock raised for human consumption.

However, there are a huge number of people in North Korea who barely manage to live and are treated like animals with no dignity. They are those detained in political prison camps (PPCs) in North Korea. They live in unimaginable misery inside the PPCs, but our voice in South Korean society is too small to protect their human rights. This is because we simply lack the interest in the PPCs. More to that, we do not know much about what the PPCs are and what is really happening there.

Dozens of the former political prisoners testified to serious and brutal human rights violations during imprisonment. The clear satellite pictures of the camps support their testimonies. Nonetheless, the North Korean regime still denies the presence of the PPCs in North Korea. The communist regime does not pay any attention to how human rights are

violated there and how often serious crimes against humanity occur. The political leaders are solely devoted to maintaining the communist system and stabilizing the regime with little consideration of human rights situation that the political prisoners face. The North Korean authorities dare to ignore the truth of what is happening inside these horrendous facilities even if they know how history will judge them in the future.

Thus, we thought it is necessary to inform the world about the PPCs and to protect human rights of the prisoners who suffer from persecutions even at this very minute. We urge the international community, the South Korean government and the world to pay attention to this issue. The presence of the PPCs in North Korea will leave an indelible stain on the history of the 21st century. The entire human race should feel ashamed if the world fails to close down the PPCs just as they should about the failure to stop Hitler from massacring the Jews in the past century.

It is desirable that the North Korean regime remove the PPCs out of its own determination. However, we can not wait until the regime, which still denies the presence of the PPCs and is unsympathetic about the horrible situations, voluntarily get rid of the camps. More than 100,000 prisoners still live in despair, facing the worst situation under which they could be executed any time. Their lives are dependent on South Korea and the international community.

I hope that this book is helpful in informing many people around the world of the harsh reality of prisoners inside the PPCs and contributes to raising public voice against the prison camps. Moreover, I hope that such voices and actions will be a small help to improve human rights for the prisoners and their families.

This book is a product of intensive work and effort by research analysts of the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) over the past several years. This project could not have been possible without the courageous testimonies of dozens of North Korean defectors who experienced the prison life in these notorious camps. Thus, I would like to extend my special thanks to them for testifying about their painful experiences. In addition, I owe a great debt to research analysts of the NKDB who were in charge of preliminary investigation, interviews, analyses, and editing. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge all the financial support for this project. I would like to give a special thanks to Ja-eun Lee and Sun-young Han, research analysts of the NKDB, for co-authoring this book. I also like to express my gratitude to Pearl Jones, Dan Mingrone, Danny Byrnes, Dr. Jungkeun Yoon, Juyoun Han, Katheleen Ryou and Aaron Mayo. Finally, I would like to ask the South Korean government and conscientious intellectuals to keep an eye on the PPCs and stage anti-PPCs campaigns until they disappears on earth.

15 July 2011

General Director of North Korean Human Rights Archives,
Yeo-sang Yoon

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What Is a Political Prison Camp?

1. Political Prison Camps; Overview

1) Definition of Political Prison Camps

Political prison camps in North Korea (PPCs) are special areas that have been isolated from the mainstream society for the purpose of imprisoning and cruelly punishing those involved in political incidents as well as their families without due process.¹⁾ Under North Korean law and the law enforcement guidelines, there is, formally, no legal basis for the establishment and operation of political prison camps. As such, information about the concept, operation and current status of the political prison camps is based on the testimony from North Koreans who have experienced

1) The sections in this report on the present situation, systems of control and human rights violations in political prison camps are based on “Survey on Political Prison Camps, 2009” and “Survey Report on Political Prisoners’ Camps, 2009,” both authored by the same author of this report (Yoon Yeo Sang) and published by National Human Rights Commission of Korea. It is also based on the information of 「NKDB Central Database」 of the North Korean Human Rights Archive under the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) in Seoul, as well as the latest in-depth interviews with over 30 witnesses.

political prison camps themselves. In addition, the term ‘political prisoner’ is not clearly defined by the North Korean authorities so we choose to define a political prisoner in this book by considering their arrests, related charges, the arresting organization, and the term and location of imprisonment.

Usually, the State Security Agency (SSA) is responsible for the investigation and punishment of prisoners as well as the operation of the facilities. The SSA is the official state security organ mandated to handle anti-state and anti-people crimes.²⁾ Therefore, cases dealt with by the SSA are considered political crimes, and the suspects and their families are labelled political prisoners. In this context, political prisoners in North Korea are distinct from ordinary prisoners, and it is this alternate criterion that will be employed for the study of political prisoners until such time that the internal criteria, if any, are disclosed by the North Korean authorities.

The North Korean Police also operates detention camps similar to political prison camps. The police³⁾ handles ordinary crimes. The camps under the control of the police include Camp No. 18 at Pukchang, Camp No. 23 in Toksong and Camp No. 17 at Toksong. The type of criminals and the extent of prisoner control are different in these camps from the political prison camps under the control of the SSA. However, for the

2) Criminal Action Law, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 26 July, 2005, Article 122, as amended and supplemented under the Ordinance No. 1225 by Standing Committee, People’s Supreme Conference.

3) The official title of the police, “Social Safety Ministry” in 1951 was changed to “Social Safety Department” in 1972, to “Social Safety Ministry” again in 2000 and to “People’s Security Department” in 2010.

purposes of this paper, police camps are treated as political prison camps due to similarities in terms of operation style and human rights violations.

The titles affixed to political prison camps vary; they are generally called political prison camps in South Korea. In North Korea, they are called ‘Control Centers (or Kwaliso),’ ‘Totally Controlled Zones’ or ‘Closed Zones.’ We know that each PPC is officially referred to as a ‘0000 Unit’ within the PPC system, just as an army unit. Political prison camps, the most common term, is used in this paper, but the term Kwaliso, or control center, also appears in the testimony of North Korean defectors.

Generally, there are two kinds of political prison camps. The first is the ‘Maximum Security Camp,’ a completely controlled zone where prisoners are detained for life and remain ‘missing’ even after death. All political prison camps in North Korea come under this category, with the notable exception of the PPC at Yodok and other political prison camps under the Police's control.

The second kind is a ‘Re-education Camp’, which is a ‘revolutionary’ zone where prisoners are released when their term of hard labor expire. The SSA-controlled PPC at Yodok and other camps under the control of the Police fall into this category.

No official evidence or documents which distinguish the two kinds of camps have ever been made available, but analyses of arrests and crimes suggest that prisoners of a relatively less serious nature are sent to the re-education camps. In other words, it appears that prisoners who are not deemed to have any hope of reintegration into society are detained in a maximum security camp for life. While those prisoners who are to be eventually reintegrated into society go to the re-education camps. However,

it is common to be sent to either type of camps without due process, and in a small number of cases, prisoners have been transferred from a re-education camp to a maximum security camp, or vice-versa.

2) Impact of Political Prison Camps on North Korean Society

It is no exaggeration to say that political prison camps are at the core of state terrorism in North Korea. Political prison camps are dreaded by North Korean residents who are well aware that if they are arrested by the SSA and designated political prisoners then not only the offenders but their family will all be sent to PPCs. The existence of political prison camps is already such a strong deterrent to all North Koreans that they restrain themselves from expressing personal political views or taking political actions, such as criticizing the policies of the party and their leaders. The North Korean authorities, taking advantage of those fears, completely control people's lives and ideologies in order to maintain the status quo in North Korea.

Of the total of 322 North Koreans who arrived in South Korea in 2009 and were interviewed by the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB), only 11.9% gave direct eyewitness accounts of political prison camps. However, 75% were aware of their existence in North Korea, which is considerably higher than the 12.8% who had no knowledge of political prison camps while in North Korea. The interview results reveal that knowledge of political prison camps is widespread and common in North Korea. When asked about their understanding of the possibility of release from political prison camps, only 7.1% of the respondents replied that prisoners in political prison camps can be released when their

imprisonment term expires; 72.8% replied that political prisoners are imprisoned there for life and 5.9% replied that all the prisoners are killed there. It indicates that, for most North Koreans, a political prison camp is a place of imprisonment for life or a place where death is highly likely.⁴⁾ Above all it shows that the SSA and the existence of political prison camps control the political ideology and actions of North Korean residents.⁵⁾ Thus, political prison camps play a key role in maintaining unconditional loyalty to Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-wun, not only from ordinary people, but also from senior officials in the party, government and army. When political prison camps were first established in the 1950s-60s, prisoners were mainly those opposed to the dictatorship of Kim Il-sung. Later, prisoners came to include anti-state criminals, those working against the power transfer from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il and potential opponents. Thus, political prison camps have effectively functioned to eliminate leading members of the party, government and army in order to strengthen the hereditary dictatorship. Political prison camps were self-supporting based on their own industrial production but have little economic significance for the NK economy as a whole, unlike the Gulag in the USSR that contributed to state construction programs.

However, it appears that political prison camps gradually began to play a more important role as bases of economic production since the late 1990s, amid deteriorating North Korean economy and the food crisis. The

4) Hung-sun Park and et al., *Survey Report of Political Prisoners' Camps in North Korea*, (Seoul: National Human Rights Commission, 2009), pp. 162-164.

5) Sun-haeng Heo, "A Study of Effectiveness of Political Prisoners Camps on the Control of People", Master Thesis, (Seoul: Unification Policy Department, Public Policy Graduate School, Sogang University, 2008), pp. 83-90.

North Korean authorities, facing serious economic problems, inevitably paid attention to the production capacity of political prison camps and the products obtainable from the hard labor of thousands of prisoners. As the proportion of the products from political prison camps increased in the domestic market, political prison camps appear to have gradually begun to assume an economic role in addition to their original political objectives. Nevertheless, the economic role played by the political prison camps is much less important than the political role for which they were originally intended.

3) Similar Examples in Other Countries

Collective detention facilities like political prison camps in North Korea were once also found in other communist states in the past. The North Korean political prison camp model was derived from the USSR's Gulag, which also served the political purpose of punishing anti-revolutionary elements. The Gulag provided the foundation for similar facilities in communist countries such as East Germany, Poland and China. Influenced by the native culture of each country, these forced labor camps have developed in a variety of unique ways.⁶⁾

In the case of Russia, forced labor camps existed as far back as the 17th century under the rule of emperors. The well-known Russian writer, Dostoyevsky was arrested in 1849 and detained in a political prison camp

6) Information updated from the chapter "Similar Examples of Political Prisoners' Camps in Other Countries," in the *Survey Report on Political Prisoners' Camps in North Korea, 2009*, pp. 282-367, (Seoul: National Human Rights Commission, 2009), contributed by Prof. Choi Eui-chul, a researcher of NKDB.

for studying French socialism. During the Bolshevik Revolution, the number of concentration camps increased from 21 in 1919 to 107 in 1920 in order to reform the bourgeoisie through labor. Forced labor in the camps was necessary not only to reform the prisoners but also for the maintenance of the camps. Dostoyevsky described the horrendous lives of prisoners in the camps in his book, "The House of the Dead". In particular, forced labor camps rapidly expanded under Stalin, performing a central role in economic development. The system of slave labor gave industry a great boost in general. As a result, forced labor camps were recognized as economic and industrial units, and prisoners and their families in the camps were treated as beasts and harshly exploited. The number of forced labor camps declined when Gorbachev assumed leadership, which was attributed to the experiences of his grandfather, who was severely tortured as a political prisoner. In addition, Gorbachev strongly believed in economic reform to overcome the chronic economic crisis. Therefore, he dismantled all the forced labor camps and released all prisoners under a grand amnesty in 1986.

As World War II was ending, the USSR sent secret agents to provide guidelines to the Eastern European countries under its occupation to introduce forced labor camp systems. Forced labor camps were established in Hungary and Czechoslovakia by Russian advisers. Forced labor camps were also set up in Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and administered under the instruction of Russian advisers. The camps in East Germany that were created and operated directly by Russian police forces had the most notorious reputation.

Forced labor camps in China also existed under the heavy influence

of Russians. In China, however, greater emphasis was placed on reform and education of prisoners in the Chinese tradition than on controlling them. In 1954, China announced 'Rules to Reform through Labor' and established forced labor camps, called Logai, for the reform and education of the prisoners in the Chinese tradition. The system continued until the 1980s. In addition to educational reformation, the prisoners were treated harshly and exploited for economic development and industrial production on a large scale. In China, with the introduction of economic reform and integration with the international economy by Deng Xiaoping, harsh treatment of political prisoners slowly began to diminish. Increasing awareness of civil rights in the process of Chinese modernization and ongoing international concern about the inhumane treatment of prisoners in China have had the impact of pressuring China to improve the treatment of its political prisoners. It is now understood that communist states operated political prison camps in the past as a means of intimidating and controlling people and strengthening their political systems. The political prison camps in North Korea, however, are most shameful because their main emphasis is not on labor mobilization or reform through education but rather on alienation of prisoners from society. For this reason, prisoners in political prison camps in North Korea today are eventually buried there amid inhumane treatment without any hope of release. North Korea's political prison camps undoubtedly rank as the worst in terms of inhumanity and cruelty when compared to other similar camps in communist states.

2. Importance of Research of Political Prison Camps and Research Methods

1) Significance of Study

Political prison camps are a core issue in human rights in North Korea, since human rights are most seriously violated in North Korea's detention facilities and the political prison camps represent one of the most important types of detention facility in North Korea. Human rights violations rampant in the camps are the worst cases of human rights violations in our entire history in terms of the number of prisoners, process of imprisonment, duration, crimes and the horrendous conditions. Systematic and objective studies of political prison camps have never been carried out due to the inaccessibility of the camps to not only foreigners but also to North Korean residents themselves.

Political prison camps are operated in complete isolation and information is strictly limited to those officials who are actually involved with their operation. Escapees from the camps and internal information are almost completely non-existent. To this date, information about the camps comes from a small number of witnesses and those with experience working in the camps. The analysis of currently available information confirms that human rights have been seriously violated and serious crimes against humanity have been frequently committed there for decades.

Detention facilities in North Korea include police and State Security Agency (SSA) cells as well as labor training camps, short-term prisons, police detention camps and political prison camps. Of these facilities,

human rights violations are most serious in political prison camps because they are completely separated from society. Testimony to date has revealed that there were once more than 10 political prison camps in North Korea. Currently, following closure, relocation and merging of the camps at different times, there are still 5 or 6 camps remaining. The total population of prisoners in political prison camps is estimated to be about 150,000 today. Important information has become available in recent years about the real and serious state of human rights violations in political prison camps from an increasing number of North Korean defectors who had direct involvement with political prison camps.

An overall understanding of political prison camps in North Korea requires understanding of not only human rights violations in the camps but also the political implications of such facilities in the context of international human rights instruments and North Korean judicial instruments. There have been some analyses and surveys based on North Koreans' testimony. Nevertheless, to date studies have been limited to their assessments of the situation in terms of international human rights norms, inter-relations with North Korean laws and judiciary systems and comparative studies of similar situations in other communist and totalitarian states. Despite the lack of studies, it is recognized that such studies are indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of the serious human rights violations in those camps.

2) Literature Analysis

The first systematic and overall survey of political prison camps in North Korea was carried out by the Database Center for North Korean Human

Rights (NKDB) with a grant from the National Human Rights Commission of Korea in 2009. Prior to this, studies of political prison camps were only a part of reports on North Korean human rights in general and survey reports by international human rights organizations. Overall analyses and studies of political prison camps have been attempted only recently and by a small number of scholars.

This report has thoroughly analyzed the increasing number of testimony by North Koreans and past studies of political prison camps.

(1) Information from Testimony by North Koreans

The first testimony on political prison camps in North Korea was from Kang Hyong-su (a former member of the SSA) in 1972 and Kim Yong-jun in 1982. However, their knowledge was on the basis of information obtained during training sessions or during visits to a political prison camp while in North Korea, not direct experience within it. Nonetheless, their testimony provided the first information on the existence of political prison camps in North Korea.⁷⁾

Detailed information about the camps became available from former prisoners and a political prison camp guard in the 1990s. Kang Cheol-hwan and Ahn Hyok, who arrived in South Korea in 1992, published a book⁸⁾ about their time in 1977-89 as prisoners in re-education Camp No. 15 at Yodok. Further details were disclosed by Ahn Myong-chol, a former

7) “North Korea Dictatorship Zone; A Product of Fascism”, *Chosun Ilbo*, 13 April, 1982, p. 2.

8) Cheol-hwan Kang and Hyok Ahn, *Religious Service of a Great King, I-III*, (Seoul: Hyangshil Publishing Co., 1993).

political prison camp guard at Camp No. 13 in Onsong, and Camp 22 in Hweryong, both of which are maximum security camps.⁹⁾ Further details were made available from North Koreans as their numbers increased in South Korea. The number of North Korean defectors annually arriving in South Korea increased from an average of 10 to over 100 as the 1990s ended, and from 1,000 to 3,000 in the 2000s. The growth in defectors has simultaneously increased the number of eye witness accounts of political prison camps.

Lee Yong Guk described in detail¹⁰⁾ the conditions in Camp No. 15 at Yodok, a re-education camp, during the period from 1995-1999 when he was a prisoner there. The situation in Camp No. 14, Kaecheon, a maximum security camp, has been outlined in great detail by Shin Dong-hyuk¹¹⁾, the first known escapee from a maximum security camp. Kim Yong-sun published a book about her life as a prisoner at Camp No. 15, as well as in the maximum-security zone of the same camp¹²⁾. Further details about Camp No. 15 were made available from other former prisoners there including Kim Tae-jin, Chong Kwang-il, Kim Wun-chol and others. Additionally, further information came from Kang Myong-do¹³⁾, who was a source of high profile information¹⁴⁾ and Kim Hye-suk's

9) Myong-chol Ahn, *They Are Crying*, (Seoul: Chonji Media, 1995).

10) Yong-guk Lee, *I Was Kim Jong-il's Bodyguard*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongshin, 2002).

11) Dong-hyuk Shin, *North Korean Maximum Security Camp out to the World*, (Seoul: NKDB, 2007).

12) Yong-sun Kim, *I Was a Friend of Kim's Wife*, (Seoul: Seoul Munhak, 2009).

13) Myong-do Kang, *Pyongyang Is Dreaming Asylum*, (Seoul: Chungang Ilbo Sa, 1995), pp. 218-236.

14) Jin-i Choi, "Series 1, Special Article on Human Rights – Inside Camp No. 18 Feature", *Rimjingang Vol. 2*, (Seoul: Rimjingang, 2008), pp. 16-55.

testimony about Camp No. 18, which is another re-education camp¹⁵).

In particular, the survey report in 2009 published by the National Human Rights Commission of Korea detailed the general camp conditions on the basis of 17 witnesses and in-depth interviews with many North Koreans. These reports, however, were based on the testimony of individuals keen to make accusations and, accordingly, lacks the objective information needed for a systematic study of the history, character and operation of political prison camps.

(2) Survey Report

Reports have been published by human rights organizations at home and abroad, which all included North Korean human rights violations and recommendations for the situation. In most cases, the reports on political prison camps have been parts of general human rights reports, and full reports dedicated to the subject are extremely rare.

The first report on political prison camps was published in 1988 by the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee and Asia Human Rights Watch¹⁶). The report included references to a total of 12 political prison camps, including 4 new political prison camps created in 1982 and the estimated total number of political prisoners in those camps of 115,000 to 150,000.

Amnesty International published reports on political prison camps in

15) Hye-suk Kim, *28 Years in Pukchang Political Prisoner Camp: Pictures Drawn with Tears*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongsin, 2011).

16) Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee/Asia Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights in North Korea," translated by Song Chol-bok and et al., (Seoul: Koryowon, 1990), pp. 115-119.

1993 and 1994 respectively and attracted international attention by making an official request to the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to account for 49 people believed to be detained in political prison camps and 6 other missing names¹⁷⁾. North Korea responded to the international community by showing its detention facilities to outsiders. In May 2011, Amnesty International published a report showing satellite photographs of political prison camps and containing testimony from fifteen North Koreans, former prisoners and guards. International concerns about human rights in North Korea have tended to focus on the issue of North Korean defectors since the mid-90s, while international concern about political prison camps, on the other hand, somewhat decreased, and reports on the issue became less common since then.

In 2003, David Hawk of the US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea published a report¹⁸⁾ about the human rights situation in political prison camps and other detention facilities in North Korea based on in-depth interviews with six former North Korean prisoners. The committee published a report in 2007 using a 2003 report on political prison camps in the context of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), making recommendations for international human rights organizations and drawing international attention. Christian Solidarity

17) Amnesty International, *Summary of Amnesty International's Concerns on North Korea*, AI Index: ASA 24/03/93, (London: Amnesty International, 1993); Amnesty International, *North Korea: New Information about Political Prisoners*, AI Index: ASA 24/05/94, (London: Amnesty International, 1994).

18) David Hawk, *The Hidden Gulag* (Washington D.C.: US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK), 2003).

World Worldwide (CSW), based in London, published a report in 2007¹⁹⁾ on human rights violations and crimes against humanity perpetuated in North Korea, calling for an International Commission of Inquiry and intervention by the UN. The report was translated into Korean in 2011 by the North Korean Human Rights Archives, part of the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB).

Seoul-based NKDB and Life Funds for North Korean Refugees, a Tokyo-based NGO, jointly published a collection of testimonies by former North Korean prisoners in English in 2003²⁰⁾. In 2004, Free the NK Gulag disclosed information about 617 prisoners and missing people in a report on political prison camps on the basis of testimony by former prisoners²¹⁾.

In October 2009, Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland published a report containing interviews with 1,346 North Korean defectors in 11 areas of China during the period of August 2004 to September 2005 as well as interviews of additional 300 defectors in South Korea in November 2008.²²⁾ Another systematic and comprehensive report on political prison camps in English was carried out in 2009 by NKDB under a grant from the National Human Rights Commission of Korea²³⁾. The report was based

19) Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), *North Korea: A Case to Answer, A Call to Act* (London: CSW, 2007).

20) Sang-hun Kim and et al., *Are They Telling Us the Truth?* (NKDB & Life Funds for North Korean Refugees, 2003).

21) Free the NK Gulags, *Forgotten Names*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongsin, 2004).

22) Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland “Repression and Punishment in North Korea: Survey Evidence of Prison Camp Experiences” *East-West Center Working Paper*, No. 20 (October, 2009), (Honolulu, Hawaii in USA: East-West Center)

23) Hung-sun Park and et al., *Survey Report of Political Prisoners’ Camps in North Korea*, (Seoul: National Human Rights Commission, 2009), pp. 162-164.

on all prior information and in-depth interviews with seventeen North Korean defectors with direct experience of political prison camps. Additionally, testimony about political prison camps have been analyzed in annual white papers by NKDB, the Korean Bar Association and by the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU). In particular, information on human rights violations is presented in the form of statistics and graphics in annual white papers published by NKDB. In addition to this, the Citizen's Alliance for North Korean Human Rights and other organizations related to North Korean defectors and human rights are releasing eyewitness accounts about political prison camps.

(3) Research Treatises

Research articles on political prison camps in North Korea are extremely scarce and limited research has been carried out by just a small number of scholars. Studies on political prison camps in the past have included research on their political implications, their character and their role in the political system of oppressing North Koreans as well as comparisons to Soviet gulags. Heo Man-ho and Ogawa Haruhisa analyzed the history of political prison camps in the context of the political implications for the North Korean political system. The reports, however, were based on witness numbers that were too small to sufficiently reveal the overall reality of political prison camps and the strong focus on human rights violations rendered it an incomprehensive study of political prison camps. Heo Man-ho concluded in his report that political prison camps are a product of a power struggle between the leadership of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il and the social class policy of North Korea. He indicated that

political prison camps were established based on Kim Il-sung's mandates, when the 'New Residents' Registration Program' and his 'totalitarian leadership ideology' were officially adopted by the Party. His doctrine asserts that factionalists and class foes must be eliminated over three generations.²⁴⁾ The report makes it clear that political prison camps are an important means of support for political power in North Korea. Japanese researcher, Ogawa Haruhisa, made an important observation in his report that political prison camps were set up during the course of altering of the 'Juche Ideology'. What began as a genuinely creative ideology in the beginning became a totalitarian leadership ideology by 1967, when political opponents began to be detained in political prison camps and the one-party system and secret police systems were instituted for the cruel application of totalitarianism²⁵⁾. Both reports agreed that political prison camps in North Korea are an important tool of dictatorship of North Korea.²⁶⁾

In 2008, Heo Sun-haeng investigated the operational systems of political prison camps and human rights violations by camp and period on the basis of interviews with many new witnesses.²⁷⁾ His report analyzed the

24) Man-ho Heo, "North Korean Politics, Social Changes & Human Rights: With Focus on Political Prison Camp," *Study of Peace*, 27th edition, (Kyungpook National University Peace Research Institute, 2002), pp. 30-53.

25) Ogawa Haruhisa, "Co-Relation between Juche Ideology and North Korean Political Prison Camp," *Tongilo*, May Issue, (Seoul: Hankyoreh, 2000), pp. 24-31.

26) The papers on the history of North Korean Political Prison Camps by Heo Man-ho and Ogawa Haruhisa were also introduced at an International Conference on North Korean Human Rights, held by Citizen's Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, Seoul.

27) Heo, *op. cit.*

role that political prison camps play in the North Korean oppressive political system and provided an important contribution to the study, definition and characteristics of political prison camp in general.

In 2005, Oh Kyeong-seop compared political prison camps in North Korea to Gulags in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in an attempt to systematically analyze political prisoner camps in general and political prison camps in North Korea in particular.²⁸⁾ In his report, he wrote that the objective of gulags was to maximize labor power, while political prison camps in North Korea function as political tools of terror by eliminating political opponents. His analysis concluded that the conditions of gulags were considerably better than political prison camps in terms of human rights. While the Gulag was dismantled in the 1980s, the control system of North Korean political prison camps has been strengthened. In 2007, Kim Yun-tae²⁹⁾ provided detailed information about the appalling situation of human rights violations in detention facilities at all levels in North Korea; political prison camps, prisons, provincial police detention camps and labor training camps, on the basis of existing information and new interviews with North Koreans in China and South Korea who had experienced detention in North Korea.

The summary list of reports and research related to political prison camps that the present report refers to is as follows:

28) Kyeong-seop Oh, "A Study on the Structural Reality of Human Rights Violations in North Korea: With Focus on Political Prison Camps," Master Thesis, (Seoul: Graduate School, Korea University, 2005).

29) Yun-tae Kim, "A Study of Collective Detention Facilities in NK and Human Rights Violations", Master Thesis, (Graduate School, Wonkwang University, 2007).

Table 1-1 Reports and Theses Related to Political Prison Camps at Home and Abroad

Content	Title	Author	Published by	Year
Theses in South Korea	Co-Relationship between Juche Ideology and North Korean Political Prison Camps	Ogawa Haruhisa	Monthly “Tongilo,” May	2000
	North Korean Politics, Social Changes and Human Rights: With Focus on Political Prison Camp	Heo Man-ho	Peace Research Institute, Kyungpook National University	2005
	A Study of Collective Detention Facilities in NK and Human Rights Violations	Kim Yun-tae	MA Degree Thesis, Graduate School, Wonggwang Univ	2007
	A Study of Effectiveness of Political Prison Camps on the Control of People	Heo Sun-haeng	MA Degree Thesis Public Adm. School, Sogang Univ	2008
	A Survey Report on Political Prisoners Camps in NK	Yoon Yoe-sang	Seminar by National Human Rights Commission of Korea/Database Center for NK Human Rights	2009
Status Reports in South Korea	Forgotten Names	Free the NK Gulag	Free the NK Gulag	2004
	2010 White Paper on North Korean Human Rights	North Korean Human Rights Archives	NKDB	Each Year
	North Korean Human Rights White Paper, 2010	Kim Tae-Hoon & Others	Korean Bar Association	Every Other Year
	North Korean Human Rights White Paper, 2010	Park Yong-ho & Others	Korea Institute of National Unification	Each Year
	Survey Report on Political Prisoner’s Camps in North Korea	Park Hung-sun & Others	National Human Rights Commission of Korea	2009

Content	Title	Author	Published by	Year
Reports from Abroad	Annual Human Rights Report, Amnesty International	Amnesty International	Amnesty International	Each Year
	Annual Human Rights Report, Human Rights Watch	Human Rights Watch	Human Rights Watch	Each Year
	Annual Human Rights Report, State Department, US	US-DRL	US-DRL	Each Year
	Ali Lameda: A Personal Account of the Experience of a Prisoner of Conscience in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Ali Lameda	Amnesty International	1979
	Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	International Human rights Commission Minnesota Bar Association	International Human rights Commission Minnesota Bar Association	1988
	Summary of Amnesty International's Concerns on North Korea.	Amnesty International	Amnesty International	1993
	New Information about Political Prisoners	Amnesty International	Amnesty International	1994
	The Hidden Gulag	David Hawk	HRNK	2003
	Concentrations of Inhumanity	David Hawk	Freedom House	2007
	North Korea: A Case to Answer, a Call to Act	Christian Solidarity Worldwide	Christian Solidarity Worldwide	2007
North Korea: Political Prison Camps	Amnesty International	Amnesty International	2011	

3) Research Methodology

(1) Content and Scope of Research

This report has been written in order to study the present situation, operational systems and human rights situations in political prison camps and make recommendations for resolving the issue. In the first chapter, it introduces the definition of political prison camps and their impact on North Korean society and analyzes past research and methods. The second chapter focuses on political prison camps past and present, processes of imprisonment and resettlement of former prisoners after release. The third discusses the control and operation of political prison camps and industrial production facilities. The fourth chapter describes lives of prisoners in terms of supply of daily necessities, family life, health, medical service, forced labor and the school system. Chapter five provides a description of human rights violations by category. Chapter six makes recommendations for the dismantlement of political prison camps and promotion of human rights.

Additional In-depth interviews with new witnesses in this book attempt to confirm the details of the circumstances and different procedures of imprisonment, as well as current conditions, location and violations occurring in political prison camps.

The main questions asked during interviews for this book include: first, the general background information about political prison camps, such as their location, official title, foundation date, history of closure of the camp or merger with another camp, organizations responsible for operation and security, size, apparatus for operation and control of work units, division

and deployment of work units, number of prisoners and their crimes, possibility of release and release procedures, if applicable.

The second group of questions discusses prisoners' experiences with political prison camp in terms of: judicial procedure prior to imprisonment, such as preliminary investigation, trial and process of imprisonment, charges against the prisoner, the political prison camp where the prisoner was imprisoned, length of imprisonment, whether the family was informed or not, information about the role of work units during the period of detention and the process of release (or escape).

The third group relates to the operation of the political prison camps, including operational systems, methods of controlling prisoners (organization and surveillance of prisoners), rules and regulations for camp officials and prisoners, systems of punishment of prisoners, facilities for punishment, industrial products and production facilities.

Next, interviewees were asked about the human rights of the prisoners. Questions were about: supplies and conditions of clothing, food and shelter; family details, such as whether families were allowed to stay together or not; whether or not marriage and offspring were allowed; health and medical conditions such as diseases in the camp and the level of medical treatment for patients; forced labor, such as hours and severity of labor and industrial production facilities; the education of prisoners' children, such as the school system, curriculum and student labor; the control of prisoners, such as control of movement inside the camp, organization and surveillance of prisoners, rules, regulations and punishment of prisoners, process and severity of punishment; and, about the human rights of females such as sexual violence against the female prisoners by camp officials.

(2) Research Methods

Systematic analysis of political prison camps requires inspection at the actual sites, but unfortunately, this has not been possible to date. Under these circumstances, the present report has made the best of past studies, research and testimony of former prisoners and camp officials through in-depth interviews.

① Analysis of Documents

To write this book, documents on North Korean human rights in Korea and abroad have been extensively collected³⁰⁾, testimony and records by those people with experience with political prison camps (former prisoners and camp officials) have been analyzed and all of the reports and research data have been examined. Further study was made using data for the purpose of comparing political prison camps in North Korea with similar cases in former communist states.

② Research via In-depth Interviews

This book is mainly based on testimony by 53 North Koreans, former prisoners, camp officials (officers of the SSA and guards) and those North Koreans who experienced visiting the camps. The new testimony, not included in previous studies, was obtained through in-depth interviews using questionnaires following a specific pattern developed and designed by NKDB. North Koreans who have had experience with political prison

30) Yeo-sang Yoon, *Analysis of Documents on North Korean Human Rights*, (Seoul: NKDB, 2008).

camps were identified through the network already developed for prior studies. The in-depth interviews were conducted by NKDB researchers with rich experience of such interviews primarily at the residences of the interviewees or at the NKDB office. Testimony adopted in this study include a total of fifteen political prison camps³¹⁾, five areas in Yodok Camp, three areas in Pukchang Camp and two areas in Toksong Camp. This study is based on 53 witnesses for a total of fifteen political prison camps.

③ Analysis of Witnesses

Witnesses already included in the prior research and new witnesses added to the list in this report are as follows:

Table 1-2 Analysis of Witnesses to Political Prison Camps

Location	Witness	Type of Experience	Period of Experience	Age When Experienced	Date of Interview	Source
Size of Camp	Kim Hyong-sun (male)	SSA Training Session	1976-7	Not applicable		Chosun Ilbo, 13 Apr., 1982, page 1 & 2
Camp No. 11 Kyongsong Dirstrict, North Hamgyong	Choi Dong-Chul (male)	Guard	1985-6	Teen		Chosun Monthly, Apr., 1996
	Shin Yong-man (male)	NK Spy in Japan	Spring, 1972	40s		Chosun Ilbo, 13 Apr., 1982, page 1 & 2

31) No testimony is available from Camp No. 24, believed to be situated in Tongshin, Chagang Province and now closed.

Location		Witness	Type of Experience	Period of Experience	Age When Experienced	Date of Interview	Source	
Camp No. 11 Kyongsong Diristrict, North Hamgyong		Ahn Myong-chol (male)	Guard	3 months in 1987	teen		“Maximum Security Camp,” NKDB	
		A29 (male)	Guard	1977-1986	10-20s	29 May, 2010	NKDB	
		Lee Sang-bong (male)	Participated in dismantlement of the camp	1990	unknown		NKHR, Volume. 154	
Camp No. 12 Onsong County, North Hamgyong		Kim Yong-jun (male)	SSA Agent, visited the camp	May, 1962 Sept., 1978	Before 10 30s		Chosun Ilbo, 13 Apr., 1982, page 1 & 2	
		A08 (male)	SSA officer	1975-1992	20-50s	30 May, 08 Mar., 09	NKDB	
Camp No. 13 Onsong County, North Hamgyong		A08 (male)	SSA officer	1965-1992	20-50s	30 May, 08 Mar., 09	NKDB	
		Ahn Myong-chol (Male)	Guard	1987-1990	10-20s		“Maximum Security Camp,” NKDB	
Camp No. 14 Kaechon, South Pyongan		Shin Dong-hyuk (male)	Prisoner, family (Born at the camp)	1982-2005	Birth to 20s		“North Korean Maximum Security Camp out to the World” NKDB	
		Kim Yong (male)	Individual prisoner	1993-1995	40s		Monthly Chosun, May, 2000	
Camp No. 15 Yodok county, South Hamgyong	Re-education zone	Ipsok-ni	A05 (female)	Prisoner, family	1976-1980	40s	19 Feb., 09	NKDB
			A11 (female)	Prisoner, family	1976-1980	10s	17 Feb., 09	NKDB
		Taesuk-ni	A12 (male)	Individual prisoner	1994-1997	20-30s	6 May, 09	NKDB
			A10 (male)	Individual prisoner	1996-1997	50s	28 Aug., 09	NKDB
			Lee Young-guk (male)	Individual prisoner	1995-1999	20-30s	28 Dec., 10	“I Was Kim’s Body Guard,” NKDB

Location			Witness	Type of Experience	Period of Experience	Age When Experienced	Date of Interview	Source
Camp No. 15, Yodok County, South Hamgyong	Re-education Camp		Ahn hyok (male)	Individual prisoner	1987-1989	10-20s		Yodok List
			Kim Tae-jin (male)	Individual prisoner	1988-1992	30s		NKDB, Lecture/testimony
		Sorimchon	A13 (female)	Individual prisoner	2003-2005	30s	2 Apr., 10	NKDB
			A14 (female)	Individual prisoner	2002-2004	20-30s	15 Jan., 11	NKDB
			A04 (female)	Individual prisoner	2002-2005	20s	20 Aug., 08	NKDB
			A06 (female)	Individual prisoner	2003-2006	30s	25 Mar., 08	NKDB
			Chon Kwang-il (male)	Individual prisoner	2000-2003	30-40s		NKDB, YH News, Press Interview
	Kuwup-ni	A15 (male)	Individual prisoner	1984-1986	30s	20 Feb., 08	NKDB	
		A03 (male)	Resident near the camp	Mid-1960s to 1998	Less than 10-30s	26 Jul., 08	NKDB	
		Kang Cheol-hwan (male)	Prisoner, family	1977-1987	10s		NKDB, "The Aquariums of Pyongyang"	
		Kim Yong-sun (female)	Prisoner, family	1970-1979	30-40s	13 May, 08	NKDB, "I Was Friend of Kim's Wife"	
	Maximum Camp	Yongpyong-ni	Kim Yong-sun (female)	Prisoner, family	Oct. 1970-Jan. 1979	30-40s	13 May, 08	NKDB, "I Was Friend of Kim's Wife"
	Camp No. 16, Hwasong County, North Hamgyong			A07 (female)	Resident near the camp	1970-1999's	Under 10 to 20s	1 Feb., 10
Camp No. 17, Toksong County, South Hamgyon			A16 (female)	Prisoner, family	1974-1994	Under 10 to 20s	10 Nov., 11	NKDB

Location		Witness	Type of Experience	Period of Experience	Age When Experienced	Date of Interview	Source
Camp No. 18, Pukchang County, South Pyongan	Tukchang County	A17 (male)	Prisoner, family	1973(4)-1982	10-20s	9 Oct., 10	NKDB
		A18 (male)	Prisoner, family	1977-1984	10-20s	1 Jul., 11	NKDB
		A16(female)	Prisoner, family	1984-1992	10-20s	10 Nov., 09	NKDB
		A01 (female)	Prisoner, family	1972-1984	birth-10s	5 May, 09	NKDB
		A19 (male)	Prisoner, family	1975-2006	20-50s	17 Jan., 11	NKDB
	Re-revolutionizing residence	Kang Myong-do (male)	Individual prisoner	1990-1992	30s		Pyongyang Dreaming of Assylum
	Pongchang-ni	Kim Yong (male)	Individual prisoner	1995-1998	40s		Monthly Chosun, June 2000
		A09 (female) Kim Hye-suk	Prisoner, family	1975-2001	Under 10 to 30s	28 Aug., 09	NKDB
		0 Myong-o (male)	Prisoner, family	1994-2000	20-30s		Rimjinggan
		A20 (male)	Camp officer	1989-2006	30s	12 Mar., 11	NKDB
A32 (female)		Camp officer	1987-2006	20-30s	12 Apr., 11	NKDB	
Camp No 19 Tokchon City, South Hamgyong	A21 (female)	Family of camp officer	1984-1990	10-20s	13 Oct., 10	NKDB	
Camp No. 22 Hweryong, North Hamgyong	A22 (Male) Kwon-hyok	SSA officer	1987-1990	20-30s	22 Nov., 10	NKDB	
	A02 (female)	Family of camp officer	1994-1994	20s	10 Feb., 09	NKDB	
	Ahn Myong-chol (male)	Guard	1992-1994	20s		“Maximum Security Camp”	
	A33 (female)	Resident near the camp	—	—	13 Aug., 08	NKDB	
	A34 (female)	Resident near the camp	—	—	31 Mar., 10	NKDB	

Location		Witness	Type of Experience	Period of Experience	Age When Experienced	Date of Interview	Source
Camp No 23, Toksong County, North Hamgyong	Sangdol-li	A23 (female)	Prisoner, family	1977-1987	Under 10-teens	23 Dec., 10	NKDB
		A24 (female)	Prisoner, family	1977-1987	Under 10-teens	20 Nov., 08	NKDB
		A30 (male)	Prisoner, family	1976-1987	10s-20s	29 Apr., 07	NKDB
		A31 (female)	Prisoner, family	1981-1988	30s	7 Sep., 09	NKDB
	Kuwuntaek	A25 (female)	Prisoner, family	1982-1989	Under 10-teens	8 May, 08	NKDB
		A26 (female)	Prisoner, family	1976-1986	Under 10-teens	8 May, 08	NKDB
	Unknown	Kim Sung-chol (male)	Three visits	1987-1988	unknown		Free Public Views Mar-May, 2000
Prison No. 25, Chongjin, North Hamgyong	A02 (female))	visitation		1993(4)	20s	10, Feb., 09	NKDB
	A27 (female)	Individual prisoner		2005	50s	11 Jan., 11	NKDB
	A35 (male)	Resident near the camp		1982-1983	10s	5 Apr., 11	NKDB
Camp No. 26, Sungho County, Pyongyang	Ahn Myong- chol (male)	Guard		1991-1992	20s		NKDB, "They Are Crying."
Camp No. 27, Chonma county, North Pyongan	A28(female)	Family of camp officer		Visitation once in 1991	Under 10	1 Oct., 09	NKDB

* "NKDB" denotes that the source is from interviews by the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights.

As already stated in the above, a comprehensive study of political prison camps in North Korea has been prevented by the political and social restrictions imposed by North Korea. In this study, we collected and analyzed as much data as possible from those who have experienced

political prison camps in North Korea. In total, 53 witnesses have been chosen for this study, including former prisoners, guards and camp officials as well as members of SSA and their families. The witnesses also include those with no actual experience in PPC but with important information about the history of the camps owing to their residential proximity to the camps. The witnesses also include persons who visited camps on official missions even though they were not directly involved with the operation of political prison camps. Their testimony covers a total of fourteen political prison camps, from No. 11 to 27, with the exception of Camp No. 14. Ranging from 1965 to 2006, this information gives a comprehensive picture of political prison camps from their inception to the recent past. All the testimony, with the exception of testimony obtained from other documents, has been directly collected by NKDB researchers through interviews. The witnesses A01-A12 were interviewed for the 2009 Survey Report on Political Prison Camps in North Korea (on forced repatriation and disappearances), funded by a grant from the National Human Rights Commission of Korea. The testimony of the sixteen witnesses ranging from A13 to A36 (24 people in total) were collected by NKDB and they are, with the exception of three, new witnesses. NKDB researchers spent between one to nine hours for each interview to obtain as detailed information as possible. The new witnesses were mainly from Camp No. 15 at Yodok, a re-education camp under the operation of the SSA, and Camps No. 17, 18 and 23 under the operation of the police. They were released on expiration of their imprisonment terms or due to closure of the camp. Families of some of the camp officials at police-controlled Camps No. 19 and 27 provided

information on the release of some prisoners during camp closures. Only three of the new witnesses had information related to maximum security camps. One of the three was a guard at Camp No. 11, the second witness, a former SSA camp officer at Camp No. 22 and the third witness, a former prisoner at Prison No. 25, who was released after 6 months under extremely unusual circumstances. In particular, Kwon Hyok, A22, a former SSA officer at Camp No. 22, has provided important information for the analysis and verification of earlier testimony, specifically from Ahn Myong-chol and A02. On the other hand, the small number of prisoners who escaped or were released from maximum security camps, in comparison with the numbers from re-education camps, is considered to be an indication of the strict and cruel controls exercised in the maximum security camps. The following are the observations of witnesses by camp:

i) Camp No. 11

The reality of PPC No. 11, closed in October 1989, was revealed by the testimony of two former guards and one visitor. Shin Yong-man was a North Korean agent in Japan who surrendered to Japanese police in 1977. In 1972, before he was sent to Japan as a spy, he had been sent to a political prisoner camp in Chu-wul to observe the horrendous conditions of the camps as a warning to him lest he fail to perform his spy duties in Japan. His account vividly describes the horrible conditions of political prisoners in the camp.³²⁾

32) Shin Yong-man, Kim Yong-jun and Kang Hyong-sun were the first to disclose the realities of political prison camps in North Korea to the public at a press conference

Ahn Myong-chol was trained to be a camp guard during the period of May to July 1987 at Camp No. 11. He arrived in South Korea in 1994 and testified on camp officials' cruel treatment of prisoners that he witnessed during the training.³³⁾

Choi Dong-chol was also a camp guard for one year and four months from February 1985 to June 1986 at Camp No. 11. He arrived in South Korea in December 1995. His information is incomplete because his duty post was in the residence area of SSA officers and direct contact with political prisoners was limited. Nevertheless, he provided important information for comparative analysis and verification of testimony by Shin Yong-man and Ahn Myong-chol from the same camp.³⁴⁾ Witness A28 arrived in South Korea in 2009 and worked as a guard at Camp No. 11 during the period from 1977 to 1986. He had little information about what occurred inside the camp as he was a guard on duty outside the camp but what he was able to say about the location, title and closure of the camp confirmed the credibility of earlier testimony about the camp

ii) Camps No. 12 & 13

Kim Yong-jun had been a secret agent for the SSA in North Korea before he arrived in South Korea in January 1982. In May, 1962, he

on 12 April, 1982. Their testimony appeared in the following newspapers on the same day: Chosun Ilbo, Dong-A Ilbo and Kyonghyang Shinmun.

33) Myong-chol Ahn, *They Are Crying*, (Seoul: Chonji Media, 1995).

34) Kim Yong-sam, ““The Scene of Annihilation of People”, A Testimony by the 4th Witness, Choi Dong-chol, Testifying to Horrendous Realities in Political Prison Camps”, *Monthly Chosun*, April Issue, (Seoul: Chosun News Press, 1996), pp. 133-139.

accidentally found signs reading “Controlled Area” and “Off Limits” up in a remote mountain area and became aware of Camp No. 12 through tips from villagers. In 1978, he was mobilized for a campaign to search for waste land and, during that campaign, he actually witnessed political prisoners. In 1978, he needed to visit the camp to have his agricultural tools repaired by the prisoners there. His information detailed how political prisoners who attempted to escape or made anti-party remarks were killed in human experiments during Special Forces training.³⁵⁾

Witness A08 was a member of the SSA at Camp No. 13 from 1965 until 1992, when the camp was closed. He provided important information about the life of prisoners there as well as the control systems of the camp. He was there when Camp No. 13 was partitioned into a second camp, No. 12, which opened in 1975. His testimony included information on the timeline, location and size of Camp No. 12.

Ahn Myong-chol, who was a guard and driver at Camp No. 13 from July 1987 to December 1990, and testified in great detail about the location, operational system, security system, lives of prisoners and horrendous human rights violations perpetuated in Camp No. 13.³⁶⁾

iii) Camp No. 14

Shin Dong-hyuk and Kim Yong are the only two witnesses to Camp No. 14. When Shin Dong-hyuk arrived in South Korea, he was the first known prisoner to escape from a maximum-security camp. He was born

35) Chosun Ilbo, 12 April, 1982, pp 1-2; Kyonghyang Shinmun, 12 April, 1982, pp. 1-2. and Tong-A Ilbo, 12 April, 1982, pp. 1-2.

36) Myong-chol Ahn, *They Are Crying*, (Seoul: Chonji Media, 1995).

in Camp No. 14, Pongchang-ni, Pukchang County³⁷⁾, South Pyongan Province in 1982 to parents who were prisoners in the camp and were allowed to marry by the camp authorities on account of their good work performance in the camp.³⁸⁾ In 1983, when he was just one year old, he was transferred to Camp No. 14 in Wedong-ni, Kaechon, from which he successfully escaped in 2005. He received a lot of attention for the vivid accounts of his experiences in the political prison camps in his book, “North Korean Maximum Security Camp out to the World,”³⁹⁾ which was published by NKDB in October 2007. He calmly described his early childhood and life at school, from the severe forced labor to the shocking atrocities and violence against the children in the camps.

Witness Kim Yong alleges that he forged his birth certificate and was promoted to the social rank of deputy manager of a trade company under the umbrella of the SSA, but was arrested in August 1993 when the forgery of his birth certificate got detected. His testimony recounts that he was sent to the maximum security Camp No. 14 but was transferred to the comparatively less harsh Camp No. 18 in October 1994 with the help of a high-ranking official. His testimony vividly describes his hard life as a prisoner in Shaft No. 2 at the Mujin Mine. His story was introduced in detail in the May 2000 issue of the *Monthly Chosun*. However, Shin Dong-hyuk has said he has no knowledge of such a mine

37) Shin Dong-hyuk testifies that Camp No. 14 was located at Pongchang-ni, Pukchang, and relocated at Wedong-ni in 1983. Since then, Pongchang-ni was part of Camp No. 18, Pukchang County, South Pyongan province, that has now been closed.

38) An incentive system in the camp whereby prisoners are married, unilaterally arranged by the camp authorities, on the basis of good performance.

39) Dong-hyuk Shin, *North Korean Maximum Security Camp out to the World*, (Seoul: NKDB, 2007).

at Camp No. 14. Shin has countered Kim's accounts of both the underground detention in a mine and the road expansion construction there.⁴⁰⁾

iv) Camp No. 15

Camp No. 15 is divided into two zones, a maximum security zone and high security zone where, unlike the maximum security zone, prisoners have the possibility of being released. Therefore, there are relatively many former prisoners of the high security zone of the Camp No. 15 and, accordingly, testimony is available in larger numbers. In this study, testimony of a total of seventeen former prisoners has been analyzed. They were evenly distributed in four areas of the high security zone, namely, Ipsok-ni, Taesuk-ni, Sorimchon and Kuwup-ni, which represents the entire high security zone of the camp.

Witnesses A05 and A11 were prisoners in the Ipsok-ni area during the same period, from 1976 to 1980. Both witnesses were families members of offenders and victims of guilt-by-association. They described in detail the systems of work units, punishments and lives of prisoners in general.

A11, in particular, was a pupil when she was sent there and described in detail the life of children in the camp school, while A05 provided important testimony from her perspective as a party member at the time

40) Sun-haeng Heo, "A Study of Effectiveness of Political Prisoners Camps on the Control of People", Master Degree thesis, p. 16, (Seoul: Unification Policy Department, Public Policy Graduate School, Sogang University, 2008). footnote No. 37 and testimony by Shin Dong-hyuk; and the *Survey Report on the Political Prisoners' Camps in North Korea*, (Seoul: National Human Rights Commission, 2009) and *Survey on former Prisoners and North Koreans with experience in political prison camps* (Seoul: NKDB, 2008).

of her arrest. She retained her party membership throughout the period of her detention there.

In the Taesuk-ni area there were bunk houses for ‘individual prisoners without other family members inside the camps’ (henceforth, individual prisoners) and houses for families. Testimony is available about those individual prisoners who were in the bunk houses but relatively little information about life in the family areas exists. A12 was detained in Taesuk-ni from 1994-1997 for making an attempt to defect from North Korea. The witness was charged with betrayal of the fatherland.

A10 was charged with spying activity during preliminary investigations by the SSA and detained in Taesuk-ni from 1996 to 1997. His testimony details the life of prisoners there.

Lee Young-guk, author of “I was Kim Jong-il’s Bodyguard,” vividly described his career as Kim Jong-il’s guard, his defection to China, the circumstances of his arrest in China, preliminary investigations by the SSA in North Korea and his life in PPC No. 15 as a prisoner. He provided further information on the operations of the camp and human rights of the prisoners in an interview with NKDB. There are four witnesses to Kuwup-ni, which is an area in the camp known to hold a large number of Koreans from Japan. Kang Cheol-hwan and Ahn Hyok arrived in South Korea in 1992 when information on political prison camps was very limited. Their disclosures about Kang’s life as a child prisoner in the Kuwup-ni area of Camp No. 15 at Yodok were the first to gather a great deal of attention on political prison camps from South Korea and abroad. His book, “The Aquarium of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korea Gulag,” provides information about his arrest, life in the PPC and release.

His testimony detailing the miserable lives in North Korea of Koreans from Japan in the 1960s was considered very shocking at the time.

Kim Yong-sun, author of “I Was a Friend of Kim Jong-il’s Wife,” described her life in the Camp No. 15. She was detained in Kuwup-ni with her family from October 1970, to January 1976, for having been a friend of Kim Jong-il's wife. After that, she was detained in Yongpyong-ni, a maximum security area of the same camp from January 1976 until her release in 1979 without any knowledge of why she was sent to a maximum security area and why she was released. During the period, her parents and one of her sons died in the camp.

Witness A15 was detained from 1984 to 1986 in a bunk house as an individual prisoner in the Kuwup-ni area of Camp No. 15 for the crime of abortive defection. He offered detailed information about his experience and the lives of prisoners during interview with NKDB. The information provided by A15 includes an interesting observation: when the number of prisoners increased, there was less work for them to do.

Witness A03 was neither a prisoner nor a camp official. The witness actually saw Camp No. 15 from outside from its foundation in the 1960s until 1998 because his residence was just outside the camp, in the vicinity of Kuwup-ni. He is one of the most important witnesses in that he was able to provide information about the camp security system outside the camp, which prisoners inside would have not been aware of. On the other hand, little information is available about the maximum security areas of Yongpyong-ni and Pyongchon-ni in the same camp. Kim Yong-sun, who was a prisoner at Yongpyong-ni, could only give us a little bit of information with few details.

v) Camp No. 16

Little information is available on Camp No. 16, a maximum security camp located in Hwasong County, North Hamgyong Province. No prisoners, camp officials or guards from the camp have been found to this date. The only information available about Camp No. 16 is regarding human rights violations in the camp described by a 13-year old boy. The information appeared on the internet site (<http://www.unitypress.com>) of the Unity Press Newspaper, USA, on 13 October, 2004. The boy was arrested and sent to Camp No. 16 together with his entire family on account of political remarks of his father, but he miraculously escaped from the camp. He alleges actually witnessing his father being beaten cruelly, and his mother and sisters being raped by SSA members. However, since he has never been identified and his accounts never verified, his testimony has not been reflected in this book. Witness A07, however, lived in the vicinity of the camp. Since the children of SSA members at the camp worked outside its wall, the witness was able to learn about the horrendous conditions inside the camp from them. He also actually witnessed political prisoners being taken to the camp in the 1980s. Other than the above information, little is known about the operational systems and the lives of prisoners there.

vi) Camp No. 17

There is only one witness to Camp No. 17, which is located in the Toksong county, South Hamgyong Province. Witness A07 was only a little baby when she was detained there because of guilt-by-association. One day, her father was called to the camp office and has been missing ever

since. Later, she heard from a police officer that her father must have been mobilized for secret construction work and perished there. Her family was transferred to Camp No. 18 when Camp No. 17 was closed in 1984. She testified to what she saw and experienced in the Camp No. 17 for ten years. However, her testimony was limited as much of her descriptions of life in the camp, the size and the management systems were based on childhood memories.

vii) Camp No. 18

Camp No. 18, which is under the control of the police, released prisoners twice during large-scale dismantlement operations, so there is a relatively large number of witnesses to the camp, comparable to the high security area of Camp No. 15. They include former prisoners and camp officials from the early 1970s up to 2006, when the camp was closed. Witnesses A20 and A32 were administration officers at Camp No. 18 and have given us important information on systems of administrative organizations, rules for camp officials and procedures and deployment of camp officials, which is the kind of information that prisoners cannot provide. Witness A20 worked in the camp for 18 years, from 1989 to 2006. His information, provided to NKDB in a five-hour interview, was particularly meaningful not only for the information on the operational systems of the camp but also on the history of the camp from its creation until its closure and relocation in 2006. His information also proved vital in verifying other testimony on the same camp.

He admitted that the control of prisoners in Camp No. 18 was not as harsh as in camps under the control of SSA. Nevertheless, he found it

emotionally difficult to testify to the cruelty with which the officials treated prisoners, as it was so severe that he did not want to remember.

Witness A32 also worked in the Pongchang area of Camp No. 18. Her testimony, obtained in an several-hour long interview with NKDB, was about the general systems of operation of the camp and was important for verification of other testimony about Camp No. 18. Her statement that the inmates of the prison in the camp were mostly ordinary villagers and other information about the general life of prisoners inside camp has given us the strong impression that Camp No. 18 is actually an ordinary collective with strict application of class and social controls.

Witness A17 was detained in Camp No. 18 from 1973, when the camp began to expand, to 1982, when he was released. He was detained there with his entire family after his father was accused of embezzlement of state property and was a student at the camp's school most of his time there. After his release, however, he continued to work there under camp regulations controlling the movement of villagers. He managed to leave the camp legally in 1994 and eventually arrived in South Korea. He calmly described how he was admitted into the camp, his life as a student in the camp school, what he witnessed and his experiences after release. Additionally, he provided information in detail about life in the labor training unit of the camp, another detention facility inside the camp he experienced.

Witness A18 was also sent to the camp together with his family because his father was accused of 'contamination by capitalism' and he spent his entire life as a student in the camp. During a nine-hour interview with NKDB, he explained in detail how the teachers were ruthless to boys and girls. He also provided important testimony about the difference

between the punishment for political prisoners and for prisoners convicted of non-political offenses.

Witness A16 was transferred from Camp No. 17 to Camp No. 18 together with his family during the camp's relocation, as explained above, and spent seventeen years at Camp No. 18. She provided important information on the circumstances surrounding the closure of the Tukchang area of Camp No. 18 in 1995, whereupon some of the prisoners were sent to Pongchang-ni, which is generally believed to be a maximum security camp. Additionally, Pongchang-ni was divided into two sections, one for ordinary prisoners and the other for released prisoners.

Kang Myong-do was an aristocrat in North Korea. He was a relative of one of Kim Il-sung's cousins and son-in-law of Kang Song-san, the former North Korean Prime Minister. After studying French at Pyongyang Foreign Language School, he became a special officer in Room No. 39 of the Pyongyang City Party, the Principal Researcher at the State Security College under the Ministry of National Defence and the Vice-Manager of 888 Special Trading Company under the Supreme Palace of the Leader. Ultimately however, he fell victim to a power struggle and was detained in the high security area of the Camp No. 18 in 1990, when he was the Principal Researcher at the State Security College, until February 1992. He described in details his life in North Korea as a royal family member and as a prisoner in Camp No. 18 in his book, "Pyongyang Is Dreaming Asylum." He was a prisoner in the high security area of the Camp No. 18 and testified to life in the camp as an individual prisoner for re-revolutionization and on the practices of sexual bribery and abortion.

Witness A01 was born in Camp No. 18 in 1972. Political remarks by her grandfather caused her entire family to be dragged to Camp No. 18. She has no knowledge of when this happened and was detained there as a prisoner until 1984 when she was released. After release, she lived there until 1991 and observed the process of the closure of the Tukchang area of the camp.

Witness A19 was wrongly imprisoned in Camp No. 18 in 1975 with his parents and brothers. He stayed there until the shutdown of Camp No. 18 and observed the entire process. His testimony includes information about control systems, the size of the camp, industrial products and the routine life of prisoners. He was married in the camp in the 1970s and had children.

The following witnesses are former residents of the Pongchang area. Pongchang area was a maximum security zone and the prisoners in the Tukchang area, a re-education zone under police control, were frightened by it until the 1980s. However, when the camp in Tukchang area began to close in 1984, ordinary prisoners and released prisoners lived together in the same area. Eventually, the entire camp at Pongchang was dismantled in 1984 and those prisoners who were not released were sent to another location in the direction of Kaechon. Kim Yong, referred to in the above section for Camp No. 14, was also a prisoner in Camp No. 18 from the time of his transfer from Camp 14 in October 1995 to October 1998 when he escaped from the camp. Although his testimony on Camp No. 14 was somewhat controversial, his testimony about life in Camp No. 18, considered with the map of the camp he drew, corresponds with other testimony and appears credible. The only discrepancy was about the free

marriage of prisoners: all the other witnesses testified that marriage was allowed in the re-education camp but Kim Yong alleges that marriage was not permitted.

Witness A09 is Kim Hye-suk, who in 2011 became a leading activist in South Korea and abroad in bringing attention to the horrific conditions in political prison camps in North Korea. Her family was sent to Camp No. 18 in 1970 because her grandfather defected to South Korea during the Korean War. When her family was initially arrested she was left in the custody of relatives, however she was later forced to join her family in the camp in 1975. Kim is believed to have been detained in a PPC for the longest period of time out of all of the witnesses to date, and has provided vivid information about the history of Camp No. 18, prisoners who were formerly high ranking government officials, camp facilities, the number of camp officers, and so on.

0 Myong-o (surname unknown) was detained in Camp No. 18 from 1994 to 2000 together with his father, who was punished for failing to regularly attend party ideology sessions. He described his life in the camp in the form of a diary that appeared in “Rimjingang,” a periodical published by Koreans reporting from inside North Korea. He also produced information on the location/history of Camp No. 18, the charges against prisoners that brought them to the camp, the reality of forced labor, food rations and the existence of a prison in the camp. He, along with Kim Hye-suk, witness A20 and witness A32, all vividly testified to the secret execution of former high ranking officials and subsequent executions of camp officials connected to the secret executions.

viii) Camp No. 19

There is one witness for Camp No. 19. She is a family member of a camp officer and lived in the camp from 1984 until the camp was closed. She refused to provide full information for security reasons but provided simple information on the conditions in the camp at the time of its dismantlement. She also gave us detailed information about a public execution in the camp.

ix) Camp No. 22

There are only two witnesses who directly experienced Camp No. 22. One of them is Ahn Myong-chol, who also worked at Camp No. 13 and Camp Sungho outside of Pyongyang. The other witness is A22, Kwon Hyok, who was a SSA officer in the camp. Ahn was working in the camp from 1992 to 1994 while Kwon was there from 1987 to 1990. Ahn Myong-chol described in his book, *Maximum Security Camp*, general facts about the location and reality of political prison camps and detailed accounts of the brutality that occurred within them. His information on the kinds of crimes against humanity perpetuated in the camp was particularly shocking.

In fact, Kwon Hyok disclosed human rights violations in Camp No. 22 in the BBC documentary "Access to Evil." During a special interview with NKDB about the camp facilities, he provided full information about the camp facilities, disposal of dead bodies, administrative structures, detention type and family life, the system of marriage allowed for the very limited number of prisoners with records of exemplary performance, child education, forced labor, rape and so on. His information included

human experimentation taking place in the camp and South Korean prisoners of war, in particular. His information regarding the reduction in size of the camp in 1989 corroborates information provided by Ahn Myong-chol on camps No. 12 and 13 in the same vicinity, giving rise to suspicions that camp No. 22 may have been present, scattered throughout the country. Further information is required for verification.

Other witnesses include A02, who was a family member of a camp officer and lived in the restricted area for a short period time, and A33 and A34, who lived near Camp No. 22 and were in the position to watch the flow of products from the camp. A02, in particular, provided significant information about camp officers' privileges, strict control over access, industrial products, the system of education, family life and successful cases of escape.

x) Camp No. 23

Camp No. 23 is for prisoners of economic crimes, rather than political crimes, and its control systems are somewhat less strict than re-education camps No. 18 or 15. Many prisoners were released from this camp and there are a comparatively larger number of witnesses available. There are a total of seven witnesses. Of them, A23, A24, A25 and A26 experienced life in the camp while under the age of ten or in their teens, and their testimony is limited to their school lives. A25 was born there and released when she was still less than 10, therefore she has only a vague memory of the camp. Witnesses A23, A24 and A26 all testified to their life in school. In the school, they were in the same classroom as children of camp officers and vividly described the severe discrimination in the school.

Both witnesses A30 and 23, were detained in the camp for 10 years and have provided overall information about the opening of the camp, the number of prisoners and their crimes, industrial products and closure of the camp. Witness A26 was over 30 when she was in the camp and also provided detailed information about the size of the camp, the reality of hard labor, food rations and administrative systems. Kim Sung-chol was a civil engineer working on the construction of power plants and visited Camp No. 23 at Toksong, South Hamgyong province, three times: in 1987 and in the spring of autumn of 1988. His account of the political prisoners in the camp appeared in the March and April 2000 issue of 'Free Public Views'.⁴¹⁾ ⁴²⁾ Naturally, since he was only a visitor his testimony is limited, but it includes what he heard from the camp officers about the lives of prisoners and industrial products.

xi) Prison No. 25

Prison No. 25 has been classified as a PPC because of its similarity to political prison camps in terms of the crimes of the detained prisoners and the camp's operational systems. Limited access to it and the extremely small number of prisoners released has given us only one witness, A27, who was a prisoner there. She was detained there for a short period of time and her movements in the camp were very limited. Naturally, her testimony alone is not sufficient to give an overall picture of the camp.

41) Sung-chol Kim, "Gloomy Valley, Note 1 of Visit to Economic Prison Camp," *Free Public Views*, March Issue, (Seoul: Korea Freedom Federation, 2000), pp. 122-127.

42) Sung-chol Kim, "Gloomy Valley, Note 2 of Visit to Economic Prison Camp," *Free Public Views*, April Issue, (Seoul: Korea Freedom Federation, 2000), pp. 142-145.

Witness A02 visited the camp by accident so her testimony is rather brief and is about the entire scene of the camp and information gathered from camp officers. Witness A35 was a villager near the camp, had knowledge of the industrial products from the camp and once watched prisoners when they were brought out of the camp to be publicly executed outside.

xii) Camp No. 26

The only witness to Camp No. 26 is Ahn Myong-chol, who was a guard at the camp from 1991 to 1992. He provided no detailed information about this camp.

xiii) Camp No. 27

Little information is available about Camp No. 27 in Chonma county, North Pyongan Province. Witness A28 was the child of a camp officer and visited the camp only once, in 1991. Her information is relatively superficial, as it is based on what she heard from her family. Nonetheless, she still gave us important information that the camp was closed in 1995 and became Prison No. 2 in Chonma.

Present Situation, Imprisonment in and Release from Political Prison Camps

1. History of Political Prison Camps

1) Location and Foundation

Political prison camps have been in continuous operation since their founding in the 1950s. Nevertheless, the North Korean authorities have refused to acknowledge their existence, making it extremely difficult to gather objective information about them. To this day, the information available to the outside world about such camps has been from related research work, reports and testimony from North Koreans with some experience of the camps. Nevertheless, the information available is still limited in terms of a comprehensive understanding of the camps as evidence is mainly about Camp No. 15, Yodok, a re-education zone under the control of the SSA, and Camp No. 18, Pongchang, a re-education camp under the control of the police, from which prisoners have been released in large numbers. The information contained in this book is based on all related past records, documents and in-depth interviews obtained

from 53 witnesses with experience of the camps. As a result, 15 such camps have been identified, including those that existed in the past or are still in operation today.

Basic knowledge about prison camps in North Korea has been in existence for a long time. However, only recently has information become available on locations, sizes and titles. In particular, exact locations have been confirmed via testimony from North Korean defectors and satellite photos. “The Hidden Gulag” by David Hawk of the US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, published in 2003, systematically displayed satellite photos of camps in North Korea⁴³). An Amnesty International Report dated 3 May, 2011, also included recent detailed satellite photos confirming locations and sizes.

The information so far available has confirmed that the total number of camps is at least 15, including the five camps still in operation today.

Today, the following five camps are in operation under the control of the State Security Agency (SSA): Camp No. 14 at Kaechon, Camp No. 15 at Yodok, Camp No. 16 at Hwasong, Camp No. 22 at Hweryong and Prison No. 25, Susong. Camp No. 18 at Pukchang, formerly under the control of the police, was finally closed in 2006 and some 200 to 300 remaining prisoners were transferred to Camp No. 14, Kaechon. It has not been confirmed whether the prisoners were actually transferred to Camp No. 14 or to Camp No. 18, which may have been relocated but remains in limited operation today near Camp No. 14.

43) David Hawk, *The Hidden Gulag* (Washington D.C.: US Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK), 2003). Translation by Shidae Jongshin, (Seoul: Shidae Jongshin, 2003).

Some of the prison camps appear to have been closed down as a result of their location being disclosed, the establishment of an important facility nearby or integration with another camp for more efficient operation. General information about the history of the camps has been made available through the testimony of witnesses who were once involved with the camps one way or another. However, further information is required for a complete understanding of the overall situation of the camps in detail. Today, three camps are located in North Hamgyong Province (Camp No. 16 at Hwasong, 22 at Hweryong and 25 in Chongjin), one camp in South Hamgyong Province (Camp No. 15 at Yodok) and another camp in South Pyongan Province (No. 14 at Kaechon); all the other camps are in remote mountain areas. The remote location of the camps in mountain areas away from population centers makes it easy to prevent escapes and control the camps in secrecy. Former camps were also mostly located in such areas.

Table 2-1 Location and Current Situation of Political Prison Camps

Camp	Location	No. of Prisoners	Type of Prisoners	Status Today
No. 11	Below Kwanmo Peak, Chuwul-li, Kyongsong County, North Hamgyong	Over 20,000 ⁴⁴⁾	Family ⁴⁵⁾	Relocated to Tongshin and Wushi in Chagang in 1987 and closed in Oct. 1989

44) Kim Yong-sam, ““The Scene of Annihilation of People”, A Testimony by the 4th Witness, Choi Dong-chol, Testifying to Horrendous Realities in Political Prison Camps”, *Monthly Chosun*, April Issue, (Seoul: Chosun News Press, 1996), p. 135. The number of prisoners were believed to be 15,000 but now amended to be over 20,000 as per Choi Dong-chol's testimony. However, on 23 April, 2011, Lee Sang-bong testified that the number of prisoners was 38,000 on the basis of his experience in the actual work of closure of the camp, *News Letter*, (May, 2011), No. 164, p. 1, (Seoul: Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights)

Camp	Location	No. of Prisoners		Type of Prisoners	Status Today
No. 12	Changpyong-ni, Onsong County, North Hamgyong	Over 15,000		Offender and Family	Closed in Oct., 1991
No. 13	Tongpo, Punggye and Chongsong areas, Onsong-kun, North Hamgyong	Over 20,000		Offender and Family	Closed in Autumn, 1992
No. 14	Wedong-ni & 5 other valleys, Kaechon City, South Pyongan	Over 50,000 (*15,000)		Offender and Family	In operation today
No. 15	The areas of Yongpyong, Pyongjon, Ipsok, Taesuk, Kuwup & Sorimchon, Yodok County, South Hamgyong	Over 5,000 in Yongpyong	Estimated to be over *50,000	Offender and Family	In operation today, (Re-education zone)
		Over 5,000 in Kuwup & Ipsok			
		Over 250 in Taesuk			
		Over 200-250 In Sorimchon			
No. 16	Areas of Puha-ri, Hwasong county, North Hamgyong	(*15,000)		Family	In operation today
No. 17	Areas of Cholsan-ni, Toksong County, South Hamgyong	30,000-40,000		Family	Closed in 1984 (under police control)
No. 18	Areas of Pongchang-ni/Soksan-ni, Pukchang County, South Pyongan	50,000 in Tukchang Area, 18,000 in Pongchang-ni (closed) 200-300 relocated to Kaechon (*19,000)		Offender and family	An area separated from the society under the police control but clearly distinctive from other political prison camps (closed in 2006, small number of remaining prisoners relocated to Kaechon).

45) Myong-chol Ahn, *Maximum Security Camp*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongsin, 2007), p. 28. The knowledge in the past that the camp was for offenders of crimes only has now been amended as per his testimony.

Camp	Location	No. of Prisoners	Type of Prisoners	Status Today
No. 19 (No. 21 ⁴⁶)	Tanchon, South Hamgyong	10,000	—	Closed in 1990 (under police control)
No. 22	Kulsan, Naksaeung & Chungbong-ni, Hweryong City, North Hamgyong	10,000 in some area (*50,000)	Family	In operation today (founded in 1973 and expanded in 1990)
No. 23	Areas of Sangdol-li & Shintae-ri, Toksong County, South Hamgyong	10,000	Offender and family	Closed in 1987 and converted to a prison under the police control
No. 24	Tongshin, Chgang	17,000		Closed in 1990s
No. 25	Susong-dong, Songpyong, Chongjin city, North Hamgyong	160 prisoners for re-education and 5,000 prisoners for life. (*5,000명)	Offender	In operation today as Susong prison *Partly for re-education prisoners.
No. 26	Hwachon-dong, Sungho Area, Pyongyang	Small scale	Offender	Closed in January 1991 (political prison)
No. 27	Chonma, North Pyongan	15,000		Closed in 1991

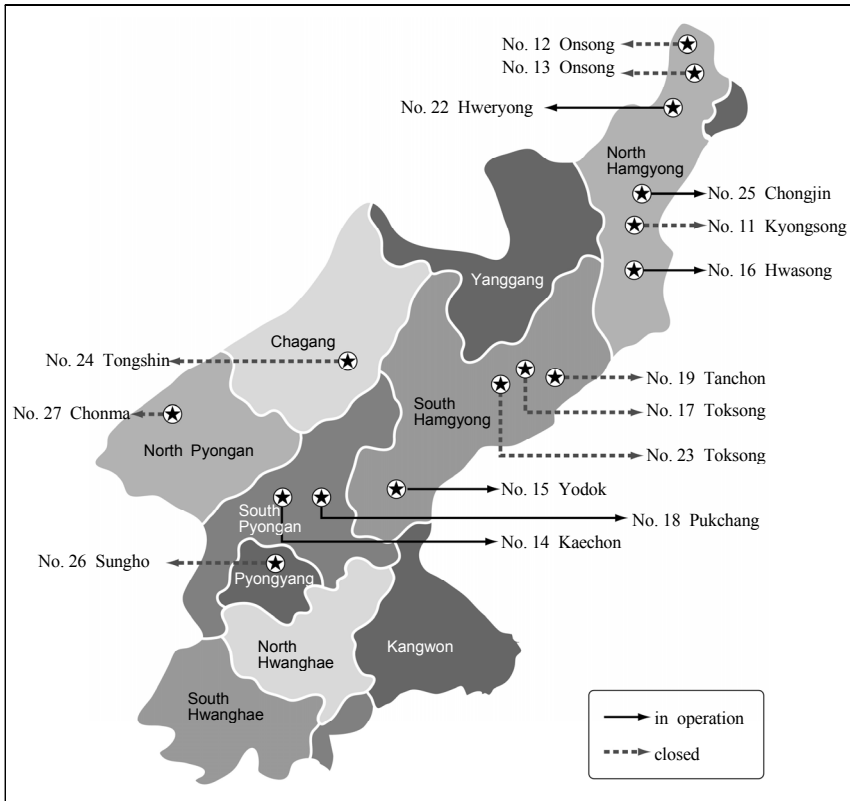
* Prisoners numbers are based on analysis of testimonies that varied with time and may not be the same today.

** Information about locations and present situations is from data obtained through interviews with NKDB, past studies and report from the National Intelligence Agency (South Korea).

*** The figure inside parenthesis represents information from the National Intelligence Agency.

46) The report, “Present Situations of Political Prison Camps in North Korea”, submitted to Yun Sang-hyon, a member of Grand Party and National assembly, Foreign Affairs and Trade Committee, by National Intelligence Agency on 16 Oct., 2009, stated the Camp No. was 21. However, the witness, A28, who was a family of a camp officer and lived in the camp states that the Camp No. was 19.

Figure 2-1 Present Situation of Political Prison Camps in North Korea



In the absence of reliable, official statistics from the North Korean authorities it is impossible to obtain information on the precise number of prisoners in the camps. The number may well be different at different times. The number of prisoners estimated today, as shown in Table 2-1, is based on testimony from former prisoners, camp officers and guards. The figures shown in Table 2-1 are minimum estimates by the North Korean Human Rights Archives on the basis of the latest testimony. It

is not claimed, however, that the figures in the table show the entire number of prisoners in all camps today, because the related testimony is not sufficient to follow latest developments of all camps, while information is completely missing for some camps.

2) History of Each Political Prison Camps

The prison camps which became known to the outside world were closed. New camps were set up and some camps were expanded or relocated as dictated by need over the years. No detailed information is available on the history, reasons for closure or relocation and number of prisoners involved.

Information has been made available on the size and history of the camps by international NGOs such as Amnesty International, research organizations and North Korean human rights organizations in Korea and abroad. Overall information on the subject has been provided by the National Intelligence Service (NIS) of the South Korean government. Denial of the existence of secret camps by the North Korean authorities and the inaccessibility of the camps for North Korean residents and outsiders meant that to obtain and analyze overall information about the camps is intelligence work and, as such, the NIS used to be the only source of such information on things such as location, size and history of the camps. In recent years, however, non-governmental organizations in Korea and abroad have begun to offer important information as the number of North Korean defectors has increased in South Korea and satellite photos have offered limited access to the camps possible.

In 1982, the New York Times in the United States quoted a senior

official in the South Korean intelligence Service as saying that there are eight detention facilities for political prisoners in addition to 25 prisons in North Korea, and that the total number of prisoners is at least 105,000;⁴⁷⁾ 27,000 prisoners in Onsong county, North Hamgyong Province, 20,000 in Hweryong city, North Hamgyong Province, 15,000 in Kyongsong county in North Hamgyong Province, 10,000 in Chongpyong county in South Hamgyong Province, 5,000 in Yongchon area in North Pyongan Province and also in Yodok in South Hamgyong Province and Hwechon area in Chagang Province.

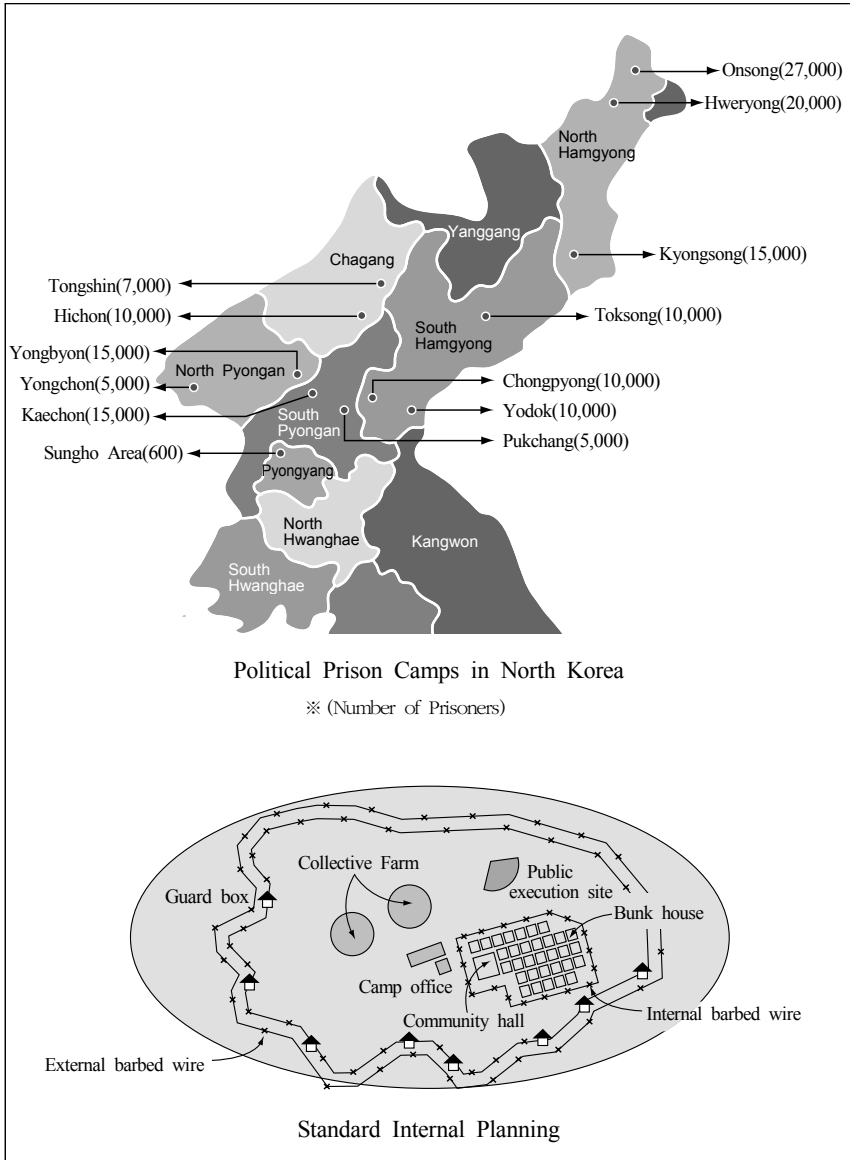
In January, 1990, the South Korean Intelligence Service reported that the number of political prison camps had increased from eight up to 1982 to 12, and in 1990 the total number of prisoners was around 200,000. This included new camps in Toksong, South Hamgyong Province, Pukchang, South Pyongan Province, Kaechon, South Pyongan Province, and another in Tongshin, Chagang Province. The South Korean intelligence source confirmed Amnesty International's 1994 report and the location of the 12 camps and the total of 200,000 prisoners in those camps, and reported that the North Korean authorities continue to increase the number of camps. At around the same time, a new camp in Sungho-ri, Pyongyang, was also announced.⁴⁸⁾

In 1999, NIS confirmed that those South Koreans kidnapped and those who went to North Korea are detained in political prison camps, and reported that North Korea was operating 10 political prison camps for 207,000 prisoners. In detail, the report listed 50,000 prisoners in Hweryong,

47) "New York Times," 11 April, 1982., Chosun Ilbo, 13, April, 1982. p. 1.

48) "Chosun Ilbo, 2 August, 1994, p. 4.

Figure 2-2 Size and Location of Political Prison Camps in North Korea in 1994



North Hamgyong Province, 20,000 in Hwasong, North Hamgyong Province, 10,000 in Tanchon, South Hamgyong Province, 10,000 in Toksong, South Hamgyong Province, 50,000 in Yodok, South Hamgyong Province, 15,000 in Chonma, North Pyongan Province, 15,000 in Kaechon, South Pyongan Province, 5,000 in Pukchang, South Pyongan Province, etc.⁴⁹⁾

Table 2-2 History of the Number of Camps and Prisoners

Year	No. of Camps	No. of Prisoners	Source of Information	Remarks
1982	8	105,000	National Intelligence Service	—
1988	12-16	150,000	Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee/Asia Human Rights Watch	—
1990	12	200,000	National Intelligence Service	—
1994	13	200,000	National Intelligence Service	—
1995	10	200,000	Naewe News Agency	—
1999	10	207,000	National Intelligence Service	—
2009	6	154,000	National Intelligence Service	Pukchang included
2009	6	200,000	National Human Rights Commission of Korea	Pukchang included
2011	6	200,000	Amnesty International	Pukchang included
2011	5	130,500	North Korean Human Rights Archives	Pukchang excluded

In October, 2009, the NIS submitted to Yun Sang-hyon, a member of the national assembly, a report on the “Present Situation of Political Prison Camps in North Korea.” The report indicated that North Korea had detained over 200,000 prisoners in 10 camps as of 1990. North Korea

49) “Chosun Ilbo,” 1 Feb., 1999, p. 3.

closed four camps as a result of international criticism at the end of the 1990s. The report concluded that there are 154,000 prisoners in six political prison camps.⁵⁰⁾ The report indicated that the two camps in Yodok, South Hamgyong Province, and in Hweryong, North Hamgyong Province, are the two largest camps, with each detaining 50,000 prisoners, followed by 19,000 in Pukchang, South Pyongan Province, 15,000 each in Hwasong, North Hamgyong Province, and Kaechon, South Pyongan Province and 5,000 in Chongjin. The report stated that four camps, Chonma in North Pyongan Province, Tanchon in South Hamgyong Province, Toksong in South Hamgyong Province and Tongshin in Chagang Province had closed. (Total number of prisoners: 47,000)

On the basis of analysis of the information available to date, the North Korean Human Rights Archives, Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, has concluded that there are five political prison camps in operation in North Korea today, a minimum of 131,000 prisoners are detained in those camps and, additionally, 200-300 prisoners are detained in Camp No. 18, Pukchang, under the control of the police. The camp control systems of Camp No 18, Pukchang, which is under the control of the police, differs in many ways from the control systems of other camps that are under the control of the State Security Agency. Since 2006, Camp No. 18, Pukchang, has been in the process of dismantlement. It is not clear whether the camp is still in operation today or not. It is suggested here that the camp can no longer be considered an active political prison camp today until further and objective information is available to confirm otherwise.

50) "Yonhap News," 17, October, 2009.

The number of political prison camps and prisoners in the camps in North Korea varies by time and by source of the information. By not disclosing official figures, the North Korean authorities are mainly responsible for the differences. The difference by source of the information can also be attributed to the different methodologies for acquiring information and differences in the analytic method. Testimonies about the lives of prisoners and human rights violations in the camps are commonly available while background account about the foundation and history of the camps is relatively rare. The information must come from former camp officers or guards, people who do not exist in large numbers, making it very difficult to find out information about the history of the camps. The history of the camps is as follows, according to analysis of all the related testimonies and data by the North Korean Human Rights Archives.

(1) Camp No. 11

To date, no prisoners have been identified from Camp No. 11. A limited amount of information is available from former guards and a civilian who briefly visited the camp. According to their testimony, Camp No. 11 was located at the foot of Kwanmo Peak, in Kyongsong county, North Hamgyong Province, but was closed down in 1989 to make way to a villa of Kim Il-sung. It appears that the prisoners in the camp were not released at the time of camp closure but transferred to Camp No. 22 in Hweryong and Camp No. 16 in Hwasong.⁵¹⁾ Offenders and their families

51) Testimony by Kim Sang-bong, who had arrived in North Korea from Japan in the late 60s but defected from North Korea recently, at a lecture in Tokyo on 23 April, 2011 on the basis of his experience as a member of labor unit dismantling the camp

were detained together in Camp 11, Kyongsong. According to Ahn Myong-chol, the guard, the official title of the camp was “No. 11 Kyongsong Family Detention Camp.”⁵²⁾

(2) Camp No. 12 and 13

Testimony about the history of Camps No. 12 and 13 comes from an SSA camp officer and a guard. Their information has been very useful in understanding the camp’s history even though cross checking is not possible at this stage. The witness, A08, who worked in both camps for a long time as a State Security Agency (SSA) camp officer, has offered full information on the foundation, division, size and body responsible for the operation of the camp. According to A08, Camp No. 13 was founded in Chongsong county (Chongsong Labor Area, Onsong county today) and was split into two camps, No. 12 and 13, in 1975 when the number of prisoners increased.

“Camp No. 18 at Pukchang was created before Camp No. 13 at Chongsong, North Hamgyong Province. I was told by camp officials of Pukchang Camp that their camp was created 3 years before ours. I was told that the camp at Chongsong was set up around April of 1964. Camp No 13 was divided into two camps in 1975. The number of prisoners when I first arrived in Camp No. 13 was 5,000. The number increased to over 20,000. The significant increase in prisoner population was the main cause of the camp being divided into Camp No. 12 and 13. What existed there

after prisoners had left the camp. *Newsletter*, No. 164, (Seoul: Citizens Alliance for North Korean Human Rights), p. 1.

52) Ahn, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

already was simply split for the purpose of administration.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

According to the testimony, it appears that Camp No. 13 was established in 1964,⁵³⁾ and was divided into Camps No. 13 and 12 in 1975. No explanation was offered as to the cause of the increase in the number of prisoners. However, large numbers of North Koreans were purged and repression was strengthened in the 1970s during Kim Jong-il’s ascent to power, and this may have played a part.

Camp No. 13 was a large camp encompassing the villages of Pungchon, Punggye, Tongpo and Changpyong in the district of Chongsong, North Hamgyong Province; it was called Korean People’s Guard Unit 3579. Camp No. 12 was set up in 1975 in the area of Changpyong, Chungsan and Tonggwan, becoming Korean People’s Guard Unit 3578.

“Camp No. 13 originally encompassed the areas of Pungchon-ni, Punggye-ri, Tongpo-ri (where the camp headquarters was located) and Chongpyong-ni of Chongsong County. When Camp No 13 was split, Changpyong-ni and Chungsan-ni became Camp No. 12 only for the purpose of administration. As a result, the greater part of Chongsong County was encompassed by the camp, and the small remaining area of the county was consolidated into Onsong County. I think this was in 1975 or so. In the beginning, Camp No. 13 in Chongsong County came under the heading of Army Unit No. 3579, the Korean People’s Guard. The new Camp No. 12 was given the title of Army Unit No. 3578. It was known as a Control Center to the outside but was a military unit internally.” (A08, former SSA

53) The witness testifies that the camp in Pukchang was set up in 1961 but other witnesses, including Hwang Jang-yop, stated that the camp was set up in 1968.

officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“There were over 5,000 prisoners in Camp No. 13 in 1967, which increased to over 20,000 by 1990. Camp No. 12 was a bit smaller than Camp No. 13. I think the number of prisoners in Camp No. 12 was around 15,000. The number of prisoners increased because anyone categorized as a revisionist along with their entire immediate family and relatives were brought there. Camp No. 12 was closed in October, 1991 and Camp No. 13 was closed in the fall of 1992. When prisoners began to be relocated, those officials facing imminent retirement were instructed to stay in the post until the end of 1992 to assist the process of prisoner relocation. Camp No. 12 and 13 were closed on instructions from Kim Il-sung who feared that the camp might be detected by the outside world. Camp No. 12 and 13 were near from the North Korea/China border and railroad. The Camp No. 22 in Hweryong is deeply hidden inside a mountain. Most prisoners from Camp No. 12 and 13 were driven to Camp No. 22. Camp No. 22 was established later than Camp No. 12 and 13, in 1975 or 78.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

It appears that camps No. 12 and 13 were closed due to their proximity to the border with China and fear of detection by the outside world, and prisoners seem to have been moved to Camp No. 22 in Hweryong. It is known that Camp No. 22 was expanded in the 1990s when additional prisoners arrived from camps No. 12 and 13.

“I retired from the service in October, 1992 when Camp No. 13 was closed. At that time, large number of officials retired and remained in the areas for living after retirement. The best houses were occupied according to rank of retiring officials. In the beginning, the camp was under the control of

the 9th Bureau of the Police Headquarters. The 7th Bureau was responsible for the management of prisons. The operation of political prison camp came under the control of the State Security Agency (SSA) as of 1975. Before the closure of Camp No. 13, inspection team arrived from the Central Committee of the Party and SSA. Thus, there was a government inspection before the closure of the camp. They conducted a thorough investigation into all aspects of the camp, such as prisoners, property, facilities and equipment and the results of production. A certain tonnage of corn was sent to the Grains Control Office of Chongsong County and livestock sent to the Farm Management Committee of Onsong County. There were several hundred cows and tens of thousands of pigs that were all carried away. It took over a year to transport all the livestock. Everything inside the camp was carried away. After all the prisoners were sent away, soldiers were mobilized to dispose of dead bodies and eliminate evidence of graves.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

The testimony by A08 reveals the process of closures of the two camps in detail. His testimony, in particular, makes it clear that responsibility for political prison camps was shifted in 1975 from the police to the SSA.

Ahn Myong-chol says that Camp No. 13 was located in Chongsong county, North Hamgyong Province, and was called Chongsong Family Camp, 7th Bureau, SSA. Its official title was Korean People’s Guard Unit 2913. Camp No. 13 was relocated in December, 1990. His testimony contains a discrepancy in the title of the guard unit from other testimony⁵⁴). Further information is required for the verification of the title of the camp; whether the discrepancy was because of changes in the military unit number or confusion by witnesses. Witness A08, who continued to live

54) Ahn, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

in the camp after closure, provided information in detail on the timing and process of closure of the two camps, No. 12 and 13.

(3) Camp No. 14

Shin Dong-hyuk, a former prisoner at Camp No. 14, Kaechon who successfully escaped from the camp, has explained in detail about the location of the camp (areas of Wedong-ni, Kaechon city, South Pyongan Province), its official title (Camp No. 14, Kaechon) and the process of splitting it from Pukchang Camp. He testified that Camp No. 14 was set up in 1965 and was located in the areas of Kaechon and Pongchon until 1983 when it was relocated to Kaechon, upstream of the Taedong River and that at the old site of Camp No. 14, a new camp, No. 18, was set up under the control of the police.⁵⁵⁾ Camp No. 14, Kaechon, was founded and remains in operation today.

(4) Camp No. 15

Camp No. 15, Yodok, is divided into two zones, a re-education zone and a maximum security zone. To date some 20 former prisoners have arrived in South Korea, providing abundant testimony. The official title of this camp is Camp No. 15, Yodok, South Hamgyong Province. Former prisoners in the camp, Kang Cheol-hwan and Kim Yong-sun have testified that the camp, however, is designated as Korean People's Guard Unit 2915.⁵⁶⁾

55) Dong-hyuk Shin, *North Korean Maximum Security Camp out to the World*, (Seoul: NKDB, 2007), pp. 21-34.

56) Cheol-hwan Kang, *The Aquarium of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongshin, 2004), p. 340.

Witness A13, however, testified that it was military unit 10410 according to records shown on a release certificate. Further information is required to determine if the camp has a different army unit number by area or by time. On the other hand, witness A12, a former prisoner from Taesuk-ni in the camp, said that because the camp office had a sign reading “Taesuk-ni Farm, Yodok County” the witness believed that it was a farm. Lee Yong Guk, a former prisoner from the same area, also recalled that the title of the camp was Taesuk Farm, Yodok Camp. The testimonies in detail are as follows:

“I think the title was Korean People’s Guard Unit 2915. It was definitely a guard unit. I saw it when I was working in the planning office of the camp. Normally, they complete the annual plan in February for submission to superiors in March. While I was working in the office, I was able to confirm that our camp was Military Unit 2915. The office was in the administrative building in front of the main gate.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“My Release Certificate read that I was a worker from Military Unit 10410.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“I remember reading a sign, ‘Taesuk-ni Farm, Yodok County.’ Some people said it has a military title but I have never read it anywhere.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

Witness A11 testified that she heard Camp No. 15 was set up in 1970, and Kim Yong-sun remembered a radio message from Kim Il-sung to all Party members saying that the camp began operation in July, 1969.

When she arrived in the camp in 1971 it was up and running, but with construction work still going on for staff housing, and so forth.

“I don’t know about the history of Camp No. 15. All I know is that the camp was there from the beginning. My understanding is that the camp was created to detain factional elements from the beginning.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“The camp was set up when there was a taped radio message to all party members by Kim Il-sung in July, 1969. The title of the message was ‘On the Subject of Revolutionization of Senior Party Members’. I was a senior member of the party so I listened to the message on tape. He complained that wives of police chiefs were abusing the power of their husbands and using official vehicles, etc. and therefore senior party members needed to be revolutionized. I also overheard while working in the farm conversations between camp officers to the same effect. I still remember that Hyon Chong-yong, the camp officer for Work Unit No. 3 saying the same thing. When we arrived in Kuwup in 1971, they began to construct staff housing and a food factory. We constructed buildings for engineers, a drying hall and furniture production. It was the beginning of camp administration. The offices of the SSA had already been constructed.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“A camp was created at Yodok in the 70s. When we arrived there, there had already been many prisoners who had been there since the 70s. They were all those who cooperated with South Korean police during the brief occupation of some part of North Korea by South Korea during the Korean war. The prisoners had bad family records. The prisoners who had been there for a long time told me that the camp was created in the 70s.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

Witness A03 lived in Yongpyong-ni, Yodok county, and testified that villagers began to be relocated in the beginning of 1970 and a detention camp was created by enclosing the area with barbed wire.

“My family lived in Yongpyong-ni and, in 1970, all villagers were relocated. Villagers were allowed to go to other districts if they wanted. The villagers who chose to stay in the same district were sent to Kuwup in the same district. We also moved to Kuwup at that time. After we had left Yongpyong, soldiers arrived and began to set up barbed wire. There were already prisoners at that time. The prisoners were probably those who arrived there in the beginning of 1970. So, in the beginning, prisoners lived there mixed with villagers until the end of 1970, when all the villagers had left.” (A03, former villager near Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, mid 1960s-1998)

It appears that Camp No. 15, Yodok, was constructed in or around 1970, according to the testimony of former prisoners, villagers and persons related to the camp. But the size of the camp was different from the camp today. Since its foundation, the camp has gradually expanded and relocation of prisoners and villagers carried out. The system of control of the camp, internal relocation of prisoners and the process of camp-site expansion appear to have followed the process stated below.

Kim Yong-sun, a former prisoner, has testified that the maximum security zone in Camp No. 15 was created in the beginning of 1975. At that time a national program of resident re-registration was on-going and, as a result, a large number of remnants of anti-state elements including families of those North Koreans who defected to South Korea, collaborators with South Korea, pastors, elders of the church and families

of landlords were brought to the maximum security zone.⁵⁷⁾

“Lee 00 also told me that she was brought here in around 1975. Her brief explanation was that they were brought there following the national program of resident re-registration from Chongju, Kujang, Pyongwon, Opa, Yonan, Paekchon, Samchon, Paechon, Wunyul, Ongjin, Changyon, Kaepung, Shinggye and Koksan. They were all very kind and nice people.”
(Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

It appears that a series of prisoner exchanges and camp expansion took place. Witness A15, a former prisoners for two years in the re-education zone of the camp, said that the re-education zone in the camp was expanded into the maximum security zone to accommodate an increasing number of prisoners in the re-education zone of Kuwup-ni in and around 1987, but that the strict control system of the former maximum security continued to be applied to the re-education zone prisoners.

“Nothing was closed. The re-education zone was relocated to a more spacious area. I was told that they moved the re-education zone after 1986 when I was released. It was not an expansion of the entire camp. It was an exchange of an area with another. In simple words, the number of re-education prisoners kept increasing and they needed more land. That’s why they exchanged the maximum security zone with re-education zone. Former fellow prisoners were released in 1987 and they told me that the control in the camp became harsher and stricter than when I used to be there. When I was still there, a re-education zone began. There all prisoners

57) Yong-sun Kim, *I Was a Friend of Kim’s Wife*, (Seoul: Seoul Munhak, 2009), p. 172.

were given a fixed term of imprisonment, 2 years or 3 years and no more. But prisoners in other areas had stayed there for 6 years or 10 years. I don't know what's wrong with them. During my time there 3-year imprisonment was the maximum term. Once I had a telephone conversation with a former fellow prisoner who was released in 1987 and he told me that they moved to a new area after I was released and rules in the new area were stricter.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

Witness A03 has testified that Camp No. 15 was crowded with prisoners from other camps in the early 1990s. This was when, according to the testimony by Ahn Myong-chol, former camp guard, Camp No. 13 was closed and prisoners there were sent to other camps such as Camp No. 22, two camps at Sungho-ri, Pyongyang, and Camp No. 27, Chonma county, North Pyongan Province. It is highly probable that some of the prisoners from the camps closed at that time were also sent to Camp No. 15.

“According to family of a camp officer, Camp No. 15 was so crowded with prisoners from other camps in 1990-93 that houses were constructed in clusters. All valleys were so full that no space was left, not for a gimlet. I was also told that many people arrived there after the death of Kim Il-sung.” (A03, former villager near Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, mid 1960s to 1998)

To this date, two cases of relocation within the camp have been reported. The first case is about the relocation in 1977 of prisoners from Ipsok-ni, who had been there since 1970, to Yongpyong-ni.

“I watched as the prisoners who were detained there in the 70s were all transported to the maximum security zone at Yongpyong-ni. We were told that conditions in the maximum security zone were much worse. The prisoners who were sent there were all landlords, capitalists, their children and other wicked elements. So there were only new arrivals in Ipsok-ni.”
(A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

The second case concerns the prisoners' families in Taesuk-ni, who were all relocated in July, 1995. A12 testified that some of them were released and others were sent to the maximum security zone at Yongpyong at that time. Further information is required to find out whether the objective of that relocation of prisoners in the same camp was to increase the number of prisoners in the maximum security zone in Yongpyong for some reason, or to make additional space for an increasing number of newly arriving prisoners in the re-education zone, or for some other reason.

“I learned from the families of the prisoners that they had lived in Ipsok-ni in the beginning and had been there over 10 years. A prisoner by the name of a Kim remembered Kang Cheol-hwan in Ipsok-ni. The prisoner said he and his father were detained there because of the offence by his paternal uncle. I spent a lot of time with them as we were in the same work unit. His father made carts for cows. In South Korea, I asked Kang Cheol-hwan if he knew the man I met in the Yodok Camp. Kang said he remembered him. I don't know how old the Taesuk-ni facility is. All I know is that the families of prisoners in Taesuk-ni were relocated and settled elsewhere in July of 1995. I think I was told that half of them were released and the other half were sent to other places such as Yongpyong. I learned this later. When they were released, some families and the Koreans from Japan I know were resettled somewhere in Kowon County, together with

former SSA officials who escorted them to the new location of settlement on their release.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

Lee Young-guk who was a prisoner at Taesuk-ni in Camp No. 15 has testified as follows:

“In July, 1995, 2nd Company became a company for women, some of the prisoners in 3rd Company were included in 2nd Company while most prisoners were transferred to 1st Company. I was told that they had found a new gold mine outside the farm of 3rd Company. All the families were taken to the new gold mine, leaving the offenders in 1st Company. There were men and women prisoners together in 3rd Company.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

Camp No. 15 expanded to Sorimchon in 1998 as the number of defectors from North Korea increased in the late 90s and subsequent increase in the number of those North Koreans being repatriated from China. Witness A03, who was a resident outside Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, testified that the camp was expanded to areas of Sorimchon and Paekkol Training Unit below Kuwup-ni. The reasons are twofold: an increase in the number of prisoners and the need to exploit coal in the Paekkol areas.

“They told me that the area I was in was set-up perhaps in 1998 or something. So, it was not very old. At that time, many prisoners died during the construction work. They were all killed at an early stage of the construction. I was told that over 100 prisoners were killed. They all died of hard work and undernourishment and were buried in a mass grave. Then, there was an instruction to keep the deaths of prisoners in the

re-education zone to an absolute minimum.” (A13 former prisoners, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“When I was sent there, the camp was new, only 2 or 3 years old. In the old days, prisoners were never released...the area opened after 1997, the year of the March of Tribulation. I was told that they expanded the camp because of an increasing number of defectors repatriated from China. I was told that expansion of the camp was a direct instruction from Kim Jong-il. The policemen told us that we were lucky because we were released due to the March of Tribulation.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“Camp No. 15 has now been expanded. The expanded area is called Sorimchon or Serum-chon. The area has a deep valley up to Pyongjon and down to Kuwup. In 1998, the areas near Sorimchon and all the way down towards Kuwup and Paekkol training unit were blocked. They installed barbed wire. They made a fence of barbed wire in 1998. The barbed wire fence was extended towards the west of Kuwup, expanding the camp by 2.5 kilometers. There is a mountain to the South, called Namsan, where gold is found in large quantities. Administratively, the area is Yongpyong-ni, and it was rumored that the area will be part of the camp. But this did not happen until 2004 when I was there. I heard that there were too many prisoners in the camp and there was not that enough work to be done by prisoners in the camp. In the area of Paekkol training unit, there was a coal mine and the camp was expanded to make prisoners work in that coal mine.” (A03, former villager near Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, mid-1960s to 1998)

It seems that Camp No. 15 is divided into 5-6 areas (valleys), each valley under an independent control system. Camp No. 15 is situated in

a mountain valley in Yodok county, with Maengsan county to the West and Taehung county to the North, each valley representing an independent site. The areas known to date include Kuwup-ni, Ipsonk-ni, Taesuk-ni, Pyongjon-ni and Yongpyong-ni. An area of Sorimchon was added to it recently, in and around 1998. Kang Cheol-hwan testifies that the five areas, not including the area of Sorimchon, represent one third of the entire territory of Yodok county.⁵⁸⁾ Of the 5 areas, two areas, Yongpyong-ni and Pyongjon-ni, are maximum security zones where no prisoners are to be released.

“There is a place called Kuwup-ni inside Camp No. 15, Yodok. It used to be a town and is an area of re-education. Only one valley is a re-education zone, while the other areas are for factionalists. They are there for life. Prisoners are released only from Kuwup-ni, the so called re-education zone.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“Yongpyong-ni and Pyongjon-ni are areas of maximum security. Once you are sent there, you will never be released. That’s what maximum security zone means.”⁵⁹⁾ (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

Witness A03, a resident near the political prison camp, testified that there is an area in Pyongjon-ni for the families of SSA officers.

“The distance from the railway station at Kwanpyong to Kuwup is about 28 kilometers. You will find Pyonjon-ni if you move a little further north

58) Kang, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

59) Kang, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

from Kuwup, and that's where the camp begins. The camp headquarters are in Pyongjon. In the same area, you will find a village for the families of SSA officers, a school and a hospital. If you move north about 2 kilometers, you will find Yongpyong. If you move up to the west of Yongpyong, that is Ipsok, and if you move up to the right of Yongpyong, you will find Taesuk. Yongpyong is a maximum security zone where no prisoners are ever released. Prisoners who will never be released are driven into the center, surrounded by those prisoners with hope of release some day in Taesuk and Ipsok around it. You see? Yongpyong, the maximum security zone, is right in the middle.” (A03, former villager from near Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1960'-mid-1998).

It has been confirmed that some valleys (area) in the camp were expanded and Sorimchon, in particular, opened in 1998-1999. The Yodok Camp today encloses five or six villages in the Yodok county including Yongpyong, which is for maximum security, while all the other areas appear to be for re-education. It is believed that there are a total of over 50,000 prisoners in the camp.

“I was told that the Sorimchon area of the camp, where I was, was made in around 1999. I believe over 100 prisoners have since been killed. When I first arrived there, the women prisoners who were there already told me that they had constructed the road and sub-camp office. I was also involved with a lot of work on repairing the road.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“I was detained in the area of Kumchon-ni, Yodok county, South Hamgyong Province, officially called the Sorimchon area of Yodok Camp. A prisoner by the name of Kim 00 told me that she was actually involved with the construction of Sorimchon area in 2000.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“There are over 20 villages in Yodok county, South Hamgyong Province, where Yodok Camp is situated. The camp encompasses the area of five villages; Kuwup-ni, Ipsok-ni, Yongpyong-ni, Pyongjon-ni and Taesuk-ni, a wide area occupying one third of the entire territory of Yodok county. The official title was Re-education center No. 15, Yodok county, South Hamgyong Province.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“Camp No. 15 is located in the Yodok County, South Hamgyong Province, a mountainous area, with Maengsan on the west, Taehung County of South Pyongan Province on the north, Kumya County of South Hamgyong Province to the east and the County of Kowon of South Hamgyong Province to the south. Its official title is Yodok Control Center No. 15, South Hamgyong Province. I was detained at the Ipsok-ni area most of the time. On record, it was called Unit 2915, Korean People’s Security Guard, but it was also called Control Center No. 15. This Yodok Camp originated from the radio speech by Kim Il-sung to all members of the Party in July, 1969.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979.)

(5) Camp No. 16

No direct testimony is available about Camp No. 16, Hwasong county (Myonggan county today), North Hamgyong Province. Analysis of information available about Camp No. 16 shows that the camp was not listed in an announcement by the South Korean intelligence authorities during 1982-1990. However, the camp is listed in announcements after 1990. It is suggested that Camp No. 16, Hwasong, was founded after 1990. However, no information is available on when it was founded, its

history, the life of prisoners or human rights violation in the camp. Information available includes satellite photos, testimonies by North Korean officers involved with the camp and residents in the same vicinity. It is believed that information is extremely limited as the camp has always been a maximum security camp under very strict control and surveillance

(6) Camp No. 17

Little information is available as to when Camp No. 17, located in Cholsan-ni, Toksong county, South Hamgyong Province, was first set up. A former prisoner, A16, was in the camp during the period 1974-1984 with family until the camp was closed and prisoners were transferred to Camp No. 18, Pukchang. His testimony suggests that the camp was founded prior to 1974.

“My entire family was dragged to Camp No. 17 in 1974. We don’t know why we were arrested. As they did not know why they were detained there, my mother and father were very exasperated.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

According to the testimony of A16, Camp No. 17 was founded before 1974 and was closed in 1984. At the time of the closure of the camp in 1984, some prisoners were released and others were transferred to Camp No. 18, a prison camp under the control of police, as was Camp No. 17.

“Camp No. 17, Toksong, is situated in the area of Cholsan-ni, Toksong county, South Hamgyong Province, and divided into Cholsan-ni (new

residence area), Sang 1 (inside the valley of Changdong), Sang 2 (inside the valley for orchards) and mine village (sub-divided into internal areas for prisoners and released prisoners). The title of the camp was Military Unit 2917. My family was brought there in 1974 but truckloads of prisoners arrived several times every year. They were all political prisoners from all over North Korea. At a rally for gift presentation on 15 April, the chief administrator of the camp announced that Camp No. 17 would be closed and prisoners would be sent to Camp No. 18. In 1984, they shut down the entire camp and all prisoners were transferred to Camp No. 18. We were all transferred by rail during a period of a month. My family was among the 8th group. At that time, the villagers remained there and about 10% of the prisoners were released. When we were transferred, they moved everything to Tukchang (an area in Camp No. 18), including rock drills, excavators and other equipment. Prisoners and families of policemen were all transferred. Conditions in Camp No. 18 were much better than the conditions in the previous camp. Rules were less strict but we were the same old prisoners.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

The testimony of A16 has been confirmed by A20, former officer at Camp No. 18 from 1989-2006 who testified that “it was not closed in 1989. When Camp No. 17 was closed in 1985 and the former camp areas were returned to society, all the prisoners and equipment from the camp was brought to Camp No. 18. At that time prisoners in Camp No. 18, Pongchang, were transferred to Camp No. 14 and prisoners arrived at Camp No. 18 from Camp No. 17.”

The testimony of A18 provides important information on the situation at the time of the closure of Camp No. 17. He further testified that Camp No. 17 was closed at the instruction of Kim Il-sung and prisoners from

the camp were transferred to Camp No. 18 for the purpose of the development of a mine in Camp No. 18.

“We were told that Kim Il-sung had a meeting at the Central Party Committee or something to do with the Metal Engineering Department, maybe in October of 1983. Reportedly, they discussed the operation of an iron mine at Camp No. 17, Toksong, during which Kim said something like we need to exploit iron mines elsewhere also. Now, Police Camp No. 17 must do the job again and return the mine in Toksong back to society. His order made everyone busy because they could not bring ordinary member of society to the work. So, they needed labor from Camp No. 18.”
(A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

(7) Camp No. 18

Camp No. 18, formerly located in Pukchang, South Pyongan Province, was operated by the Police, and as such was distinct from camps under the operation of the State Security Agency (SSA). Further study is required to determine whether the camp should really be classified as a political prison camp or not.

The camp could be found at Soksang-ni, Pukchang county, South Pyongan Province, with Tokchon city to the North and Kaecheon city to one side. Witness A17 stressed that the address on letters to the area had to contain the words Soksang-ni. However, another witness, A20, said that the original and official address is Pongchang-ni, Tukchang-ku, Pukchang county, South Pyongan Province. Kang Myong-do, a former prisoner, testified that “the camp is located at Tukchang-ni, Pukchang county, South Pyongan Province, but is known as Tukchang-ni because

the headquarters of the camp are located there.”⁶⁰) As observed above, Camp No. 18 traversed Tukchang and Pongchang, very large areas, and information on the location is somewhat confusing due to its expansion, incoming prisoners from another camp and movement of prisoners at different times. The official title of the camp was ‘Police Camp No. 18,’ or ‘Camp No. 18, Korean People’s Guard Unit 2918.’ However, the camp was often identified as Tukchang Mine after the name of an area of the camp mentioned by Kim Il-sung in a speech at a meeting of the Political Sub-Committee of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers’ Party on 31 March, 1977.⁶¹) The closure of Camp No. 18 began in the 1990s and was completed in 2006. When camp closure began, the Tukchang area was closed but Pongchang area remained open. O Myong-do, a prisoner at the time, testified that the area was called Pongchang Coal Mine Unified Enterprise Company by outsiders.⁶²) Major testimony on the title and location of Camp No. 18 is as follows:

“Camp No. 18 is Tukchang Coal Mine. It used to be called Tukchang Coal Mine by outsiders, not No. 18. I am not sure whether it was in 1979 or 1980, but prisoners even received gifts from Kim Il-sung for producing so much coal to keep Pukchang Power Plant operating. At that time, no one called it Camp No. 18. Party propaganda always began with phrases like

60) Myong-do Kang, *Pyongyang Is Dreaming Asylum*, (Seoul: Chungang Ilbo Sa, 1995), p. 221.

61) Kim Il-sung, *Collection of Kim Il-sung*, Vol. 32, (Pyongyang: Publishing Company, Korean Workers’ Party, 1986), pp. 55-61. “he praised workers of the Tukchang Mine for increasing the production to 2 million tons under the title “On the Need to Increase Production at Coal Mines in Tokchon Areas”.

62) Jin-i Choi, “Series 1, Special Article on Human Rights – Inside Camp No. 18 Feature”, *Rimjingang Vol. 2*, (Seoul: Rimjingang, 2008), p.46.

“To the Officials and Workers of Tukchang Coal Mine,” and “Dear Comrades of Tukchang Coal Mine, you were so faithful to the instructions of the party and your hard work is a good example to other workers and blah blah..” The party propaganda lines always ended with the words “Thank You.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977- 1984)

“The camp was located at Soksang-ni, Pukchang county, South Pyongan Province and its official title was Police Camp No. 18. The camp was usually called Tukchang Coal Mine. This was also mentioned in the New Year message from Kim Il-sung. It was also called Tukchang Area because of the large number of miners there. Letters must be correctly addressed, mentioning Soksang-ni. The term ‘Tukchang Area’ is used inside the camp. The camp was at Soksang-ni and there were many people and they also called it Tukchang Workers Area. (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)–1982)

“When I arrived at the hall as instructed, I found other people waiting in line to receive medals, like me. The medal read: ‘This medal is presented by the Party Committee, Pongchang Coal Mine Unified Enterprise, with confidence in you and the consideration of the party in recognition of your good work’. I was so surprised to learn for the first time that they were using a different title for occasions like this. To call this hell Pongchang Coal Mine Unified Enterprise? What a gut to call this dam prison an enterprise! I was very angry on that day.” (0 Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

“In society, the camp was called Guard Unit 2918 or Police Camp. Now, it is Police Prison Department Camp No. 18.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Camp No. 18 was divided into many areas. Most former prisoners have testified that there were some 11 to 12 areas in the camp but did not remember names of all areas. Their testimonies summarize that there were areas called Yongsan, Odong, Kalkol, Popi, Shimsan, Sohak, Tukchang, Pongchang, Myonghak, Kinkol, Chamsan and Yongdong. According to the testimony, the Pongchang area is sub-divided into Sangni, Suan, Saemawul and Yongdung-ni.

“I can explain the villages in the camp. In Camp No. 18, there were the villages Pongchang-ni, Sang-ni, Suan, Saemawul (a new village constructed for camp officers), Honmawul (for camp officers) and Yongdung, and each village had an administrative office. The size of the village? You can say it is large for a village and small for a county.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“My sister told me that food supply was better in Pongchang because the area had more land than Tukchang Coal Mine. In Tukchang, there was a coal mine while there was a ranch for goats in Pongchang. Once, I went to Pongchang and found the place not different from Tukchang. In Pongchang, those former prisoners who were released could visit their relatives and could go to a market 12 kilometers away. This was not possible for prisoners in Pongchang. Conditions for prisoners were quite different.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984 and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

“Kalkol area is in the north and Tukchang area on the right side of Kalkol. Shimsan area is on the other side of Pongchang area. (It was 12 kilometers from Shimsan to Pongchang). Originally, there were three areas of Kalkol, Tukchang and Shimsan. Pongchang area was sub-divided into Suan and

Yongdung...Over the river below Pongchang area, were Sang-ni and Chamsan that belong to Shimsan area. Yongsan area is part of Kalkol and I have never heard of Odong area. Popi area was in the direction of Tukchang. Over the other side of Taedong river, there was Sohak area for the family of camp officers.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Another witness, A19, testified that the camp was founded in 1958, which matches the testimony of Hwang Jang-yop, who said that the first prison camp was founded in Pukchang, South Pyongan Province in 1958 to imprison political prisoners on the instruction of Kim Il-sung. A17 and A18 stated that the camp had been there for a long time but it was in 1973 and 1974, when a large number of prisoners began to arrive, that the camp went into systematic operation.

“I met a guy by the name of Hwang Po-chon at Camp No. 18. He had been a warehouse chief for over 10 years and knew the history of the camp very well. According to him, the camp was founded in around 1958. This was when North Korea completed the nationalization of all North Korean land and began screening the backgrounds of all North Koreans under Cabinet decision no. 149. In the process, many families and relatives of those who had defected to South Korea were arrested. This was the beginning of Camp No. 18.”⁶³⁾ (Kang Myong-do, former prisoner, Camp No. 18, 1990-1992)

“When we arrived, there were no houses and all the prisoners slept collectively. Those who could not sleep under any roof slept by the stream

63) Kang, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-233.

like refugees. The policemen selected those prisoners who could sleep under the roof and we were among them. It may have been because of my father, who was a party member. When I woke up the next morning, I saw so many people sleeping by the stream. We were all mobilized for house construction work. We wove thin mats with straw rope mixed with mud. That's all house construction meant. You know a house is poorly constructed like this. When I moved into the camp in 1973, it was the beginning of the camp in full operation. I don't mean the camp was founded at that time. Before our arrival, Park Kum-chol, former vice-prime minister under Kim Il-sung, Kim Do-man and their followers were there. Kim Do-man and his daughter drowned to death in the Taedong River there." (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

"The camp was first founded in 1958 and camp control became gradually loose until it was completely closed in 2006." (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

"Reading documents in the police station gave me a strong impression that Kim Jong-il assembled political opponents here for strict control in 1974. I was told that the headquarters of Camp No. 18 was there in 1968. In the 1960s, a small number of Koreans who collaborated with the Japanese colonial government were detained here and the camp expanded in 1974 as Kim Jong-il came in power." (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

"Camp No 18 at Pukchang was created before Camp No. 13 at Chongsong, North Hamgyong Province. I was told by camp officials of Pukchang Camp that their camp was created 3 years before ours. I was told that the camp at Chongsong was set up around April of 1964." (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 13, 1965-1992)

In addition, Shin Dong-hyuk, a former prisoner in Camp No. 14, Kaechon who escaped from the camp, testified that Pongchang had been part of Kaechon Camp until Kaechon Camp was moved north. The old site of Kaechon Camp became Pukchang Camp No. 18.⁶⁴⁾

As Shin testified, Camp No. 18, Pukchang, was located on the old site of Camp No. 14 downstream of the Taedong River from 1983, when Camp No. 14 moved north. However, the process of ending Camp No. 18 began in 2006 and most prisoners were released, with the exception of a small number of prisoners who were transferred to Kaechon. It appears that the camp is virtually closed at present, with the exception of a small section of the camp.

“When Camp No. 18 was partially closed, there remained some 80 families that were not to be released. I was told that Camp No. 18 could not be totally closed as part of its purpose was the detention of formerly high ranking officials dispatched at any time from Pyongyang or Kangwon Province, a location to detain high ranking officials in future. The 80 families did not have records of serious crimes. They were, rather, from families so impoverished that they could not bribe officials for release. In North Korea, being poor is a crime and being unable to bribe is a sin. Camps No. 14 and No. 18 face each other across the Taedong River. Public trials and execution took place behind the tile factory where I used to work in Camp No. 18 and these were watched by the entire prisoner population of Camp No. 14 from the other side of the river. Camp No. 14 has only farms. When it was closed in the beginning of 2007, the 80 families that were not released were transported to Mujindae. The two

64) Shin, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

guard posts, Chaktong and Songni, were closed. The tile factory, part of the construction unit and where I'd worked, the planning and draftsmen office, the cement and pottery factories, the liquor factory and elderly prisoners' unit were all moved over to No. 14. Roads disappeared and new barbed wire was set up. Barbed wire was also set up in the valley of the 2nd unit of Pongchang-ni Village. I was told that No. 14 would encompass the entire area of Pongchang-ni. There was a place called No. 12 inside a valley, on the right side of No. 14, and the other side of Taedong River from No. 18. Wonpyong-ni is the name of the village.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2000)

“We lived in the Popi area, Soksan-ni, Pukchang County, South Pyongan Province, prior to 1984. Newly arrived people lived in the areas of Paektan, Tukchang, Kalkol, Myonghak and Chamsan. Then, many people were released after 1984. After that, there was a big change in the situation. In 1991, entire areas were removed from restriction. In the Tukchang Control Center where I lived, there was a prisoner release in 1984 and once more in 1985. Those of lesser crimes were released and allowed to meet their relatives. Those prisoners of serious crimes were all sent to Pongchang.” (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1972-1984)

“The control area in Tukchang, Pukchang County, South Pyongan Province, adjoins Kaechon County on the west and Tokchon County on the north. I passed two barbed wires and the first place I arrived was a mine inside the Suan valley, gloomy and dismal like hell. There are many camps but Camp No. 18 is the only camp under the control of the Prison Bureau, People's Police, Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In 2006, there were a number of problems including a few escape attempts from Camp No. 18. As a result, Camp No. 18 was relocated to Omok Valley, Sunchang-dong, Yongwon-ni, Kaechon County, South Pyongan Province,

during a 5-day period, 21-25 August. The new place was a natural prison surrounded by tall mountains.” (O Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

According to recent testimony by former prisoners and camp officials, most areas in the camp were closed, some prisoners were transferred to Camp No. 14, and Camp No. 18 was relocated to Sunchang-dong, Yongwon-ni, Kaechon city. Further testimony is required regarding the title, operational system and conditions in the camp at the new location.

Testimony concerning the closure of Camp No. 18 is summarized as follows. Prisoners began to be released in large numbers from 1984, and control of prisoners gradually became looser until the camp was closed completely in the 1990s, with the exception of Pongchang area. In 2006, part of the Pongchang area was also returned to society. During this process, many prisoners were released and reintegrated into society but some prisoners with serious criminal backgrounds were sent to Camp No. 14 or another location in the district of Kaechon.

Witness A19, in particular, was a prisoner in Camp No. 18 until 2006 and one of the prisoners released during the process of camp closure at its old site. A19 testified that Camp No. 18 has been relocated to Chohyang coal mine, Kaechon, with 150 families brought from the old Camp No. 18. Witness A09 also states that Camp No. 18 continues to exist with 80 families who were not released. It appears that the camp was closed at its old site but continues to exist on a smaller scale at another location.

“The camp was first founded in 1958 and controls gradually became less and less strict until it was totally closed in 2006. They created a new Camp

No. 18 at a small village, Chohyang Coal Mine, for 150 families of innocent prisoners.” (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

“We left the camp in the middle of August, 2005, and I saw the camp again in February, 2007. The difference was that the camp was closed and some 80 families who had not been released were transferred to Mujindae and the guard posts at chik-tong and Sang-ni were removed. They also installed barbed wire at village 2, Pongchang-ni. They told me that Camp No. 14 was to be extended across the entire area of Pongchang-ni. The reason is that they found platinum in the mountain and Camp No. 14 wanted to take it. Camp No. 14 is operated by the State Security Agency, stronger than the Police. The life of the released prisoners there is becoming harder and harder. No food rations. They supply soya-bean paste, soya-bean sauce, and vegetables only. It is said that they are so hungry that they kill people to eat.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“Until we were released in 1991, prisoners were exchanged with prisoners from Pongchang. When a house was vacant in Camp No. 18, a prisoner with a good family background from Pongchang moved in. Prisoners with poor family backgrounds at Camp No. 18 were often sent to Pongchang, vice-versa. You see? Prisoners were released in 1991 but, at that time, some prisoners which had committed serious crime were sent to Pongchang,” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

“I was in the 00 Unit, 00 area, Tukchang coal mine in 1984, released in 1992 and married in 1993. Prisoners were last released in 1995. Those prisoners who were not released at that time were sent to Pongchang-ni. My sister was married and found a new home in Popi area. Her husband was from 00 but was not released for reasons unknown; he got transferred

Table 2-3 Analysis of Witnesses, Camp No. 18, Pukchang

Witness	Period	Ages when arrested	Timing of Foundation	Year of merge/closure
A17 (male)	1973(4).7-1982.7	10s-20s	1973 (existed before 1973 but was in full operation after 1973)	In 1988, entire area was returned to society with the exception of Pongchang which remained as a maximum security camp.
A19 (male)	1975.12-2006.	20s-50s	1958	Control began to be weakened since 1986 and completely closed in 2006. Last remaining 150 families relocated to Chohyang coal mine in Kaechon, maintaining camp No. 18.
A18 (male)	1977.11-1984	10s-20s	Coal deposit confirmed in 1967 and limited operation began in 1970 and full operation in 1974.	Large number of prisoners released in 1984 and losed in 1990s. Some prisoners transferred to Pongchang and the prisoners who had been in Pongchang were relocated elsewhere. (unconfirmed)
A16 (female)	1984-1992	10s-20s	—	Camp closed in 1995 and some prisoners transferred to Pongchang Area.
A01 (female)	1972-1984	Birth-10s	—	—
A09 (female)	1975.2-2001.2	Birth-30s	—	Camp had been closed in February 2007 and last 80 families relocated to Mujindae(Camp NO. 14) and Pongchang-ri became part of camp No. 14.
0 Myong-o (male)	1994-2000	20s-30s	—	Relocated to Omok-kol, Sunchang-dong, Yongwon-ni, Kaechon city, South Pyongan in August 2006.

to Pongchang. But, they were released in 1997 and came over to our home for a visit.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984 and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

“The reason for the release of prisoners in 1989 was that many of the prisoners were, in fact, the third or fourth generation of offenders such as landlords, capitalists, collaborators with the Japanese colonial government and other people of bad family background, in fact, imprisoning them was the prime purpose of the political prison camps under the political campaign by Kim Jong-il to make his father the only leader in North Korea. In fact, the prisoners were grandchildren of offenders and they found the grandchildren were in fact innocent and decided to release them. So, the release began with the 3rd generation of offenders. But they soon found problems in controlling prisoners and released prisoners together. It is my view that they decided to split the camp for this reason.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

The reason for the closure of most of Camp No. 18 has not been unveiled. Witness A09 stated that the reason for the transfer of part of Pongchang-ni to Camp No. 14 was because a deposit of the precious metal platinum was found there and the stronger agency of the two, the State Security Agency, took it. The testimony of A20, a former camp official until the closure of the camp, provided information in detail on the closure, relocation and conditions in the camp after relocation.

“The closure of Camp No. 18 began in 1985, not in 1989, when Camp No. 17, Toksong, South Hamgyong Province was closed and all the prisoners and equipment there were brought to Pongchang. Camp No. 14 was relocated to Pongchang and Camp No. 17 merged with Camp No. 14

there. In 1989, the prisoners who had not been released were taken to Pongchang. A new guard post was installed for the separate control of the prisoners in Pongchang. Then, in September, 1995, camp closure expanded into the areas of Shimsan and Tukchang, singling out Pongchang, which became a political prison camp...Then, in 2006, Pongchang was split. Prisoners arrived in Yongdung again. Pongchang was not totally freed, and was placed under separate control. There was no problem, but they suddenly discontinued control and moved to Kaechon in September, 2006. I don't know how the camp was relocated there because I did not follow them to the new location. The new location was on back side of a big mountain of Camp No. 14. You are not mistaken in believing that the new location is on the other side of the big mountain of Camp No. 14.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Toksong Camp was closed and prisoners were brought here to Camp No. 18 because of the magnetic iron mine in Camp No. 17. Magnetic iron is like a component of steel and is needed in the steel industry. The original intention was to return the mine to society to make national investment possible. Now, things have gone wrong and the mine is out of business. Anyway, for this purpose, the camp was closed and prisoners were brought to Pongchang. The second objective was to bring the operation of the coal mine in Pongchang under party control, not by the state security agency, in a virtual extension of Camp No. 17.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“The number of prisoners in the new location was somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000. They took with them prisoner technicians and prisoner engineers who were needed for the operation of the mine. They also brought with them all the camp officials with the exception of those officials who did not want to go, like me. Some 50% of the camp officials

did not follow them.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“In the new location, the mine had 2 shafts. Additionally, they operated a farm. So called modern criminals went there. Prisoners in Camp No. 18 were neither political prisoners nor economic prisoners. They were somewhere in between. Many prisoners were brought there for attempting to go to South Korea, human-trafficking or telephone conversations with someone in South Korea. Those without any contact with South Korea should have no problem. Those whose telephone contact with South Korea was detected were brought here. People were brought there for the crime of large scale smugglings. Generally, the camps are not for economic crimes.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

(8) Camp No. 19

It is difficult to find testimony about Camp No. 19 in Tanchon, South Hamgyong Province. To this date, there is only one witness, A21.

In the report “Present Situation of Political Prison Camps in North Korea,” published by the National Intelligence Service (NIS) of South Korea in 2009, the camp is listed as Camp No. 21 at Tanchon, South Hamgyong Province. It is not clear at this stage whether the camp in the NIS report is the same camp as testified to by witness A21 in this book. It appears that they are the same camp given the location and the timing of closure. Witness A21 has little information on the foundation of the camp but has provided ample information in detail on the closure.

“I know about Camp No. 19 very well. I lived there from 1984 to 1998. In 1990, prisoners there with good records were given citizenship

certificates and became ordinary workers under the instruction of Kim Il-sung. Buildings in the camp were all altered to become mine buildings. Virtually, prisoners were released at that time. After this, discharged soldiers carried out most of the work there. At that time, woman workers from the garment factory, Songchon Factory, and twin brothers from Wunyul Mine were there to do the work. When the camp was closed in 1990, discharged soldiers arrived there. At that time, I heard from a registration clerk. They came one by one from all areas of North Korea. In the fifth branch of Taehung Mine Company alone, there were some 300 prisoners...I heard that Camp No. 19 was closed because there were too many camps. I was also informed that some camps were split to make new prisons. In fact, one of my acquaintances was a political officer with the Organization Department of Camp No. 19, and became a section chief at Oro Prison.” (A21, former family of camp officer, Camp No. 19, 1984-1990)

Camp No. 19, Tanchon, South Hamgyong Province, is found in information announced in 1999 by the National Intelligence Agency (NIS), South Korea, but the same information published in 2009 shows the camp as closed. Accordingly, it is believed that Camp No. 19 had been in operation until 1990 when the camp was closed under the instruction of Kim Il-sung. Substantial numbers of prisoners who were released at that time have since lived in the same area as ordinary villagers, together with a large number of discharged soldiers and workers arriving from other areas.

(9) Camp No. 22

Camp No. 22, Hweryong, South Hamgyong Province, is recognized as

one of the maximum security camps and, to date, no former prisoner from the camp is known to have reached South Korea. Therefore, information available about the camp is limited to the testimony of a former State Security Officer, a former guard and family member of a camp official. The camp is located at Hweryong, South Hamgyong Province, was founded in 1960s, the operational systems were completed in the 1970s, the camp was expanded in the 1980s-1990s and has three areas; Chungbong, Sawul and Haengyong. Testimonies are as follows

“No. 22 sits in a wide basin and is twice the size of No. 13. At that time (1990-91), No. 22, the Control Center at Hweryong, was the largest of all camps. This place was Unit 2209, Korean People’s Security Guard, under the control of the 7th Bureau, SSA.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)⁶⁵⁾

“No. 22 includes the areas of Chungbong (incorporated in 1981), Sawul and Haengyong. You must take a train from Hweryong bound for Hakpo Mine (Sechon Workers’ District). From there you must go about 6 kilometers further into a valley. The village for camp officers’ families is in Chungbong-ni. This was originally a normal area. When I was a small boy and in the 4th year grade in primary people’s school, the Chungbong Mine became a control district and many prisoners arrived in cargo trains. They were dispersed and settled in several districts such as Sawul and Haengyong. Lately, a resident in Hweryong told me that No. 22 has been relocated.” (A02, family of former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1994)

Camp No. 22 has been recognized as the largest camp in terms of

65) Ahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 68, and 128.

number of prisoners and scale. One piece of testimony states that part of the camp was relocated recently. Further information is required for verification of this;

“Camp No. 22 was founded around 1965. I worked in the Haengyong area and there were some 10,000 prisoners. Prisoners were split into three areas in 1989 for unknown reasons. In my view, it was because of the bad economy. The land in camp is very fertile and the People’s Defense Ministry took over some land to grow tobacco (to earn foreign exchange). Operation of the coal mine was transferred to North Unified Mine Enterprise. The company returned the land back to society. In December, 1989 when it was very cold, some prisoners were sent to Kaechon Camp in South Pyongan Province, some prisoners to a military base in Hyangsan in Kangwon Province and some prisoners to a secret military base, 31-li in the Kapsan county of Yanggang Province. I escorted some 3,000 prisoners to the military base. They were sent there to be killed. They were separated from their families.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

(10) Camp No. 23

Camp No. 23 was a police camp in the area of Sangdol-li and Shintae-ri, Toksong county, South Hamgyong Province. No information is available as to when the camp was founded. All prisoners were released in 1987 and the camp became a prison. Related testimony is as follows:

“My father had a good job, was well-off and had a scandal with a woman. That’s why we were sent to a prison, called No. 23 prison, 4-kori, Toksong county, South Hamgyong Province, as an example and a warning to others.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“Camp No. 23 was at Kuwuntaek, Shintae-ri, Toksong county, South Hamgyong Province. There were children from prisoner families and also non-prisoner families in the same school. I knew the camp number was 23 from my friends at the same primary school who were from non-prisoner families. There were areas of Shintae-ri and Sangdol-li. Sangdol-li was closer to the town of Shintae-ri. Shintae-ri was further divided into Sungni and Kuwuntaek. My family belonged to 00 Unit, Kuwuntaek, Shintae-ri” (A26, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1986)

“I did not know the address of the camp. One day, I found it was written on my birth certificate that my birth place is Sangdol-li, Toksong county. I was born in the camp and I always carried the birth certificate with me. I knew it was a prison camp but I did not know the number of the camp. I met a former prisoner from the same camp in Thailand on my way to South Korea and she told me that it was No. 23.” (A25, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1982-1989)

(11) Prison No. 25

Susong Prison No. 25 has been recognized into one of the maximum security camps. Susong No 25, located in the Susong area of Chongjin, North Hamgyong Province, is in operation today but the date of its foundation is unknown. All other political prison camps in North Korea are situated in large areas and have the appearance of farm villages or industrial sites. Unlike these, Susong Prison No. 25 looks like a prison; buildings crowded in a small area with prisoners administered collectively.

Note that there has been little fundamental change in the system of political prison camps in North Korea. Since the 1990s there has been growing international concern and protests have been strongly voiced;

nevertheless, no major changes in the situation have really been noted. However, although not in the maximum security camps, there do appear to have been some recent changes at Camp No. 15, Yodok, and No. 18, Pukchang.

Available information suggests that there have been some changes in both camps in terms of relocation, release of prisoners, reduction and/or expansion. In particular, testimony is available suggesting that significant changes have taken place at Pukchang; that it has been closed or at least diminished considerably. Further verification requires more testimony from North Koreans arriving in South Korea.

2. Present Situation of Political Prison Camps

1) Size

Five political prison camps have been confirmed as being in operation today in North Korea under the State Security Agency, and the number of prisoners in the five is estimated to be at least 130,500. The location and number of prisoners in each camp is provided in Table 2-1. The table shows over 50,000 prisoners in Camp No. 14, Kaechon, over 10,500 in Camp No. 15, Yodok (previously estimated by NIS at 50,000), over 15,000 prisoners in Camp No. 16, Hwasong, over 50,000 prisoners in Camp No. 22, Hweryong, over 5,000 prisoners in Prison No. 25, Susong, and small number of prisoners still remain in Camp No. 18, Pukchang, which is or was under police operation.

However, limited information available on the camps and recent relocations and reorganizations have made it complicated to estimate reasonably. In particular, it must be noted that the number of prisoners in each changes at different times and this has made it virtually impossible to analyze the number of prisoners in the camps by period. It must be also noted that the estimated number of prisoners and the real number may vary due to the possible existence of unknown camps and extremely limited information available as a result of difficult access to maximum security camps. Testimonies about the number of prisoners in each camp are as further described in the following.

(1) Camp No. 11, 12 and 13

Camp No. 11, Kyongsong county, No. 12, Onsong county and No. 13, also Onsong county, all in North Hamgyong Province, have now been closed. No testimony from former prisoners at any of these camps has been obtained. Present information on the number of prisoners, location and history of closure is available from a former guard, a state security officer and someone on a short term visit to the camp.

On the number of prisoners at Camp No. 11, Ahn Myong-chol estimated a little over 2,000 while Choi Dong-chol estimated over 20,000. It is confirmed that the two camps, No. 12 and 13, were the same camp once but split into two camps as the number of prisoners increased. It has been reported that Camp No. 12 had 15,000 prisoners and Camp No. 13 over 20,000. Their related testimony are as follows:

“His memory of the official title of the camp in Kyongsong county (formerly Chuwul county), below Kwanmo Peak, was Korean People’s Guard Unit 2911...According to Choi, there were some 20,000 prisoners, 500 state security officers and 450 guards in Camp No. 11. The camp was so close to China that Chinese mountains were easily within view from the camp...In the past, China and North Korea were socialist brothers and areas along the border with China were considered to be the safest. That’s why North Korea founded prison camps near the border with China. In recent years, North Korea has felt it can’t trust China any more. North Korea must be quite worried about the possibility of the detection of the camps located along the border.”⁶⁶⁾ (Choi Dong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 1985-1986)

66) Kim Yong-sam, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.

“Camp No. 13 was divided into two camps in 1975. The number of prisoners when I first arrived in camp No. 13 was 5,000. The number increased to over 20,000. The large prisoner population increase was the main cause of the camp being divided into camp No. 12 and 13. What existed there already was simply split for the purpose of administration.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“There were over 5,000 prisoners in Camp No. 13 in 1967, which then increased to over 20,000 by 1990. Camp No. 12 was a bit smaller than Camp No. 13. I think the number of prisoners in Camp No. 12 was around 15,000. The number of prisoners increased because anyone categorized as a revisionist along with their entire immediate family and relatives was brought there. Camp No. 12 was closed in October, 1991 and Camp No. 13 was closed in the fall of 1992. When prisoners began to be relocated, those officials facing imminent retirement were instructed to stay in the post until the end of 1992 to assist the process of prisoner relocation.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“There are about 3,000 prisoners at Tongpo Mine, 80 prisoners at the food factory, 120 women and 20 men prisoners at the clothes factory, about 50 prisoners at the mechanics workshop, 10 prisoners at the livestock farm, 10 prisoners at the butchers unit and 6 prisoners at the power transformer station. Additionally, there were some 300 prisoners in the construction unit. There were three other sections, 60 prisoners at each section. There were 5 units of workers at each village. There was an SSA officer, a chief worker and an inventory clerk at each work unit.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

(2) Camp No. 14

It has been confirmed that Camp No. 14 is in Wedong-ni and 5 valleys, Kaechon city, South Pyongan Province. Prior to the 1970s, the camp was located in Pukchang but was relocated to the present areas and has since been expanded. The area and size of the camp have been confirmed by satellite photos while the number of prisoners and operational systems information have become available from Shin Dong-hyuk, a former prisoner who escaped from the camp.

Shin Dong-hyuk estimates that the number of prisoners in the camp was more than 50,000 on the basis of his experience of work and of information he learned about other areas during his imprisonment in the same camp. It may not be realistic to expect information about entire camp from an individual prisoner who may have limited information about other work units or areas in the same camp. However, most witnesses provide us their estimate of total number of prisoners in the camp on the basis of their own experience and information they somehow learned during their imprisonment in the camps. Their estimates, however, were not very much different from the recent estimates obtained from the study of satellite pictures. However, information from the National Intelligence Agency (NIS), the South Korean government, suggests that there are 15,000 prisoners in Camp No. 14. However, the information from NIS failed to present the basis for its estimate, leaving the only justified estimate of the number of prisoners in Camp No. 14 coming from Shin Dong-hyuk.

“The Control Center is comprised of a headquarters village, No.1 Valley, No. 2 Valley, No. 3 Valley, No. 4 Valley and No. 5 Valley. There are about

100 houses for SSA officers' families in Camp No. 14, two families at each house for a total of 200 SSA officers' families. Four prisoners' families lived in a house and there were 160 families in my village. On average, each prisoner's family was a mother and a child, two persons per each family. Additionally, there are a large number of factories and the total number of prisoners was estimated to be 70,000 to 100,000 by many prisoners. But my estimate is about 50,000.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

(3) Camp No. 15

There is a lot of testimony about the location, size and number of prisoners in the camp. Most testimonies available are in detail. However, information about the latest situation and the total number of prisoners is not available at present.

This camp is located in the areas of Yongpyong, Pyongjon, Ipsok, Taesuk and Kuwup, Yodok county, South Hamgyong Province, and is a maximum security camp with re-education zones in the same camp. A relatively large amount of testimony is available about the number of prisoners, operational systems and size of the re-education zones while similar information about the maximum security zones is rare. Lee Young-guk, a former prisoner there, testified that he heard from Kim Tae-bong, his platoon leader, that “20 kilometers to the east is Kumya county and 40 kilometers to the west is Maengsan county, the outside world. This is Camp No. 15, but in the south is Pukchang where there is another camp, No. 14.⁶⁷⁾ His testimony provides general information

67) Young-guk Lee, *I Was Kim Jong-il's Bodyguard*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongshin, 2002), pp. 153-154.

on the location and size of the camp. Detailed testimony on the number of prisoners is as follows:

“I do not know the size of the entire population but there were at least 200 prisoners in the 1st and 2nd Companies.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“There was a wall and barbed wire around hospital ward area. Inside the wall and barbed wire were the management office, quarters for camp officers, dining room, a hall about the size of holding some 200 prisoners, clinic and a plaza. Over the other side of the plaza to the north was the ward and toilets for men and women. Additionally, there was a ward for outpatients, 1st Company ward for men and one for 2nd Company, part of which was for women. The wards were one-story buildings of earthen bricks. There were tiles on the roof. Behind the wards there were mountains all around and a guard post at the top of a mountain. We could command views of the maximum security zone from the peaks of the mountain. I was told that it used to be a re-education zone; what is now a maximum security zone. When I was there, there were about 150 prisoners in the ward of 1st Company and 25 women in the ward for women.” (A16, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“At that time, there were 50 to 60 families at each work unit. The 7th Unit was larger. The 7th Unit was the central area of the camp with a school, clinic and a shop. All prisoners come to the 7th Unit on Sundays. The distance from the 5th Unit to the 7th Unit is 8 kilometers. Units from 1 to 4 have a different shop. They use the shop at the central area. The administration office is located at the 1st Unit. There was a shop. We used to receive supplies from the shop. The Koreans from Japan were concentrated in a separate location. I did not pay very much attention to

their area and I don't know anything about them. There was a SSA staff member at each work unit. They carry a gun. We cannot speak to one another and have time together.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Yodok Camp is large, covering about one third of the entire Yodok county including five villages; Kuwup, Ipsok, Yongpyong, Pyongjon and Taesuk. The villages of Kuwup, Ipsok and Taesuk make up the re-education zone. Prisoners include those who attempt to defect from North Korea or criticize the North Korean system, or who give neighbors information about outside world, Koreans from Japan and those who surrender to North Korea. In case of individual prisoners, they are put under the control of the companies and an entire family are sent to family district. In the family sector, the North Koreans from Japan are separate from ordinary North Koreans. In the re-education zone, there were over 1,300 individual prisoners, 9,300 prisoners in the family sector and over 5,900 families from Japan. In the entire camp, I believe, there were some 50,000 prisoners.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“They made five villages a concentration camp including Yongpyong-ni, Pyongjon-ni, and part of Kuwup-ni, Ipsok-ni and Taesuk-ni. I was in the Kuwup sector. When I was at Yongpyong-ni, the number of prisoners exceeded 5,000.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup and Yongpyong, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“There were less than 250 prisoners in Taesuk-ni including the three independent platoons. Prisoners were released and new prisoners arrived all the time.” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

“Unit 1 was for families, Unit 2 (also called Company) was for individual

prisoners and Unit 3 was for both families and individual prisoners. Additionally, there was a General Unit that was merged with Unit 2 after July of 1995 when the family sector was relocated. In Taesuk-ni, there were both individual prisoners and families. Then, in July, 1995, the entire family unit was relocated elsewhere. I was told that some families were released. In April, 1994, there were a total of over 500 prisoners including individual prisoners and families together. I remember that there were about 120 prisoners in 50 families from Unit 1 and part of Unit 3. The others were all individual prisoners. When families moved away in July, 1995, about 300 individual prisoners remained. There were still 200 individual prisoners in April, 1997.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“In the late 1990s, the number of prisoners in Taesuk-ni area was about 1,000, including 1st Company (200-400 prisoners), 2nd Company (200-400 prisoners), 3rd Company (200-400), Female Platoon (20-40) and Independent Platoon (about 30 prisoners)” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

Kang Cheol-hwan is the only witness who has given us information about the total number of people in the entire camp. He testified that there were 1,300 individual prisoners, 5,900 prisoners with Korean families from Japan, and over 9,300 ordinary North Korean prisoners in the re-education zones of Kuwup-ni, Ipsok-ni and Taesuk-ni of the camp. He further testified that there were another 34,000 prisoners in the maximum security areas of Pyongjon-ni and Yongpyong-ni, a total of over 50,000 prisoners in the entire camp. Most prisoners have knowledge only of the area of their own detention. Kim Yong-sun, a former prisoner in the maximum security areas of Pyongjon-ni and

Yongpyong-ni for 3 years, 1976-1979, the only witness from the maximum security area of the camp, states that there were over 5,000 prisoners there.

There are two former prisoners from Ipsok-ni, too. One of them testified that there were 10 work units, No. 1 to 10, with 50-60 families in the 5th work unit, while the other former prisoner testified that there were 9 work units, No. 1-9. Lee Young-guk stated that there were 1,000 prisoners in Taesuk-ni, and witness, A12, gave information in detail, saying that there were a total of 500 prisoners including 120 prisoners from the family sector and that the others were all individual prisoners. However, in July 1995, all the family prisoners were relocated leaving over 300 individual prisoners there. The number of individual prisoners was reduced to 200 in April, 1997. Another witness, A10, gave us testimony only about the independent platoon he belonged to. He testified that there were 250 female prisoners in the platoon. Testimony about the Sorimchon area, a new re-education zone opened in 1998, has been consistent on the number of prisoners there, between 200 and 250. No testimony was given in detail about the number of prisoners in the Kuwup-ni area.

As above, information became available on the total number of prisoners in Camp No. 15 thanks to the testimony of Kang Cheol-hwan on the basis of his knowledge from 1987 to 1990. The same information after 1990 has only been estimated. The total number of prisoners in Camp No. 15 is estimated to be more than 10,500 on the basis of summarizing all available information. No information has been made available on other areas in the same camp to date. The National Intelligence Agency (NIS) has estimated the entire number of prisoners in the camp to be over 50,000.

(4) Camps No. 16 and 17

Camp No. 16 has been in operation to date in areas around Puhari, Hwasong-kun, North Hamgyong Province. Nevertheless, no testimony has been made available about the situation in the camp. A07, the only witness to the camp, stated that she has little knowledge of the number of prisoners there. Accordingly, the only information available on the number of prisoners in the camp is from NIS.

Camp No. 17 was located in the areas of Cholsan-ni, Toksong county, South Hamgyong Province but believed to have been closed now. It is believed that there used to be over 30,000-40,000 prisoners in the camp. Part of the testimony by A16, a former prisoner in Camp No. 17, is as follows:

“We lived in a new house and 4 families shared one house. I ran about 15 minutes to the school from my house and there were houses on both sides of road all the way to the school and many houses were crowded in the alleys.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

(5) Camp No. 18

Camp No. 18 was situated in the areas of Pongchang-ni and Soksan-ni, Pukchang county, South Pyongan Province, and has now been closed in most areas recently and a small section of the camp has now been relocated to the area of Kaechon. Therefore, further information is required about the camp to determine whether or not the camp has been completely closed. A large number of witnesses are available on Camp No. 18, a

re-education zone like Camp No. 15, Yodok. Their testimonies available on the size of the camp include:

“I will explain to you about the villages in Control Center No. 18 in detail. There were villages of Sang-ni, Suan, Pongchang, Saemaul (a new village constructed for the families of camp officials) and Hyonmaul (a village for the families of camp officials) and an administration office at each village. Only one administration office served the two villages of Saemaul and Hyonmaul of the camp officials. The size of villages was large by the standard of a farm village but small by the standard of a county. There were 1,200 families in the Yongdong sector alone. Pongchang is the largest in size and Yongdong, Suan and Sangni were smaller in the same order. I think the entire number exceeds 20,000. The Tukchang Mine is very large. There were 600 to 700 prisoners assigned to each shaft and there were an additional 300 prisoner in the open shaft. So, there were also additional 20,000 prisoners.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“In 1994, when Tukchang sector was broken off and attached to the local government, 60% of the area was cut away from the sector. Nevertheless, there were 15,000 prisoners remaining in the Yongdong sector and, additionally, there were many factories such as a motor pool, and similar facilities. So, the entire population exceeded 50,000. In 2006, Pongchang had restrictions lifted. The systems in the control center fell into a state of confusion after the relief operation in 2000 in the wake of march of suffering and food shortage. But 100 families were driven to Kaechon without any due consideration of them” (0 Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

“There were some 75,000 people (including camp officers) before 1989. At that time, the police was most powerful followed by agriculture chief,

propaganda secretary, organization secretary and chief of workers' union committee. Then and now, there was a young workers' union and there were many prisoners in the union. There was no such thing as official figure of the number of prisoners. In recollection, former high ranking officials and their families represented some 30% of the entire population. I was in a position of Administration affairs to have some idea as to the number of prisoners. My memory is that the number of prisoners was largest in the areas of Tukchang and Pongchang. There were 25,000 prisoners in Pongchang area alone.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Camp No. 18 was of dual structure, former high ranking officials like me to be reformed and ordinary prisoners. The first camp was like a camp inside the camp. Total number of prisoners in the entire Camp No. 18 was at the level of 50,000.”⁶⁸⁾ (Kang Myong-do, former prisoner, re-revolutionizing residence, Camp No. 18, 1990-1992)

Testimony on the number of prisoners varies according to each witness. Their estimates are based on the number of prisoners by work section and number of families in each area. Witness A18 estimated the number of prisoners to be over 200,000, the largest, and another witness, A16, estimated the number of prisoners in her work area to be over 5,000, the smallest. It is assumed that the numbers could have been misleading as they were children. The witness, O Myong-o, estimated the number of prisoners to be around 50,000 in 1995, representing 40% of the total number in the camp before the camp reduction in size.⁶⁹⁾ Other witnesses

68) Kang Myong-do, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

69) Ryu Kyong-won, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

estimated the number to be somewhere between over 20,000 and over 50,000. It is believed today, however, that the camp was closed in 2006 and some 80-150 families of the last prisoners were relocated to a small camp in the direction of Kaechon.⁷⁰⁾

Table 2-4 Analysis of Estimates on the Number of Prisoners, Camp No. 18, Pukchang

Witness	Length in time of Detention	Ages at Time of Detention	Estimate
A17 (male)	1973(4)-1982	Teen and 20s	No estimate
A19 (male)	1975-2006	20s to 50s	Over 27,000
A18 (male)	1977-1984	Early teen-early 20s	Over 200,000
A16 (female)	1984-1992	Early teen-early 20s	Over 5000-600
A01 (female)	1972-1984	Birth-10s	—
A09 (female)	1975-2001	Brith-30s	20,000 in Pongchang alone
0 Myong-o (male)	1994-2000	20s-30s	50,000 (representing 40% of the number before reduction in 1990)
Kang Myong-do (male)	1990-1992	30s	50,000 including 10,000 female prisoners
Kim Yong (male)	1995-1998	40s	Over 50,000
A20 (male)	1986-2009	30s	Over 52,000 in total. 17,500 in Pongchang alone (2,000-3,000 after relocation to Kaechon)
A32 (female)	1987-2006	20s-30s	24,000-32,000 in total (750 families in 2007)

70) The witness, A32, was a camp officer. One of her colleagues followed the camp when it was relocated to Kaechon. Sometime later, the witness heard from her colleague who visited the witness from Kaechon that the number of prisoners in the camp was small at the time of camp relocation but it has since increased by 3 times following the increase in the number of defectors to China. The witness knew that there were 250 prisoner families at most when the camp was relocated to Kaechon. In 2007, the witness was visited by her colleague from the camp. At that time, the witness asked her colleague about situations in the camp in Kaechon. She stated that new prisoners have since arrived and the number of prisoners has increases by 3 times. She added that the new prisoners were modern version of prisoners as all of them had been repatriated from China.

(6) Camp No. 19, 22, 23 and 24

Camp No. 19 was located in Tanchon city, South Hamgyong Province and is not in operation today. No testimony is available on the number of prisoners in the camp. However, it is believed that there used to be over 10,000 prisoners.

Camp No. 22 is located in the areas of Chungbong, Naksae and Kulsan-ni, Hweryong county, North Hamgyong Province, and it has been revealed that the camp is the largest of all camps in operation today, with an estimate of 50,000 prisoners.

“Camp No. 22 has a large basin and is twice the size of land of Camp No. 13. At that time (1990-91), Camp No. 22 was the largest. The camp did not have areas divided and was under a uniform control in the entire camp. The number of prisoners was over 50,000 at that time.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 22, 1992-1994)

Ahn Myong-chol, a former guard at Camp No. 22, revealed that the total number of prisoners was over 50,000. A22, former SSA officer in the camp, said that he did not know the total number of prisoners in the entire camp but in the area of Haengyon, where he worked, there were over 10,000 prisoners and the camp was divided up.

“At that time, there were 5-6,000 prisoners in the coal mine, 3-4,000 in the farm and additional 3-4,000 prisoners for a variety of work sites. In December, 1989, when it was very cold winter, some prisoners were relocated to Kaechon Prison in South Pyongan Province, some prisoners to a military base in Hyangsan county, Kangwon Province and others to the secret military base, 31-ri, Kapsan county, Yanggang Province. I have

led them, some 3,000 prisoners, to the secret military base in Yanggang Province. They were brought there to be killed after finishing construction of the secret base.” (A22, former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

Camp No. 23 was located in the areas of Sangdol-li and Shintae-ri, Toksong county, South Hamgyong Province, and has now been closed. Camp No. 24 was located in Tongshin, Chagang Province but was closed in 1990. It is revealed that the number of prisoners was over 10,000 in Camp No. 23 and over 17,000 in Camp No. 24.

(7) Prison No. 25, Camp No. 26 and 27

Prison No. 25 is located in Susong-dong, Songpyong Sector, Chongjin City and is in operation in a small area packed with buildings. Prison No. 25 is a maximum security area under the control of the Police. It is believed that there are over 5,000 prisoners there.

“In the building I was detained, there were 160 prisoners, divided into unit1-3. Some 100 male and 60 female prisoners. There were eight prisoners each cell. Male prisoners were on the 3rd floor and female prisoners on the 2nd floor.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

Camps No. 26 and 27 have now been closed. Camp No. 26 was located in Sungho area, Pyongyang and Camp No. 27 at Chonma, North Pyongan Province. Camp No. 26 was very small with, allegedly, some 15,000 prisoners.

2) Modes of Management

(1) Distinction between Operations by State Security Agency and National Police

In the operation of political prison camps, there are some distinctions in modus operandi by implementing organization. Most political prison camps are under the control of the State Security Agency (SSA). However, no. 17, 18, 19 and 23 were controlled by the Police. The camps under the control of the police were considerably distinct from those under the operation of the SSA in systems of control and operation. In general, the control of prisoners under the police is considerably less harsh than in the camps under the control of the SSA. Prisoners in the camps under the control of the police had a highly realistic chance of release. Accordingly, the camps under the police control may well be classified as a place of residence separated from the mainstream society, rather a political prison camp.

(2) Maximum Security Camps and Re-Education Camps

Political prison camps in North Korea are classified more specifically into maximum security camps and re-education camps by distinctive modus operandi. Maximum security camp is for a life-long detention where no prisoners are ever released alive even after their deaths. This is a very cruel camp, totally separated from the mainstream society, and prisoners are forced to do hard labor to their death and their bodies are not allowed to be buried outside the camp.

On the other hand, prisoners are released on expiration of a fixed term

of imprisonment in a re-education camp and relatively less serious offenders are detained here. Because the prisoners are expected to return to the mainstream society, the prisoners continue to receive fundamental education required by the North Korean society and routine party training.

All the political prison camps in operation today in North Korea are maximum security camps with the exception of Camp No. 15, Yodok, which operates a re-education zone in part of the same camp site. It is revealed that most political prisoners are imprisoned at maximum security camps and a very small number of prisoners, by comparison, are detained at a re-education camp.

Camp No. 18 was operated by the Police in a manner similar to a re-education camp and prisoners in the camp continued their routine duty for party and government as they would have done if they had not been arrested. It was rather like an ordinary residential area, except that it was separated from mainstream society.

(3) Imprisonment of Offender and Entire Family

The political prison camps in North Korea are divided into 3 types, first type for offenders only, the second type for offenders and their families together and the last type for families only.

As shown in the table 2-1, analysis of testimonies available to this date, Prison No. 25, Susong, appears to be the only camp for offenders only of all political prison camps in North Korea while the other camps are for offenders and families or families only.

(4) Houses and Collective Bunk Houses

With the exception of Prison No. 25, Susong, North Korean political prison camps are situated in large areas with shelters for prisoners. In external appearance, the camps are not different from ordinary farm villages or coal mine areas if there were no barbed wires and guard posts installed all around. However, Prison No. 25, Susong, offenders are detained collectively in prison buildings as found in foreign countries and South Korea. It is revealed that offenders under suspicion are detained there separated families.

3. Reasons for Imprisonment

The survey made on the reason of imprisonment of former prisoners of political prison camps did not show any discrepancy from a previous survey on ordinary defectors from North Korea. The survey conducted by Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) in 2009 on the reason for arrest for political offenses revealed that expression of political views, attempt to defect to South Korea and anti-regime activities were the main charges against them.⁷¹⁾ The testimony of former prisoners were basically identical to the results of the previous survey.

Table 2-5 Reason for Imprisonment in Political Prison Camps : 「NKDB Central Database」

Classification	Frequency (No. of People)	Valid Percentage	Total Percentage
Political Crime	402	48.3	36.5
Criminal Crime	21	2.5	1.9
Economic Crime	24	2.9	2.2
Illegal Border Crossing	67	8.0	6.1
Admin. Crime	14	1.7	1.3
Guilt-by-Association	297	35.7	27.0
Others	7	0.8	0.6
Sub-total	832	100.0	
Unknown	269		24.4
Total	1,101	100.0	100.0

71) Hung-sun Park and et al., *Survey Report of Political Prisoners' Camps in North Korea*, (Seoul: National Human Rights Commission, 2009), p. 157.

As shown in table 2-5 on page 130, the main reason for arrests for political offenses was expression of political views, criticizing the leader, attempting to defect from North Korea and guilt-by-association. In particular, of the 27 former prisoners in the political prison camps, 14 prisoners, or 51.9%, were arrested on the system of guilt-by-association, a very high percentage. However, the percentage of guilt-by-association is very low in Camp No. 15, a re-education zone, due to the large number of individual prisoners in the camp. In case of other camps, the large number of families naturally shows a high percentage of guilt-by-association. The truth is confirmed by the testimony of Shin Dong-hyuk, a former prisoner of Camp No. 14, and other witnesses, A01, A09 and 0 Myong-o, former prisoner in Camp No. 18, who were all there due to the political activity of grandfather or defection to South Korea of their grandfather. However, it has been also revealed that, with the exception of the offender oneself, some prisoners were without any knowledge of the reason why they had been detained there. They vaguely believed that their grandparents, their parents or someone, a relative, may have done something wrong to bring them there.

The survey on the reason of imprisonment in political prison camps, on the basis of information from the Central Database,⁷²⁾ North Korean Human Rights Archives, NKDB, has revealed that 35.7% of the prisoners were there under guilt-by-association. The highest with 48.3% was under the charge of political offense. The percentage of prisoners without the knowledge of the charges against them was as high as 24.4%. As it is

72) On the basis of analysis of a total of 31,594 cases of human rights violation from North Korean Human Rights Archives, NKDB central database, as of 1 July, 2011.

very likely that most of the prisoners without the knowledge of the reason for their imprisonment would have been there under the system of guilt-by-association, the total percentage of prisoners of guilt-by-association would be the highest. High percentage of prisoners of guilt-by-association has also been substantiated by a large number of witnesses.

“In 1969, my father’s brother was banished. He was divorced from his wife and sent to Hwachon, South Hamgyong Province. After that, in 1974, our entire family was sent to the Camp No. 17. We did not know the charge against us. We did not know what was wrong and my parents were enraged.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

“I was born at Toksong Camp. My father may have done something wrong; I was told that he had been sent to the camp shortly after his marriage. My father and mother were relocated to another camp in Sangdol-li, Toksong county. My brother and I were born in the camp.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

Witness A01 was born and lived in Camp No. 18 in connection with the problems of his grandparents. He was told by his father that his father was without any knowledge of the reason for his imprisonment at the time of arrest.

“My father was married and brought to the Control Center with mom. He did not commit any crime and I was told that he was brought there because of the activities of my grandfather. We didn’t know precisely why my father was there and why I was born there. We were settlers.⁷³⁾ I never considered myself a criminal’s daughter. I did not know that I was a

criminal's daughter.” (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1972-1984)

“The reason my father’s family was imprisoned in Camp No. 14 was because of two of my father’s brothers defected to South Korea during the Korean war...My mother, Chang Hye-gyong, was married to my father in the camp. I do not know anything about the background of my mother’s family...I was born in Camp No. 14 and grew up there...I grew up where I was born and I had no idea that we were in the maximum security camp. All I knew that I must work hard to cleans myself of the sin committed by my ancestors and parents.”⁷⁴⁾ (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Former prisoners also informed us of a variety of charges against fellow prisoners at the time of their detention. However, further information is required to determine whether or not the variety of charges represent the type of camp or limited to the experience of the individual concerned. Most common charge against them was related to criticizing the Father or the Son of the North Korean leadership. Testimonies in detail are as follows:

“Camp No. 22 is for political prisoners. If you make angry remarks against Kim Il-sung, entire family would be brought there. The prisoners in Camp No. 22 are not ordinary workers like us. Generally, they were high-ranking and very smart. Most of them were former senior party members, professors

73) “Migrant” is another term for a prisoner and “released villager” for a prisoner released who stay in the same location in Camp No. 18 after release.

74) Shin Dong-hyuk, above book, 2007, pp. 22-26, p. 37.

or Ph.D degree holders. They were all brought there for wrong remarks they made.” (A02, family of former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1994)

“I was brought here because my husband made a comment during his office conference to the effect that it is acceptable for a father to appoint his son to succeed him, but holding his son’s picture aloft is not appropriate when the father is still alive. That statement became a problem at his office. Because of it, he was brought here straightaway. The entire family was also brought here” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Cases of disappearance were not very frequent in Camp No. 18 during the period of my service. Before 1982 when Kim Byong-ha was the chief of SSA, many people disappeared for political reasons. In fact, those people who disappeared were all sent to the political prison camp No. 14, 15 and 16. At that time many people disappeared from Camp No. 18 and were sent to these camps. After 1989, there was a case of disappearance in Camp No. 18 when a wife of a discharged soldier made wrong political remarks and her entire family was sent to Camp No. 15, Yodok.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006”

Those elements of enemy class such as anti-party factionalists, defectors, landlords and capitalists were sent to political prison camps together with their families.

“In Chongsong, there were many former landlords and their families, including children. When the People’s Army was pushed to the north and Hwanghae Province was occupied by the South Korean Army during the Korean War, many former landlords and their children returned to claim or sell their lands, etc. When the People’s Army regained the areas, the

NK government decided to eliminate the former landlords under dictatorship. I was told this is why Chongsong was created in April, 1964 to relocate landlords and their children from Pyongyang, Shinuiju, Hamhung and Hwanghae Province. Later, many prisoners under the category of revisionist also arrived. Many children of revisionists were studying overseas at that time but they were also all brought here. During the period of purge in 1985-6, many anti-party revisionists arrived at this camp from Pyongyang.” (A08, former SSA camp officer, Camp No. 12, 13, 1965-1992)

“My family was detained at the camp because my grandfather defected to South Korea without the knowledge of my grandmother. We did not do anything except being related to that grandfather who had defected to South Korea. Many prisoners were taken here for things that happened 20 or 30 years ago. At the time of the Shimhwajo case, many people were brought to the camp including high ranking government officials. When they arrived, there were a lot of people and furniture in their car.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2000)

Rare as it may be, there appear to be cases where prisoners were arrested and sent to political prison camps for the purpose of giving warning to other people.

“My father was brought here, maybe, he had an affair with a woman, maybe he had a financial problem, maybe he misused the government funds...This was in 1977 and my father was arrested as a case of warning to other people. This happened when I was 7 years old. I cannot forget it. I was a child and I did not know what the charge was against my father. My mother knew the reason precisely. But she passed away and nobody else would know about the case. When I was released on expiration of

prison term of 10 years, I kept asking why we had been sent there. Once, I had a big quarrel with my father on this issue.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987).

“Father of the family of a Choi, I was told, was a thief or something. He robbed shops and something else in the town. At that time, there was nobody with political offense in the camp. Everybody was brought here for cases like that.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“We arrived in Toksong Camp in 1976 when I was 3 years old. We were brought here because of my father. My father told me that he was engaged in usurping public supplies for his private purpose. This was why he was arrested. But, this was a false reason. The real reason was that he was from South Korea and, once at a drinking party, he was drunk and beat a policeman. This record caused him to be sent to a prison camp. At that time, North Korean policemen punished people for being drunk.” (A26, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1986)

There is also a report from a former prisoner of witnessing to former South Korean prisoners of war (POW). According to the testimony by A22, the percentage of South Korean POW was as high as 30-40% of the camp population.

“30-40% of the prisoners were South Korean POWs, the others were for political offense, victims of the system of guilt-by-association and Japanese kidnapped from Japan. Most of the cases of investigation of my responsibility were about South Korean POWs. Many of them had strong views of their own. There was a case of a spy, a South Korean soldier who attended the inauguration ceremony of South Korean president Syngman Rhee. He came to North Korea in disguise of a POW. He was

working at Hamyon coal mine but was arrested by tip from another former South Korean POW. In fact, he had married in North Korea but was brought here without his wife. He was not an ordinary South Korean POW. He was a spy and sneaked into North Korea in disguise. There were many former South Korean POWs. Many of them were brought here for talking about his former job in South Korea or praising South Korea.” (A22, former SSA camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

In Camp No. 15, some prisoners were brought to the camp for attempting to go to South Korea. There is information about a prisoner in Camp No. 22 who was imprisoned for a religious reason.

“At that time, there were not many prisoners under the charge of attempt to go to South Korea among the new prisoners. They were less than 10, including a Choi, a Huh and a Cho.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“The interrogation was so tough everyday that I was totally exhausted. I excused myself by saying that I watched a South Korean TV program and it was out of curiosity that I attempted to go to South Korea and I had no political motivation. Well, I was sentenced to 3-year imprisonment term at Yodok camp after 4 months of awful interrogations. They denounced me for betraying fatherland and going to China for the purpose of going to South Korea. They did not inform me of the prison term and they did not tell me it was a political prison camp I was sentenced to. I knew it was a political camp only when I was released. People are so frightened by mere mention of political camp where, many people believe, no prisoner is released alive and, for this reason, they did not tell me that I was going to a political prison camp.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“The interrogator explained to me if I am charged under illegal border crossing in violation of some provisions in the Constitution or I may be sentenced to 8 years in prison and also in case I am charged with an economic crime...but it would be only 2 years in the camp if I admit political crime of defection to China...maybe I have a chance of release within a week...so I better say that I went to China for living and I did not like China and I liked North Korea so I came back to North Korea just as soon as possible. Then, I would be given 2 years in the camp, which is much better than 8 years in prison. Since I had no previous record of political crime, I agreed to his suggestion.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“I simply replied to my interrogator that someone in China told me that I can make a lot of money in South Korea and so I attempted to go to South Korea for money. In the evening of one day in 2003 my investigator told me, ‘you are going tomorrow.’ When I asked him, ‘where am I going?’, he replied, ‘to spend three years at a high-security camp in order to clean up your brain. Then, you are going to be all right.’ There was no such thing as a trial. I arrived in the camp with 4 others under the same charge of attempt to go to South Korea. They were a Pang, a Kim, another Kim and a Cho.” (A06, prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“There was a prisoner who was arrested for reading Bible. She said she read it in Yanbian, in China. Most of prisoners who read Bible were from Hweryong, North Hamgyong Province.” (A22, former SSA camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“There was a female prisoner, called daughter of a Christian family. She was from Sariwon, Hwanghae Province, arrested for reactionary crime of telling other people about the Bible. Her husband was forced to divorce

*and her daughters were sent to the camp with her. She was a rare person in the camp, always smiling and humming strange melodies...At dawn one day, we heard her shrieking amid angry shouting by a SSA officer...The Christian woman and her two girls were being beaten by SSA officers...They were forcibly dumped onto a truck and they kept crying crazy.*⁷⁵⁾ (Kang Chul-hwan, *prisoners, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987*)

As shown above, prisoners in the political prison camps in North Korea have been arrested and imprisoned for a variety of reasons. Most common charges against them include expression of political views against the North Korean system and Kim leadership, factionalism, anti-party activities, being family of those who had defected to South Korea, former landlords, capitalists and victims of the system of guilt-by-association.

75) Cheol-hwan Kang, *The Aquarium of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongshin, 2004), pp. 177-179.

4. Procedure Prior to Imprisonment

1) Arrest and Process of Preliminary Investigation

Surveys on the circumstance of arrest reveal that the victims were all arrested arbitrarily without arrest warrant or explanation of the charge against them by SSA officers or other government agents.

“My father went to work with a lunch box in the morning but did not come home in the evening. I was told he was arrested. There was no such thing as a preliminary investigation or any other investigation and he just simply disappeared.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“When my father was arrested, there was no such thing as a preliminary investigation and, in fact, the entire family was carried away at dawn with him. I was told by my father that once he was called by the SSA to confirm if he’d made a certain remark. There was no attempt to corroborate whether he’d made the remark, and we were all pushed out at dawn. I was able to carry only a bowl and some rice.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

It appears that offender and family were treated alike in the process of arrest. In case of the offender, most of them were arrested at work, but some prisoners were arrested at home or during travel on mission or at a third location. Families of political offenders were arrested at home in general but sometimes a member of the family was arrested at school or work site. Arrest warrants were never shown and reasons for arrest never explained. The common statement at the time of arrest is that “we

have a case to investigate” or “you are being arrested because some of your family has already been arrested.”

“My grandparents were successful with a plating business in Japan but came to North Korea in August of 1977, and settled down in Pyongyang. When the wave of arrests of Korean families from Japan began, we were arrested and detained in Camp No. 15. At that time, we were kicked out of our home at 4 o’clock in the morning by SSA officers who shouted at us, “why are you so slow? Didn’t I tell you to be quick to pack up your things and get on the vehicles outside?” There were two trucks, engines running, in front of our house. My father, his youngest brother, my grandmother and my 8-year old sister were all pushed into the truck. We were told by the SSA Section Chief, named Jon Jae-kun, that my mother would join us later with the remaining furniture. We have never heard anything from her since. We passed through downtown Pyongyang, Kang-dong, Songchon and Yangdok. Then, we crossed over Wolwanglyong Pass and arrived at camp No. 15, Yodok.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“Was it in 1973? I don’t remember clearly. I think it was in 1974 but it was such a long time ago. We were told to pack furniture to join grand socialism construction program. I was a child at that time and did not know who arrested us. They were not in police uniform. They were about four men in plain clothes. I think my father told me that they were all policemen. There were other people outside to stop us from running away. My father told me to go and tell our relatives about this. I was about to go to my relatives when they stopped me. They just told us that we are going for grand construction work. All our furniture carried a label reading “Grand Socialism Construction Program.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“One day in December, 1975, I was about to leave home for work in the morning when a truck pulled in and I saw several guys leaving the truck. They were SSA officers, police officers, another government officer and two soldiers with guns. My parents felt something seriously wrong and sat down plump. We were told to pack up some furniture and they carried away the furniture. A few hours later, they carried eight of us, my parents and brothers, to Nampo railway station in a car. We struggled to resist but were forcibly pushed on the train by some people who had been waiting for us at the railway station. We were pushed into a closed box car. We were in the train for about two days. When we left the train, we found ourselves in front of a prison at railway station. It was mid-night, 12:20 hours. It was very cold and we all shivered with cold. We arrived in Camp No. 18 at two o’clock in the morning. In the morning, we arrived at a house which was like a pig’s pen.” (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp 18, 1975-2006)

“I was 12 years old at that time. I was in school and we had six class hours that day. Just when we started the 6th class, a man in black suit knocked the door of our classroom and spoke with my teacher outside the class room. My teacher came back to the class room and told me to pack up and follow the man outside...Of course, school teachers could not resist SSA or police officers. I asked the man where I am going. He replied that your family is moving. I asked him again, “Where to?” He replied some place very nice. I jumped with joy and ran before him. When I arrived at my house, I saw a truck, a little larger than one-ton pick-up truck of South Korea. The truck was already fully loaded. It was mid-day, around 12:20 or 12:30 and as soon as I arrived, they started to move. I think I remember it was around 11:40 at night when we arrived at the camp.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

It was confirmed that, in most cases, it was SSA officers and, sometimes, policemen who arrest the prisoners. In some cases, the witnesses do not remember who arrested them.

The offender is imprisoned in a prison camp following the process of preliminary and formal investigation. North Korean laws specify preliminary investigation to take place when arresting a suspect. In North Korea, a preliminary investigation is a process of interrogation and confirmation. Regulations pertaining to preliminary investigation are all clearly specified in the North Korean criminal law and criminal action procedures about the manner, length, implementing agencies and etc. of preliminary investigation. North Korean laws specify that preliminary investigation is carried out by investigative agencies to be completed within six months.

It is revealed by the survey through in-depth interviews with North Koreans in South Korea that those who were arrested in connection with a criminal case were all subject to preliminary investigation and the period of preliminary investigation was, in most cases, 2-5 months.

“I had a record of illegal travel to China. In China, I don’t know how but eventually I arrived in 000 Province, in search of relatives. During the course, my identity was already disclosed and I was to be arrested by the SSA anytime...The City SSA was very suspicious of me and asked me a lot of questions for two days about why and for what purpose I went to China. This was when food was rationed regularly and living conditions in North Korea were not that bad. They had to accept my statement that I went to China for family affairs and came back to North Korea as soon as I could. They eventually accepted my statement on the merit of my surrender. At mid-night, I was fettered by both legs and put on a car. After

3 hours in the car, we arrived at the central area, another City SSA...All the political prisoners were sent up to the Provincial SSA but I was sent to City SSA where only economic criminal are detained. So I was sent to a cell, alone. They told me not to speak to the guards there that I had been to China, a foreign country, and they were afraid I might speak to guards there about China. They kept me there for two days and eventually decided to transfer me to the Provincial SSA. I was there for six months during which time they were very suspicious of me...I was subject to preliminary investigation for 6 months and then I was escorted to Yodok.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“I was at the County SSA for 4 months for a preliminary investigation. My crime was an attempt to go to South Korea and repatriation back to North Korea by Chinese police. At that time, there was an instruction from Pyongyang to send illegal border crossers to a re-education zone which expedited the interrogation process. My case was a very simple case, only one charge against me, that was illegal border crossing. One of the prisoners with me at that time had a bad luck of encountering a bad interrogator who tried to press more accusations. By comparison, my case was just simple.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

Witness A10, however, testified that his preliminary investigation lasted one year and 5 months. It appears that the specification of a maximum of six months for preliminary investigation may not be always followed and often extended depending on the nature of the case.

“During the period of preliminary investigation, the interrogators often asked the cell guards to give the prisoner good food so that the prisoner could sit up for many hours of interrogation. The interrogators may ask

for it but guards did not necessarily heed to such requests. I was there from 1995 to 1996. They said no prisoner could survive 8 months there.”
(A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

There are two investigative organizations implementing preliminary investigations, the State Security Agency and the Police. It has been surveyed that, in cases of prisoners of political prison camps, SSA has been mandated to conduct preliminary investigations, an indication that it was directly responsible and involved at all stages of investigation. According to testimonies, all arrested suspect were detained in the SSA cells, SSA hotel or Preliminary Investigation Bureau or SSA Ministry.

It has been revealed that while the offenders are subject to preliminary investigations, their families were sent to camps right after arrest without preliminary investigation⁷⁶⁾ as they are sent to camps under the system of guilt-by-association. In case of imprisonment by families, most prisoners were without precise knowledge about the reason for their arrest and imprisonment. The survey has confirmed that, in case of man and wife, there were cases where a spouse was spared through divorce. However, no further information is available as to whether the divorce was forced. According to the A17, his father was sent to the camp straight without preliminary investigation.

“They shipped all our household effects by train. We were on the train without hand-cuff. There were four coaches in the train and all the coaches

76) There may have been cases where a member of family of an offender is asked a question for the confirmation of the statement of the offender. However, in most cases, family of an offender is sent straight to camps without the process of investigation.

were fully crowded. There were so many people in the train. The train moved all night and we eventually arrived in Soksan, Pukchang County. My father never received any preliminary investigation. He has never been called by SSA for any questions. (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

It has been confirmed that during the process of preliminary investigation, a process of investigation and confirmation in North Korea, torture, violence, appeasement and a variety of human rights violations commonly occur. The preliminary investigation was such a pressure and pain for the prisoners that they would do anything to finish the investigation just as soon as possible by making a false statement or false confession. The interview records with North Korean defectors in South Korea also support the horrendous situation under which preliminary investigations are carried out in North Korea.

“He was very crafty when interrogating. He said, ‘we all know that family members are in South Korea.’ I replied, ‘I don’t know where they are.’ Then, he called me, ‘you wicked bastard!’ He continued to give me hard time without lunch for me. Then, he began to beat me. I was interrogated over 20 times. I had a visit from a higher office one day and finally the investigation about me was rounded up.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“There is a variety of ways in preliminary investigations. Beating, starving and keeping the suspect awake without sleep for days are common practice. They are so overpowering, they make a suspect admit anything.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“He beat me severely during interrogations. He asked me to talk about South Korea which I refused. He placed the paper on the desk and told me that he was leaving me because I did not cooperate with him. All of sudden, he kicked me down to the floor from behind. I was so weak from hunger that I could not get up. He grabbed my hair to pull me up. I fell to the floor again. He held me up again by holding my hair and beat me so severely. When I woke up, I was back in the cell and found my face all swollen. I saw my blood on the floor when I stood up the next morning. I thought my ears were injured. I was so badly beaten that I don’t remember everything that happened to me. When I woke up, I found my nose and mouth swollen.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

2) Trial and Process of Transfer

Legal procedures are rarely followed in the process of arrest and preliminary investigation in case of prisoners in political prison camps in North Korea. Similarly, in almost all cases, there was no official trial in the process of transfer.

“There was no such thing as trial. Decision is made by them and you are sent to a camp. No one sat for any trial. They asked me questions during the preliminary investigation and that’s all. It is their policy and it is end of it. The decision was to send me to the re-education camp. The interrogator told me that “your life is spared owing to the kind consideration of the leader. This is the best I could do for you.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

Information is required from prisoners as well as officials concerned

to understand the process of decision-making on imprisonment and terms of imprisonment. However, no witnesses have been identified to date on the decision-making process. The information must be available from SSA special officers and special investigating agents but it is our understanding that none of them has yet to arrive in South Korea to date. Under these circumstances, the only information available is from analysis of testimonies of former prisoners about the process of arrest and imprisonment in political prison camps.

Studies to date suggest that it is the State Security Agency (SSA) that investigates and decides the imprisonment of prisoners. SSA is not only responsible for preliminary and final investigations but also for the decision of imprisonment and length of imprisonment in accordance with internal guidelines.

It has been revealed that prisoners are asked to sign all the pages of the record of investigation and admit the crime in the presence of the interrogator and a senior officer who makes the final decisions on the imprisonment, term of imprisonment and inform the prisoner of the decision. Often, however, prisoners are not even informed of the final decision and just carried off to the camp.

“Before I was sent to Yodok camp, someone came from SSA Headquarters and asked me to confirm my statement and ink my fingerprint on the document. That was my statement for self-criticism. The papers were this thick (10 cm). I was forced to fingerprint the entire statement page by page. Then, he told me, ‘don’t try to escape. Do good job there.’ About a week later, they gave me winter clothes, the clothes of other women in the cell as I did not have clothes for winter. Then, I was sent to Yodok camp (No.

15). Later, I learned from my family that they knew nothing about my fate.”
(A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“When they sent me to Yodok, there was no trial, absolutely nothing! Do you know what happened to me? The preliminary investigator gave me this much paper and told me to read it one day. When I was leaving, they told me to sign it. A few days later, I was taken to the office of the Bureau Chief. The chief and other senior officers came in and told me, ‘you, prisoner No. 00, stand up!’ I stood up. The Bureau Chief read my paper and said you were sentenced to three years in the high-security camp, including the two years for preliminary investigation. Therefore you were staying your last year at the Yodok Control Camp. His implication was that I should be grateful to him. Then, they took me to Yodok straight”
(A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

“In the evening of one day in 2003 my investigator told me, ‘You are going tomorrow.’ When I asked him, ‘Where am I going?’ He replied, ‘To spend three years at a high-security camp in order to clean up your brain. Then, you are going to be all right.’” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)”

“My investigator once told me that the investigation was almost over. He said, ‘someone from the Central Office will come. Just tell him what you have told me. If you start to tell him anything else, your stay here will be prolonged.’ Sometime later, a man from the Central Office dressed in civilian clothes came and showed me my papers and asked me if I confirmed the statement as true. The statement said that I intended to live in China. I said that I went to China intending to stay briefly, and then return to North Korea after finding the whereabouts of my mother. My proposed revision was accepted and I inked my fingerprint on all the pages.

There was no trial. One day, the cell guards told me, 'get ready! You are going now.' So, I obeyed him. I asked them where I was to go. They didn't tell me. Then I was taken to Yodok." (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

"When preliminary investigation was over, the investigation report was signed by Preliminary Investigation Section Chief and finally by Chief SSA officer. And finally, someone arrived from SSA Headquarters. He was coming from Pyongyang. He was so powerful that he could kill people if he wanted to. Prisoners' fate is dictated by his pen. He came for interview to confirm if I accept the conclusion. Then, he explained that the impact of my crime could adversely affect the careers of my brothers, sisters and parents and I should have been more careful. But he never told me about his final decision at that time. He told me to meet him again. On that day, we were stripped and put on new prison uniform. There were several prisoners at that time. We were called into the room one by one. When I was in the room, he told me that your crime was so serious against dear Comrade Kim Jong-il that 3 generations must be killed for your crime of betrayal of your fatherland. But at the merciful discretion of the party, you were ordered to re-educate yourself for two years. Be obedient there. Well, that's the end. In my times, maximum penalty was for 3 years. No one was ordered to stay more than three years." (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

However, it is only some of the prisoners of Yodok re-education camp who were informed of the prison term. In the absence of testimonies to the same effects from prisoners of any maximum security camp, no further confirmation is possible on this issue in case of prisoners of a maximum security camps.⁷⁷⁾

Trials were not attended by judges or lawyers in the process and some prisoners were informed of their prison term at a final round-up meeting with the interrogator and his superior officers.

On the other hand, there have been cases where a prisoner was informed of the imprisonment term bilaterally or sent to the camp right after arrest without any investigation. As reviewed in the above, some prisoners were asked to sign a statement and informed of the decision of imprisonment and its length. However, most families of the prisoners have been without the process of investigation and trial and have not been informed of the decision of imprisonment and its term at any time.

“Of course, there was no trial for me since I was innocent anyway. There was no trial or judicial proceeding of any kind---not once! Not even a rubber-stamp trial or a single visit by a lawyer or anything like that--even for my father who was the actual suspect! In the case of my father, they spent six months for the preliminary investigation and the final sentence was made by the police and the 2nd Economic Committee, not by a court of law. It was a political purge. Would you expect to have a lawyer or court action for a political punishment in North Korea? My father was deprived of his post and duty in the Party and was simply sent to a camp. That was the end of whole thing. We were not the exception and we came to learn that no prisoners in the camp had received any form of a fair trial.” (O Myong-o, former prisoners, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

77) Shin Dong-hyuk has been the only and officially recognized former prisoner from a maximum security camp to date but he is not in position to tell us about the arrest and imprisonment process because he was born in the camp.

Very rarely, there was a trial to inform the suspect of the verdict. It was confirmed that the function of trial was to confirm the verdict already informed. A lawyer was there to simply watch the process, not to defend the suspect.

“When I was tried, there were five guys, a lawyer, a prosecutor, a judge, the interrogator and a director from SSA. They read to me the conclusion of the investigation, signed the paper and passed a sentence. My family did not know that I was being sent to Yodok. Lawyer? I never saw him before. They made decision themselves. I never had any conversation with the lawyer and I thought it was funny. They forced me to admit what I have not done and to ink my fingerprint on the paper. They argued that I had complained that I found North Korea the difficult place to live under insufficient supply of electricity, compared with China. And they beat me for throwing away the home country of North Korea. I replied that I fell on the street in North Korea, would anyone help me up? I was cautioned to be careful with what I say. They told me not to speak to any one in North Korea about good life in foreign countries. The lawyer never tried to help me. Then, they passed a verdict...lawyer doing nothing and the other guys just sitting on chairs...” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“We were there for about a week or 15 days. Then, my father was tried. It was in 00 city, North Hamgyong Province,.. I was only a child, too young to attend it but my mother attended it.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

In some cases, defectors from North Korea were confused in the meeting with the interrogator and his superior officer. This is due to a general

lack of understanding of a trial by some North Koreans. Most North Koreans have little knowledge of the process of a trial attended by a judge, prosecutor, lawyer, plaintiff and defendant and, as a result, their understanding of a trial is at a very low level. Therefore, some prisoners say that they were tried, but in reality, it was not always a trial.

It has been revealed that prisoners are transferred to the camp by a vehicle of the organization that arrested and investigated the prisoner and, sometimes, by train.

“We were taken to the camp the next day of trial. The train service was poor. At the railway station, we took car for about 40 minutes with the escorting officer, a Park. There we took train for 3-4 days. The escorting officer returned after handing us over to an SSA officer from my hometown, who took us to the camp. We women prisoners had arms tied together. I arrived there in 2002, and I was released in 2004. When I arrived at the camp, a policeman frightened me by saying that I would never be released from the camp.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“I arrived at Yodok by train at night. We slept at a small government hotel that night. At 11 o’clock the next morning, An SSA officer arrived from the camp to take us to the camp. He did not have a car but found a car going to the camp and took us to the camp.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“After trial, my mother and father were both shackled and my father was also shackled. They tied my arm with my brother’s arm with a rope so that we could not run away. We were escorted by officers. We went some 12 hours by train. In North Korea, the train service was really poor. The

train was very slow and stopped many times for many hours. When we arrived at Toksong railway station, there had been a car waiting for us to take us to the camp. We were immediately taken to the car. It was a good coordination.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

Many prisoners in the political prison camps in North Korea were born in the camps. As such, they cannot provide information about the process of arrest, investigation, trial and transfer of prisoners. Therefore, new chapters may need to be added in future surveys of imprisonment of prisoners at political prison camps for the distinction between the offenders and their families and the extent of the application of the system of guilt-by-association.

“I was born in Camp No. 14 and grew up there. People call the place I was born and grew up in Camp No. 14, Kaechon. Most of the people in the camp when I was there were born there or had been there for a long time and they did not have any interest in the outside world. Simply, we follow rules and regulations of camp and perish when our life is exhausted.”⁷⁸⁾ (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“I was born at Toksong Camp. I was told that something was wrong with father and he was brought here shortly after his marriage with my mother. My father and mother were relocated to Sangdol-li, Toksong county, in 1982 and my brother and I were born in the camp. I don’t know whether my mother got pregnant in the camp or had been pregnant when she arrived at the camp.” (A25, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1982-1989)

78) Shin Dong-hyuk, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

With the exception of arrest and imprisonment together with families, the families of most prisoners were not informed of the imprisonment. There was a case where the prisoner was allowed to meet family before his transfer to the camp but this appears to be very rare.

“My family was not informed. The body guard unit I belonged to thought I was dead because the report from SSA was that I was dead. When I finished the Military Supply School and came to Pyongyang alive, they were all surprised.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“All political prisoners are forcefully divorced. They spare one of them. In my case, I was more like a civilian and the instruction was about the offender only. So, my wife was not arrested. (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“My family did not know that I was sent to a re-education camp.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“Families are not informed. The families may know that the prisoner will be sent away to some location but they do not know the destination. Then, families would try hard by borrowing money to send their child some provisions, such as socks. In my case, my parents sent me a pair of shoes and a pants I used to wear for work in the farm.”(A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“My family did not know anything. They knew when I was released from the Susong Prison. They said they looked for me all over while I was missing. My youngest brother found out first and telephoned to my sister.

She came for me with her husband. They all knew that I was imprisoned after I arrived home. My children did not know anything about the situations. They knew about it after my release. My family in other areas is still without any information. (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

Absence of notice from the related organization about the imprisonment of a prisoner renders the prisoner officially missing administratively, and causes the families to experience a great tragedy or to dissolve. It has been revealed that if a member of family is missing, it is generally believed that he or she is sent to a political prison camp and locating the whereabouts of the missing person is practically impossible.

5. Procedures for Imprisonment

1) Process of Imprisonment

A prisoner is transferred to the gate of a political prison camp by the SSA of the investigating organization and camp officers take him over at the gate from the escorting officers and imprison him in accordance with internal camp procedures.

“We arrived there by train. When we left the train at a nearby railway station, we were led to a small hotel. One of our arms was tied to a small desk inside, leaving us with the use of one arm only. We stayed there for about half a day until a coal truck arrived. We traveled for about three hours in the back of the truck, accompanied by a SSA officer, and arrived at the main guard post of Yodok Control Center. It was three or four o’clock in the afternoon. We continued by car and arrived at a SSA officers’ village and signed papers there. There was a wall in front of the guard post with a watch tower and guards. We passed four more guard posts in the next 30 minutes and observed walls and barbed wire. This was the Control Center in which I was to be detained.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

In case of Camp No. 15, a re-education camp in Yodok, some items of personal effects are not allowed inside the camp, in which case the items are left to the custody of the camp, and other items are allowed inside the camp. The prisoners are assigned to an orientation class for 3 days to a month before he or she is assigned to a work unit. No information is available on the procedures of imprisonment for any maximum security camp.

“For a month at the Orientation Class, I had plenty of food, side dishes and even bean-paste soup. We were very comfortable there, easy life and good food, and sometimes we were at work to uproot some grasses in the garden. Once, they searched us and inspected items of personal effects. All prisoners had their personal effects placed in front of them and another prisoner made up a list of all items. No confiscation of any items. They did not search our bodies. All personal effects, in fact, had already been authorized by SSA before imprisonment. SSA officers liked large quantity of items. The items in excess were kept at a store room. You carry your items with you to work units after orientation class and they keep your items in the store there. The chief in charge of the store room gives your item on request.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“The orientation class is for new prisoners. The papers about prisoners are already received by the camp authorities and the prisoners are detained in the bunk house of the class. The process was supervised by other prisoners. In the class, they asked all prisoners if he or she has any skill. The skilled workers are separated from the prisoners without any skill who are sent to farm-units. Strong and stout prisoners are sent to timber work sites. I was in the class for three days. I had some pieces of underwear, fatigue clothes and a pair of sneakers. Some strong new prisoners robbed me of those good items during the three days. I was in the bunk house for three days and someone came from the Company for me.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“On the way to Yodok, we passed through Hwasong. There we met people from Yanggang Province and a man by the name of Park 00 from 00 city. We went to Yodok together by car. At Hwasong, they released me from my restraints and allowed me to sit in the front seat of a truck. My family

arranged for an SSA officer who has close connection to a mine to bring me a blanket, clothing, soap, a toothbrush, toothpaste and food for two days. This SSA officer accompanied me to Hwasong. The next day, a senior SSA officer called three of us to his office, one by one. He told me to stay at the Control Center for two years and to maintain good behavior while there. He told others to stay three years. In reality, I was there for three years. I noted that no prisoners were being released after just two years. I concluded I would be there for three years. Detention for three years was a kind of standard. But there were some prisoners, with poor work records, who stayed there for five years.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

It has been found that there was little distinction by camp in the process of imprisonment in the political prison camps. However, reports on the same process for Camp No. 18 have shown some differences. Prisoners arrive in Camp No. 18 by truck or train without any information about their crime and destination. On arrival at the camp, they are assigned to a shelter, work unit and called to a village hall where they fill out a simple registration form and begin the life of the camp immediately. This is a noticeable distinction from the re-education zone of Camp No. 15 where all prisoners are subject to orientation class to prepare for life in the camp.

“I arrived there at night and I did not know this was a political prison camp. When we were inside the camp, we slept collectively. Some prisoners slept outside by a stream like refugees. I don’t know whether it was the policemen who selected prisoners to sleep under roof or without. May be it was because of my father who was a party member that we slept under roof. When we woke up the next morning, we found many people outside

sleeping by the stream. We were mobilized for a house construction project from the next day. We wove thin reed stems with a straw rope, mixed it with clay and that's all for house construction.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“Before we were on board a train at the Nampo railway station, policemen searched my body. He confiscated from me a knife, a small radio, other unusual items and pocket note-book. I never received them back on my release from the camp. We left train at Camp No. 18 at 2 o'clock in the morning. In the morning, we arrived at a shelter which looked like a pig pen. In fact, the shelter was already occupied by other prisoners and we were pushed into the house to be with the previous occupants. This was a situation of real hopelessness. We moved our personal effects into the shelter on my back and I started to work from the next day. The bad words and discrimination were beyond my imagination. Some prisoners who complained of hunger, hard life and bad conditions, were all carried away to Camp No. 14 by a black closed truck at 9 o'clock in the evening.” (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

“There was a camp administrative building before you reach Sohak area of the camp...Our car drove into the building at night and it was dark inside. Someone in the building talked bla bla with officers who escorted us. We waited there for about one hour or so. I mean inside the car...Then, we continued our way until we arrived at Kalkol area at around 10:30 the next morning. When we arrived, all the adults were out for work and we found small children only. We just arrived from Pyongyang and we must have looked so well-off to them with colorful clothing as the children there looked as dirty and wretched as beggars. The children spoke themselves in surprise pointing their fingers at us. We were like people from another planet to them. This was the beginning of my life in the camp. There was

no such thing as physical examination.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

The imprisonment procedures at Camp No. 23 were also as simple as they were in Camp No. 18. Grown-up prisoners would be assigned to a shelter on arrival and begin to work immediately and children had to be registered at school. It has been revealed that the offenders were subject to an ideology session at a labor training site to repent their crimes and prevent recurrences.

“At that time, there was a labor training site, not orientation class. There, we were given lectures on basic rules and why the prisoner was brought there. This was a place where the prisoner should be trained to repent the crime and not to repeat the same crime again. I did not attend the training because I was a child at that time. My mother attended something like that. And my father was separated from the family to attend the course for about a month. The training was all about admitting the charge against a prisoner and agreement to being punished for the crime against the state and commitment not to repeat the crime again. I was told that the training program takes place in the administration building. While he was away, we arrived at this village. They had already searched our bodies and house-hold effects at the 00 city SSA so they did not need to search us on arrival at the camp. After two days, my mother took me to school because we were told to report to school by a class chief of the school. After that, my mother began to work at an agricultural farm. Chief of a work unit in the farm came to our house to take my mother to work.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

The imprisonment procedures for Prison No. 25 differed from other

camps in some ways as this camp, unlike other camps, was like an ordinary prison where buildings were crowded in a small place.

“On arrival, the policeman took me to my cell. It was during day time and everyone was out for work. I was called out in about 30 minutes and an officer told me about rules and regulations, such as, what time to get up in the morning, and what not to do such as collective action and talking to another prisoner. Sometime later, other prisoners arrived for lunch. I had lunch with them and I was at work with them from afternoon. Everyone who arrived here within 3 months was in the orientation class. There were 3 work units, the oldest prisoners were in the 1st work unit and newest arrivals were in the 3rd work unit. I was assigned to the 3rd work unit. I was not searched here. There were no particular procedures for imprisonment. You just tell them from where you were at the time of arrival at the camp registration and they pass your record to dining room and they take you to your cell.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005).

2) Deprivation of Citizenship

The penalty of deprivation of suffrage, specified in Article 32, North Korean Criminal Law, signifies deprivation of suffrage for a certain period with respect to a criminal or criminals of anti-state or anti-Korean crimes. The court, when examining a case of anti-state or anti-Korean crimes, must examine the issue of deprivation of suffrage at the same time. The period of deprivation of suffrage may not exceed 5 years from the date of expiration of prison terms sentenced by the court. The prisoners imprisoned in a political prison camp may be classified under “anti-state or anti-Korean” crimes. Therefore, the prisoners may have their citizenship deprived or suspended.

In the case of prisoners in maximum security camps, their civil rights and citizenship are totally lost, while prisoners in re-education camps have their civil rights partially suspended. It has been found that the prisoners of re-education camps surrender their residence certificate to the camp authorities at the time of admission to the camp and retrieve it when they are released. In case of a member of the party, some prisoners surrender the party membership card to the camp authorities while others have retained the card during the period of imprisonment in the camp. In most cases, a prisoner is expelled from the party in case of imprisonment in the camp as an offender. It has been revealed that if a party member is imprisoned in a camp not as an offender, the person was able to retain party membership during the period of imprisonment. However, in the case of imprisonment of former SSA officers or policemen, percentage of expel from the party was considerably high.

“I was admitted to the Control Center as part of a group of seven. I kept my party membership card and it was not confiscated all the time I was there. But there were many prisoners who were deprived of their party membership cards. Of the seven prisoners detained under the same charge, some of them had their party membership cards confiscated and others did not. I do not know what constituted the difference. Those who were deprived of their party membership felt very depressed about it. Many former military personnel and former members of the SSA or police were mostly deprived of their party memberships and were badly treated.” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

Cases of retaining party membership during the period of detention seem to take place only in the re-education camp while prisoners of maximum

security camps are denied their citizenship as well as party membership. On the other hand, during the election in 1976 and 1980, prisoners in the camp participated in the elections, according to witness A05.

When imprisoned in the camp, they allowed me to keep my party membership card but my husband was deprived of his party membership card. Former position of the prisoner did not make any difference. We could not resist it and we did not know why they confiscated the card from my husband. They also confiscated my residence certificate. They gave me back the residence certificate when I was released. They kept my TV in their custody but they did not return it to me when I was released. I participated in the election in the camp. Of course, election is our duty.” (A05, former prisoners, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

Witness A15, who was a prisoner at Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, during the period 1984-1986, testified that they did not confiscate residence certificates in the camp.

“When I arrived in the camp, they did not deprive me of my citizenship. They kept my residence certificate card. Inside the camp, prisoners could perform duties as a party member and of other party organizations were also functioning. This camp was literally for re-education of prisoners. They meant that prisoners should continue to carry out their duty as a party member.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

It has been surveyed that the 2 camps, No. 15 and 18, are both re-education camps but differ in the treatment of prisoners on admission to the camp as the two camps are operated by different organizations.

Former prisoners in Camp No. 18 testify that they surrendered North Korean residence certificate to the camp authorities when they were admitted and received a new certificate. The new certificate shows blood type in a different color for distinction from regular certificates for other North Koreans. This is a feature that makes the camp distinctive from all other camps and, at the same time, makes it harder to classify Camp No. 18 as a political prison camp.

“The residents in the Control Center have new their citizenship cards that show blood type in black in the back corner of the card. The blood type is in red for the ordinary citizen’s card. When the prisoners are released, they receive new citizenship cards that shows blood type in red as in the ordinary card.” (O Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

It has been revealed that the prisoners in Camp No. 18 retain citizenship and carry a residence certificate. O Myong-o testifies that the prisoners in the camp receive a special certificate on arrival in exchange for an ordinary certificate on release. He added that the certificate they receive on release shows blood type in red as in all ordinary certificates.⁷⁹⁾ His testimony is supported by the witness, A20, former camp official of the Camp No. 18.

“Prisoners retain citizenship. They vote and carry a residence certificate that is somewhat distinctive from the ordinary certificate. The certificate issued by the camp shows blood type in black as against red in ordinary

79) Choi Jin-I, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

certificate. A glance at the certificate immediately shows whether or not the holder is a prisoner. The new certificate they receive on release shows the blood type in red. I don't know when this change started. Anyway, it was part of a national system.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

However, another witness, A17, a former prisoner, testifies that the prisoners in Pongchang area in the camp, where prisoners were under more strict control, did not carry any residence certificates. However, the witness, 0 Myong-o, was a prisoner in the same area and testifies that he had a residence certificate there. A17 was released in 1982 prior to the grand amnesty in 1991 while 0 Myong-o was imprisoned in 1994 when most prisoners had already been released from Camp No. 18, suggesting that changes may have occurred after 1991.

“We were prisoners alright but we all knew that the guys over there (Pongchang) were more serious offenders than us. They could not have pictures of the leaders at home because they did not have citizenship...we could see their shelters at distance, so awful and rundown. The roofs of their shelters were of thin reeds which covered the space like a tent.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

Table 2-6 Imprisonment Process of Prisoners

Location		Witness by Gender	Crime	Location of Preliminary Investigation	Length of Preliminary Investigation	Trial or Not	Imprisonment Term	Family Informed or Not
Camp No. 14 (Kaecheon, South Pyongan)		Shin Dong-hyuk, Male	Guilt-by-association (family's defection to South Korea)	N/A (born in the political prison camp)	—	—	Entire lifetime	Entire family arrested
		Kim Yong (male)	Document forgery	Maram Hotel (Pyongyang)	4 months	X	Entire lifetime	Entire family arrested
Camp No. 15 (Yodok, South Hamgyong)	Ipsok	A05 (female)	Guilt-by-association	No investigation	—	X	3 years	Entire family arrested
		A11 (female)	Guilt-by-association	No investigation	—	X	3 years	Entire family arrested
	Taesuk	A12 (male)	Attempt to cross border	SSA, City SSA	5 months	X	3 years	Unknown
		A10 (male)	Traitor and spying for USSR	8th Bureau, Preliminary Investigation Department	18 months	X	3 years	X
		Lee Young-guk (male)	Attempt to surrender to South Korea	SSA	4 months	X	Unknown	X
	Sorimchon	A13 (female)	Attempt to surrender to South Korea	County SSA	4 months	X	2 years	O
		A14 (female)	Attempt to surrender to South Korea	City SSA Provincial SSA	7 months	O	Unknown	X
		A04 (female)	Attempt to surrender to South Korea	City SSA	2 months	X	3 years	X

Location		Witness by Gender	Crime	Location of Preliminary Investigation	Length of Preliminary Investigation	Trial or Not	Imprisonment Term	Family Informed or Not
Camp No. 15 (Yodok, South Hamgyong)	Sorimchon	A06 (female)	Attempt to surrender to South Korea	County SSA	4 months	X	3 years	O
	Kuwap-ni	A15 (male)	Illegal border crossing	Provincial SSA	6 months	X	2 years	X
		Kang Cheol-hwan (male)	Guilt-by-association (spy charge against grandfather)	No Investigation	—	X	Unknown	Entire family arrested
		Kim Yong-sun (female)	Leaking information about the family of Kim Jong-il	SSA Hotel (Pyongyang)	2 months	X	Unknown	Entire family arrested
Camp 17 (Toksong, South Hamgyon)		A16 (female)	Guilt-by-association (unknown)	No investigation	—	X	Unknown	Entire family arrested
Camp 18 (Pukchang, South Pyongan)	Tuchang area	A17 (male)	Guilt-by-association (embezzlement of state property by father)	No investigation	—	X	Unknown	X
		A18 (male)	Guilt-by-association (adulteration of socialist culture)	No investigation	—	X	Unknown	X
		A01 (female)	Guilt-by-association (expression of political views by grandfather)	N/A(Born in political prison camps)	—	—	Unknown	Entire family arrested
		A19 (male)	Document Forgery (untrue)	No investigation	—	X	Unknown	Entire family arrested

Location		Witness by Gender	Crime	Location of Preliminary Investigation	Length of Preliminary Investigation	Trial or Not	Imprisonment Term	Family Informed or Not
Camp 18 (Pukchang, South Pyongan)	Re-revolutionizing residence	Kang Myong-do (male)	Unauthorized contact with foreigners (victimized by internal power struggle)	Organization Department, General Politics Bureau	unknown	X	3 years	Unknown
	Pongchang-ni	A09 (female)	Guilt-by-association (grandfather defected to South Korea)	No investigation	—	X	Unknown	Entire family arrested
		0 Myong-o (male)	Guilt-by-association (father's failure to attend a party meeting)	No investigation	—	X	Unknown	Entire family arrested
Camp 23 (Toksong, South Hamgyong)	A23 (female)	Guilt-by-association (embezzlement of state property and a case of adultery by father)	No investigation	—	O	Unknown	O	
	A24 (female)	Guilt-by-association (embezzlement of state property by father)	No investigation	—	O	Unknown	O	
	A25 (female)	Guilt-by-association (precise reason unknown)	N/A (born in political prison camp)	—	X	Unknown	Entire family arrested	
	A26 (female)	Guilt-by-association (embezzlement of state property by father)	No investigation	—	X	Unknown	Entire family arrested	
Camp 25 (Chongjin, North Hamgyong)	A27 (female)	Embezzlement of State Property	County Police	—	O	—	X	

6. Sentence and Imprisonment Term

Since most political prison camps in North Korea are maximum security camps for life, term of imprisonment is meaningless. It has been revealed that only in those two re-education camps, No. 15 and 18, were prisoners under prison terms. However, the survey confirmed that most prisoners imprisoned in Camp No. 15 arrived in the camp without knowledge of their prison terms. Most prisoners under relatively short prison terms of about 3 years were aware of their prison terms but prisoners under long prison terms spent their years in the camp without any knowledge of their prison terms.

“After about a year in the camp, I learned that my prison term was for one year. But nobody told me about it and, in the meantime, I thought my term was for 15 years.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“In case of re-education camps, imprisonment term of 3 years is a kind of standard but there were prisoners who were there for 7 years. Generally, most prisoners serve their term of 1–7 years.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Well, there is no fixed term of imprisonment and no one tells you about it. You may be released in 3 years, 5 years or 10 years on the basis of record of your performance. They do not announce prison terms of prisoners. On Kim Il-sung’s birthday, they announce names of prisoners to be released. Their records were reviewed by the party organizations before the announcement. The announcement start with the phrases, “...In kind consideration of Comrade Kim Il-sung...” Until names are announced,

no prisoners know how long they should continue to stay there.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

It has been surveyed that most individual prisoners imprisoned in the re-education camp at Yodok were under a prison term of 3 years and, on expiration of the term, released. It was reported that the family prisoners or those prisoners who had not been informed of their prison term were imprisoned for an extended period of time over 3 years. It was also found that prison terms were extended by one year or so in cases of violation of camp rules.

“By principle, families are not informed of imprisonment of prisoners. One woman was in the camp for about a month when another prisoner was being released. She asked him to give her family a letter saying that she is alive and alright. The prisoner in the process of release informed the camp authorities of her request. So, her term was extended by one year. In March of the same year, she was told to report to the office, with a man and woman. she was told that their prison terms were extended. The man and woman were sent to prison cell for further investigation. They had the letter she has written to her parents and they did not have anything for further investigation. So, her case was completed with the result of her prison term extended by one year.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“They were factionalists. A regulation says that speaking with factionalists is an offense to be punished. For example, if I speak with them, my prison term will be extended by one year. So, we did not speak with them.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

It seems that offenders of less serious crime are sent to the Camp No. 15 at Yodok, for 3 years without family while offenders of more serious crime are imprisoned with families for an extended period of time, a situation almost similar to the practice in Camp No. 18.

7. Procedures for Release, and Escape

The procedure for release, as in the case of the procedure for imprisonment in the camp, has not been legally specified. Therefore, testimonies by former prisoners, SSA camp officers and guards have been analyzed to obtain information about the procedures for release and cases of escape.

Of all political prison camps, prisoners are officially released only from the re-education camp No. 15, Yodok. Therefore, testimonies about the Camp No. 15 have been analyzed, including testimonies of former prisoners from the Camp No. 18, as necessary. It is known that a number of attempts were made to escape from the camps and the case of success is extremely rare. Of those former prisoners who escaped from the camp successfully and arrived in South Korea, Shin Dong-hyuk from Camp No. 14 is the only one in South Korea. Naturally, information about the process of escape from the camp is greatly limited in this book.

1) Procedures of Release in the Re-education Camps

Information of the release procedures is applicable only for re-education camps, not for maximum security camps. Today, there are two re-education camps, one at Camp No. 15 and the other one that appears to be part of Camp No. 18, Pukchang.

The re-education zone of Camp No. 15 is located in the areas of Ipsok-ni, Taesuk-ni, Sorimchon and Kuwup-ni and prisoners in the zone are released on expiration of their prison terms⁸⁰⁾ to other areas or have

80) In North Korea, release of prisoners from re-education camp to society is called

their status renewed in the same location in case of Camp No. 18. Further observation reveals that there are two different cases of release, individual release or collective release of prisoners in the entire area.

(1) Individual Release

A prisoner is released individually from the re-education camp on examination of the performance record. In case of Camp No. 15, Yodok, it appears that prisoners whose prison terms have expired are individually examined and released unless impediment is found. On the other hand, it seems that limited release of the long-term prisoners whose prison terms have not been specified is decided in consideration of their family background and social status, self-criticism statement of the crime and record of performance during the period of imprisonment in the camp. Release of prisoners is announced on a particular date in the year and prisoners are released after signing an affidavit to the effect that they will not disclose the secret of the political prison camp. They are released to their hometown or to a specified area.

It is general practice that the families are also released at the same time with the offender.

“We were interviewed by someone from the headquarters of the Control Center when we were released. Then, we signed a statement at the SSA

“cancellation.” It appears that they use the term “cancellation” because their release was not automatic on expiration of prison term, but rather a political decision in consideration of the length of imprisonment in the camp, type of crime, performance while in the camp, extent of self-criticism, background and social status of the family. Therefore, “cancellation” may imply that the condition of detention has now been cancelled.

sub-station. The statement was to the effect that I would not disclose anything I witnessed or heard in the camp, nor the location of the camp nor any of the people I had met in the camp. My travel pass and food ration coupon issued on release stated that I was a worker at Military Unit. No. so-and-so.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“The Chief Political Officer of the SSA came up to us. When he approached, I guessed someone was going to be released. When he arrived, all the prisoners scheduled for release were assembled at an administrative office and the prisoners were asked to sign an affidavit promising that they would not speak to anyone outside about the Control Center. We inked our fingerprints on the affidavit. Then, normally, he would tell the prisoners when they were to be released, for example, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. We suddenly became a member of mainstream society when we inked our fingerprints to the affidavit. We stopped working and freely walked around. Normally, prisoners are released first thing the next morning. When I was released, I was released with a woman from 00 Province. Her name was 00. She was young. I used to see this young girl at work. She was there for two years. The two persons detained with me at the camp were not released at that time. One of them had her detention term extended by one year. I don’t know what happened to the other woman by the name of 00” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“In 1987, it was generally understood that, under the guise of interviews, secret investigations were actively being carried out to detect further information about families of Koreans from Japan. Everybody was cautious when speaking and the dread of further punishment was widespread in the villages where Koreans from Japan were detained. My grandmother had

a long interview with an SSA officer, during which time she had to answer so many questions about her family. Questions probed who her relatives were in Japan, what kinds of business they were engaged in, which town in Korea her family originated from, when they emigrated to Japan and etc. One day we were told to be neatly dressed up and to assemble in the hall of Work Unit No. 1 at 8 o'clock in the morning on the 26th of February, the birthday of Kim Jong-il. At the meeting, names of prisoners were announced to be released under the kind benevolence of the beloved leaders. At that time, the names of Song Ok-son and her four family members were announced for release. Ten long years of detention were coming to an end. We fingerprinted in ink an affidavit prepared by the SSA agreeing that we would not disclose the secrets of the camp and would accept the consequence of re-arrest if we failed to abide by this solemn pledge of silence. We were given residents' certificates and passed through the iron gate, then the main gate in a car.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

It has been revealed that the statement in the affidavit prisoners are asked to sign when they are released was somewhat different by prisoners. The affidavit for prisoners, in general, read to the effect that they will not disclose any information about the camp to anyone. In case of prisoners with special background like Lee Young-guk⁸¹), the contents of the affidavit was much more in detail.

“If a release is approved, the release is announced in the village hall and the prisoner to be released is asked to sign an affidavit at a sub-office of SSA. The affidavit is to the effect that I will be an obedient member

81) Lee Young-guk was a bodyguard of Kim Jong-il.

of the society, remain faithful to Kim Jong-il, keep it absolute secret of what I witnessed to in the camp, never be revenged on SSA agents, that if I should attempt to go to South Korea again, I as well as my entire family will be treated as traitors and I accept to be shot for violating any part of the affidavit. After signing the affidavit, an SSA officer arrived from my home town to take me home.” (Lee Young-guk, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

Primarily, timing of release is determined on the basis of prison term of the prisoners concerned once or twice a year in consideration of work target of the camp and special holidays. Prisoners are released on a day during off-farming season; the birthdays of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il are favored for amnesties.

“For release, the release announcement meetings for the largest number of prisoners are held on 10 October and prisoners are also released on 15 April and on 16 February. We saw some individual prisoners released on 15 April and going home. The most important day is 10 October. February is spring and prisoners are released but not in large number because it is peak farm season. You need a large number of prisoners for farm work in summer. 10 October is favored because harvest work is over. The average of 70-80 prisoners were released a year but new prisoners arrived in larger number, say 100-120 prisoners a year. That’s why prisoner population was increasing in the camp.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

It has been revealed that prisoners are not informed of the release in advance. The release is announced at an assembly of prisoners (release announcement meeting) on the day of release or shortly before the release.

“I think there were approximately five or six families being released at the same time as mine. They were all from different places. I remember that there were two families, including my family, from Pyongyang and the others were from other areas. The release takes place once a year and all the prisoners whose detention term has expired are assembled at one location. No explanation was given as to why we were assembled. When we were there, they called our names, one by one, and we began to realize that we were undergoing the release process. They simply told us, ‘you are going out tomorrow.’ The assembly for release was not frequent. The next day, a truck arrived for us and our bags. I left the place after signing a paper saying that I would never speak about the camp once I was outside.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsonk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“In January, 1979, I was told to pack up my belongings all of a sudden. I was confused for a moment and struggled to comprehend what the ‘packing up’ was referring to. At the same time and almost immediately, I sensed that maybe I was to be released. I thought I was not going to be executed and then what should I be afraid of? Including the period of investigation, I was detained for nine years and several months altogether. I was not worried about being sent to another location because the camp at Yongpyong-ni, in which I was detained, was the worst of the camps. All our family signed the affidavit with tears in their eyes and used all ten fingers to ink the affidavit.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“In 1997, a car pulled in and prisoner-in-chief of the bunkhouse told me you are now going home because you have done good job here. I said good-bye to everyone and took the truck. I was the only passenger.” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

“We were told to assemble on 10 October. No one knows whether or not he or she will be released. Your prison term does not matter much. You find out at the meeting whether you have to stay there longer or not. When names are pronounced in the meeting, that’s when you know you are released. If your name is called, then, you are released. Then, in the evening, you are called to administration office and SSA office to sign an affidavit that you are not going to tell anyone about the camp, you will be punished for violation of the affidavit in accordance with some law and some articles in the law. You read and finger-print it. Then, they preach you. After that, chief of administration unit gave me a card certifying that I was a laborer at Military Unit No. 0000. I was told to tell people that I was a worker at a military unit so and so, not that I was a prisoner at a political prison camp. Chief of young workers’ union committee also preached me to be obedient member of society and something like this.”
(A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

When released after the release announcement meeting, released prisoners may go back to their hometowns individually, or SSA officers escort the prisoner or an SSA officer may come from the hometown to the camp to accompany the prisoner.

“After the release announcement meeting, a camp official told me that I was going to Tanchon. Normally, they do not tell released prisoners their destination. But he told me my destination because I was in good term with him. I was not alone. There were over 15 released prisoners going to Tanchon. We were escorted to the Labor Section of the Tanchon City Government. We were not fettered or anything like that. We signed affidavit again in Tanchon. Then, they took us to a waiting room. We did not have any work to do and we had easy time there, washing our clothes and etc.

One evening, they took us to Kumya.” (A15, former prisoners, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“I was released for being good at farm work. At that time, everybody was there and they asked me to come forward. Then, they told me that I was to be released thanks to kind consideration of Comrade Supreme Commander. I was surprised. As they assembled all of us, I thought it was for another public execution or something. But I found organization secretary of my work unit approaching. I burst into tears. I came home...I did not know when I was to be released. I was told that I was released and I left the camp, as simple as that. Release procedures? We didn't know. When I was told to come forward, I thought why they would kill me when I committed no faults. I was in the camp for about a week after the release announcement. My hometown, Musan, was far away and there was no railway. Soldiers arrived to escort me. I was to be sent to my hometown under my release instruction. Two men arrived from Musan City SSA to escort me to Musan.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“The release procedures were as follows: My new residence certificate said I was a worker of the Military Unit 10410. I took the oath, by that I mean I fingerprinted in ink on the paper. They gave my escort officer necessary papers. I was accompanied by my escort officers. The papers were all SSA papers and the papers must be provided to political chief. Another word, the former prisoner and his papers are transferred to the authorities of your hometown, paper and person together. The papers include food ration authorization, party membership certificate, if you are a party member, a travel pass and authorization to take up a residence. The other records about me were secret.” (A13, former prisoners, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“I worked until the day I was released. The SSA officers escorted me with food. The SSA officers simply passed all the necessary certificates over to the provincial authorities. A certificate said I was a worker of the Korean People’s Guard Unit No. so and so. There were some numbers and I don’t remember them now. They showed me the certificate briefly and immediately kept it back from me so how could I remember them?” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

It has been revealed that the release procedures of Camp No. 18 are basically the same as Camp No. 15 with some exceptions. Unlike the camps under the control of the SSA, there was a set of release procedures for prisoners in Camp No. 18. However, prisoners in the camp had no fixed prison term as in Camp No. 15 and most prisoners there were without knowledge of their prison terms.

“The Police were responsible for the release of prisoners. As a first step, they examine whether you have been a good worker or not and confirm that you are third generation from the offender. Recommendation for a release must be prepared by the camp authorities for approval by police chief, party chief of politics, chairman of the party committee, chief administrator of the camp, and the party secretary in charge of you and submitted to the Prison Bureau of the National Police Ministry for final approval.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, Pongchang-ni, 1989-2006.)

“There is no such thing as a prison term and prisoners are not precisely informed of their prison term. It can be 3 years or 5 years depending on prisoners’ performance in the camp. The maximum prison term is about 10 years. Prisoners’ prison terms were never officially announced.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang area, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

A small number of prisoners are released on the basis of their performance record on national holidays such as 16 February and 15 April.

“On Kim Il-sung’s birthday, names of prisoners to be released are announced in a speech starting with a phrase, ‘...in kind consideration of Comrade Kim Il-sung.’ No one knows how long he or she has to stay in the camp.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

After announcement, the released prisoners visit the camp office or have police officers visit their homes to have an affidavit signed by the prisoner to the effect that the prisoner would not disclose any information about the camp. The following testimony by A09, a former prisoner, describes the procedures of release in detail.

“I was released after the year 2000 and became a free man. In fact, I should have been released when my father died. But, this did not happen and I wasted my life there for over 20 years. I was in Camp No. 18 for almost 30 years and the number of prisoners released increased in 2000s. In 1990s, prisoners were released on 16 February and 15 April, twice a year. I tried very hard to get released on these days and bribed the Director of Administration with a pig and made a lot of efforts. It is a widespread practice to bribe camp officials to be released. Even when a prisoner is released, he may not be authorized to return to hometown and ordered to be a farmer or worker at another area.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“Prisoners are released on 16 February, 15 April and the anniversary of 27 July. For those prisoners to be released on 16 February, for example, a list of 2-6 selected prisoners arrives in the camp office in envelope from

a higher office in November of the preceding year for comments by immediate supervisors on the basis of performance records of the prisoners. The immediate supervisors of the selected prisoners will submit their comments to the administration committee of the control center. Cases of the selected prisoners and entire family, if a family is selected, are reviewed by the committee. On 15 February, all the selected prisoners are assembled in the cultural hall. The selected prisoners take seats in front and approximately 250-300 prisoners watch the release process from seats behind. This seating arrangement is such for the purpose of showing other prisoners that release is possible for them, too, if they obey camp officials faithfully and be good.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“Before the camp meeting begins, the camp officials make sure that the number of families to be released has been checked and is correct. When the meeting begins, the Administrative Director, Senior Secretary of Party Committee and the Security Director take their seats on the stage. Then the presiding officer reads the good performance reports of prisoners scheduled to be released, creating the impression that the prisoners will be released on the basis of good performance and due to the beneficence of the leader. Three prisoners scheduled for release, with the worst social background, are selected for speaking onstage. Then the camp meeting proceeds with three prisoners, selected from the group of prisoners not being released on the day, to come up to the platform for a separate session. After that, prisoners not on the release list are ordered to leave the meeting room, leaving only the prisoners soon to be released behind. These prisoners are compelled to swear that they will not leak any information related to the Control Center to their relatives and outsiders after release. Only when this pledge is extracted is the camp meeting brought to a close. However, they are not sent to their homes directly after

this meeting. Instead, they are forced to do some work at a mine and help miners. The following day the prisoners must go through a ritual of cordially offering a bouquet of flowers in front of a Kim Il-sung's portrait, then, offer a bribe to the camp official in their respective unit office.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

Unlike Camp No. 15, Yodok, the released prisoners from Camp No. 18 quite often stay in the same location with other prisoners after release. In case of Camp No. 15, prisoners leave the camp and return to their hometown or are sent to elsewhere in other areas. In case of Camp No. 18, however, some prisoners leave the camp on release but, very frequently, the prisoners stay in the same location in the camp with other prisoners or in areas near the camp after release and obtaining a new status. As explained by the testimony of A09, Camp No. 18 appears to be like an ordinary villages in terms of mode of living and organizational activities with the exception that administrative control is much stronger and work harder than other villages in North Korea.

Cases of releases from Camp No. 23, another camp under the control of the Police, have also been reported. Whether or not prisoners are released also from other camps operated by SSA have not been confirmed due to lack of information. However, it seems that prisoners are released only from Camp No. 15, Yodok, a re-education SSA camp.

No great distinctiveness is noted between the two camp No. 23 and 18 in terms of release and procedures of release. Further details of the procedures of release of Camp No. 23 are as follows:

“No one knows his or her prison term in the camp. The camp is a place

of no hope. We were released in 1998. My father was informed of our release in the camp office and came home to tell us that we would be going out of the valley the next day. The next day, a military jeep arrived for us with SSA officers in plain clothes and allowed us to leave but without any personal effects. They searched our bodies thoroughly before they allowed us to leave the camp. They moved their hands all over our bodies to make it sure that we don't take anything from the camp. My father had to take an oath that we would keep everything in the camp secret and would accept to be killed in case of violation of the oath. My mother was not asked to make the same oath. My father finger printed it and we passed guard posts by car. They took us to the railway station at Toksong and left us there without any money. My mother telephoned her relative who came to meet us.” (A23, former prisoners, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“We were imprisoned in the camp in 1976 and until the winter of 1986. We came to our hometown under the new policy of Kim Il-sung. One evening, my father came home from an evening meeting and told us that we are going hometown under a new policy. So, we came back to our home village in winter.” (A26, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1986)

(2) Collective Release

In re-education camps in North Korea, prisoners are released individually or by families. However, it has been revealed that in special cases prisoners are released collectively when a particular area or sector is entirely closed. In case of relocation of a camp or transfer of prisoners in large numbers, a substantial number of prisoners are released at the same time and allowed to return to their home town or to settle down in the same location.

It appears that large numbers of prisoners are released to reduce the number of prisoners to be transferred in case of camp relocation and to secure labor force to keep the mines and other important facilities in operation after the closure of the camp concerned.

It also appears that collective releases and settlement of prisoners in another area in the society began in the 1980s. Witness A18 testifies that, at the time of closure of Camp No. 17 in 1983, 320 families were released collectively from Camp No. 18 and relocated in the area of closed Camp No. 17 to keep the Toksong Mine there in operation. In fact, the released prisoners continued the same hard work together with the same fellow prisoners, and a life is similar to prisoner in the prison camp.

“After release, we, 320 families, were not allowed to return to our former residence but brought to Cholsan. It was said that Kim Il-sung, sometime in October, 1983, entrusted the Police to produce iron ore at Camp No. 17 and also ordered to return the Toksong Iron Ore Mine to the society at a meeting of Metallic Industry Committee Meeting. Then, the authorities expedited making necessary arrangements. And we were brought there from Camp No. 18. We were released because it was part of national program. Otherwise, release of prisoners was unthinkable...We worked at the Toksong mine and it was continuation of prisoners’ life in Camp 18 as before, and all released prisoners lived a life of prisoners and the prisoners released from Camp No 17 were also there with us. All trouble makers were brought here. This was how Toksong mine restored normal operation.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“I was told that Camp No. 19 was closed in the 1990s because there were too many prison camps and camps were split to make prisons. In 1990,

under the guideline of Kim Il-Sung, political prisoners with satisfactory performance were released to be ordinary workers.” (A21, family of former camp officer, Camp No. 19, 1984-1990)

“In 1984, Camp No. 17 was totally closed and all the prisoners there came to Camp No. 18. It took a month for all the prisoners to move by train. At that time, villagers remained there and some 10% of the prisoners were released and so they did not need to move. At the time of relocation, they took all equipment to Tukchang, Camp No. 18, such machines as rock drills and excavators. Prisoners, policemen and their families all moved to Camp No. 18.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984 and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

Shin Dong-hyuk testifies that Camp No. 14, from which he successfully escaped, was located in the areas of Kaechon and Pongchang until 1983 when the existing Kaechon Camp was relocated in areas upstream and a new Camp No. 18 was founded in the old site of Camp No. 14 that was under the control of the national police. At that time, it appears that most prisoners of Camp No. 14 moved to the new camp area upstream of the river and, during the process, many prisoners were released or remained in the same area which, then, became new Camp No. 18.⁸²⁾ The testimony of A01 that many prisoners were released coincides with this period.

“Many prisoners have been released since 1984. There were some changes since that time. I don’t know who made the difference. In 1991, all prisoners were released at my camp and new prisoners arrived from

82) Dong-hyuk Shin, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

Pongchang. If a house became vacant in my camp, then a new prisoner, favored by authorities, arrived to take the house. If not favored at Camp No. 18, the prisoner was sent to Pongchang. And then, from 1991, the released prisoners were sent back to Pongchang when they committed a crime again. At that time, those prisoners of less severe crimes were authorized to meet their relatives. Those prisoners of more serious crimes were all sent to Pongchang.” (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1972-1984)

Camp No. 18, Pukchang, was closed during the period 1991-1995 by entire sector and serious offenders were transferred to Pongchang area during the process. On the other hand, prisoners with good family backgrounds were transferred to Camp No. 18 from Pongchang area. It indicates that there were major changes in Camp No. 18 in terms of re-organization of camp in 1991 and there were exchange and transfer of prisoners between camps. In particular, it has been revealed that Camp No. 18 was totally closed in around 2006 with the exception of a very small number of prisoners who were transferred towards a location in the direction of Kaechon. It appears that prisoners were gradually released from Camp No. 18, Pukchang, in the 2000s.

In the course of closure of Camp No. 18, prisoners were released individually or collectively by entire sector while some prisoners with serious criminal records were sent to other areas where control is stricter. Released prisoners included the prisoners whose prison terms expired or whose good performance was a model for other prisoners.

2) Release Procedures of Maximum Security Camps

It is believed that no prisoners are released from any political prison camps in North Korea all of which are maximum security camps with the only exception being the re-education zone of Camp No. 15, Yodok. As such, testimony about the maximum security camps is extremely rare and information is greatly limited on the procedures of release in those camps. Some testimonies available on the maximum security camps are as follows:

“No one is ever released alive from any maximum security camps in North Korea. Kim Chang-bom, former Minister of National Defense of North Korea, was detained at Camp No. 22 for the crime of unsuccessful attempt on the life of Kim Il-sung. He was stabbed to death in 1989 in the train on his way to meet Kim Il-sung at the invitation of Kim Il-sung. This is only prisoner who left the camp alive even though he was eventually murdered outside the camp. Like this, there is no prison term and all prisoners are detained there until their death. The dead bodies are brought to the shaft No. 3 where only one cargo coach could move in. Once a month, some 20-50 dead bodies are placed at the bottom of the cargo coach, covered by coal to be sent to the power plant in Chongjin for burning coal together with the dead bodies in a melting furnace. So, you don't find any tombs in the camp. This is why no one knows what happens to the dead bodies of prisoners. All cargo coaches are thoroughly searched with hooks so that no one escapes by train. But this cargo coach carrying dead bodies at the bottom is never inspected. It is common knowledge for everyone in the camp that no one leaves the camp alive.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“The purpose of the Control Center is to detain prisoners for life. Once admitted, no one can leave it. It is a secret area where no one can enter or leave.” (A02, family of former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1994)

Some former prisoners testify that they were released from a maximum security camp to be detained at a re-education camp. Kim Yong alleges that he was a prisoner at Camp No. 14, Kaechon, a maximum security camp, and transferred to Camp No. 18, Pukchang, a re-education camp. This is not a case of release to society from a maximum security camp. Rather, this appears to be a case of prisoners’ transfer from maximum to re-education camp.

“One day in October, 1995, he was called by the SSA officer in charge. He was extremely terrified by the possibility of punishment for a crime he was not aware of...What a surprise! The SSA officer dictated him to write down, “I will not disclose anything I saw and heard at Camp No. 14 and, in case of violation of this oath, I would be gladly dragged like a dog and executed.” He was told to put the fingerprint on the statement. The SSA officer told him that he would be transferred to Camp No. 18 today at the merciful decision of General Kim Jong-il and should be a good prisoner at Camp No. 18. He was taken straight to Camp No. 18 by car. He became a prisoner at Camp No. 18 when the escorting SSA officer presented all the papers about him to the authorities of Camp No. 18. He was assigned to excavation unit at the Yongdung shaft. After 15 days here, he was called again.”⁸³⁾ (quotation by Kim Yong-sam from Kim Yong, former prisoner Camp No. 14 and 18, 1993-1998)

83) Yong-sam Kim, “Inside Camp No. 14, North Korea’s Auschwitz, Record in Blood of the Crime of Human Extermination,” *Monthly Chosun*, May Issue (Seoul: Chosun News Press, 2000), pp. 332-334.

3) Escape from Prison Camps

Attempted escapes from prison camps are a very serious matter risking life, but, nevertheless, occur occasionally. Attempts are made by some prisoners to escape from the camp at the risk of being caught and executed, rather than living a life of a slave. It has been reported that barbed wires and walls installed one over another internally and externally, guards on regular patrol, the system of prisoners watching other prisoners and informants have made escape almost impossible. Without exception, unsuccessful cases of escape were always publicly executed in front of all the prisoners, as a warning to others

“Escape is practically impossible due to the strict system of control and punishment of families without help of SSA officers or guards. If a prisoner is missing, entire camp site is searched for one week to see if the prisoner committed suicide by jumping off from a cliff or drowned in river. The internal search effort will continue for 15 days. Entire Prison Bureaus in North Korea are alarmed for 5 days after 15 days of suspected escape. Nationwide search will be launched after 20 days. Photos of the missing prisoner and information about his appearance are distributed nationwide.”⁸⁴⁾ (Kim Yong, former prisoner, Camp No. 14 and 18, 1993-1998)

Rare as it may be, cases of successful escape from prison camps through impenetrable security system are reported. Shin Dong-hyuk, in particular, was dramatically successful in escaping from the maximum security camp of Kaechon, Camp No. 14, through electrified barbed wire while

84) Yong-sam Kim, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

sacrificing a fellow prisoner who attempted to escape together. Taking into consideration this successful case of attempted escape from a camp, it is believed some successful escapees are still at large in North Korea and elsewhere.

“There were two prisoners who ran away from Camp No. 13 in the year of 00. While the prisoners were at work in the downtown area of Chongsong, two of them escaped.” (A08, former SSA camp officer, Camp No. 12, 13, 1965-1992)

“The barbed wire wall in front of us had 7 or 8 lines at the interval of 30 cm from the bottom. We ran into the space between the first and second barbed wire walls. I slipped and fell on the slippery patrol path when my fellow prisoner passed me. I had rapidly reached out the other side of barbed wire with my hand and pushed my body between first and second barbed wire when I felt a piercing pain at the bottom of my foot and I almost fainted when my two legs were electrified. By instinct, nevertheless, I pushed myself forward. It was a success. But when I looked back, I saw my friend electrified and hanging over barbed wire. It appears that when I fell at the patrol path, he passed me and attempted to jump through the wire before me but was electrified and his body was hanging over the wire and pushing down a wire opening a space for me to pass through. My legs were bleeding from the electric shock from the wire but I did not have time to look after my wound. There was no way I could help my friend hanging over a barbed wire. Outside the barbed wire, was a downhill. I ran downhill in all my strength without looking back.”⁸⁵⁾ (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

85) Dong-hyuk Shin, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-280.

8. Life after Release

1) Residence and Employment after Release

Most prisoners who were released from political prison camps return to their hometown (former residence) or family. But they are not accepted by their former employer and experience difficulty in finding a job because of their record of imprisonment in a political prison camp.

“Yes, I received my party membership card when I was released. Nevertheless, I was rejected. Literally, I was prevented from receiving help, finding a job for living. I was always under police surveillance and interference. They never gave me any job. I was forced to give up all hope. I used to be nice to my friends and they helped me in return so that I could survive.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“I lived in my hometown after release. But, I was not able to return to my old job. I just stayed home with my children. Many factories had been bankrupt. They had bad impression on me because of my record of imprisonment in a political prison camp and defection to China. So, I had to simply stay home. No one wanted to accept me because of the bad record about me. I wanted to cultivate land with my children in the countryside. This is North Korean ways and systems. There was no room for me. They never said this but, in fact, they were pointing to me...” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“After I was released from the camp, I came to my sister’s home in North Hamgyong Province. I helped with bakery business. There were rumors

about me that I have been to South Korea or my aunt has been to South Korea. My brother and sister may have had difficult time because of such rumors about me.” (A13, former prisoners, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“In winter, I returned to my old village but lived in another house.” (A26, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1986)

There were cases of collective settlement by former prisoners in another area. It seems that prisoners are often collectively sent to locations of mines or factories in need of workers.

“It was at dawn when we arrived in Kumya railway station in a closed truck. One officer followed us to the Labor Section, Tanchon City People’s Committee. He carried a bag containing documents. He never told us where we were going. We were in car and sometime later we found ourselves in the Administrative Committee of Tanchon city. We left the car and walked into the building and the escorting officer presented to the supply and distribution officer the documents about us. There, we were given job. We were of 00 number and all of us were assigned to Tongam Mine collectively. It was difficult to move to another place from the mine.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“My father had been a manager of 000 company before we were imprisoned. After release, my father worked at a coal mine at his hometown. Because of the bad record, it was very difficult for my father to find a job. So, he had to work where he was assigned to. The work at the mine machines was backbreaking but he had no other choice.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

In case of prisoners released from Camp No. 18, with the exception of a former senior officer who was cleared of the charges against him and returned to his former post, most prisoners remained in the camp after release. O Myong-o testifies that it was very difficult for a released prisoner to be re-integrated with society unless the prisoner had a good family background.⁸⁶⁾ The witness, A17, testifies that it was difficult to be re-integrated with society unless she had husband. Some female prisoners prefer marriage with someone outside for the purpose of re-integration into society.

“After release, the prisoners continue to live with other prisoners in the same camp. But they can pass the guard post to visit relatives. Their work is easier than prisoners. Released prisoners can take a job in Surveillance Unit or become an inspector. They can travel to outside camp once a year or so. They get better food ration. They also receive a ration of a little quantity of wine and cooking oil.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

Even though they continue to stay in the camp after release, their status is enhanced and they are better treated than before. For this reason, some prisoners prefer remaining in the camp.

“Many prisoners who were outside the camp returned to the camp. They found the society outside the camp was worse for them than the life in the camp where their status is equal and they are better treated. If they should find a good job in the camp such as working for camp officers and

86) Jin-I Choi, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

etc. they find themselves much better off than in the society outside the camp.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

2) Surveillance and Disadvantage

Release from the political prison camps is not a guarantee of freedom. The prisoners released from a political prison camp are, in fact, blacklisted by SSA and under routine surveillance. The former prisoner may be watched by SSA officers or secretly by someone around him. It appears that victims of such surveillance suffer not only from inconvenience in their private affairs on a daily basis but also enormous psychological stress.

“I was under constant surveillance by SSA and Police.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“Sometimes, I find the SSA officer sitting in my house and asking me questions about what I am doing and where I have been. Sometimes, if I am away from home for more than 2 hours, then, I am obliged to report to him. If I leave home for work at the farm or some business in the market, I must give them a report first. I must give them a report about everything about me and my business.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“Of course, my father was under surveillance. My father told me that he was an economic offender and if he spends some money for anything, the police asked him about the source of money. If he has good food, police asked him where he had the money from...he was also under the surveillance of residence unit chief. She pretended to visit us for social purpose but we all knew the reason for her frequent visit. And she always

came at our meal and watched what we are eating. If my father or mother left home, she immediately informed the police. If we were not at home for two or three days, she always asked us where we had been.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“My friend told me that she was told to watch me. We were friends and she let me know that. She had to report to the police about me every hour. SSA keeps the record about me. There was somebody else watching me. We were up in the mountain together and I gave him food and firewood. Then, he confessed to me that he was watching me and reporting to Police about me regularly. He even told me to go away to China so that he does not have to watch me any more.” (Lee Young-guk, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“Of course, I am watched. I was always watched. Once you are released, there is always someone spying on you for about 3 years. After 3 years, no one was watching me but they called me to SSA office once in a while and asked me how my life is these days or if I am thinking about bad things and etc.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

Former prisoners released from Camp No. 18 who continue to stay in the camp report that they were secretly watched by camp clerks. Visits to relatives were restricted and, in cases of approval, former prisoners have to answer many questions from SSA officers after their return from such travel, which is a great psychological stress on them. In reality, former prisoners continue the same camp life after release but in a somewhat relaxed manner.

“I was always monitored after release. I was in the same camp any way and even though we were released, we were still watched. The SSA officers investigate about what I did every hour outside the camp in case of authorized visit to relatives. It is not the police. It is the SSA that conducts the investigation. They ask me what I did every hour while I was outside the camp. Then, they call me a few days later again to continue the questions. Former prisoners hate this so much that many of them want to leave the camp.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

3) Discrimination after Release

It has been reported that the offenders are discriminated against in daily life after release and their families and even relatives are also disadvantaged in their application for higher education or party membership. In particular, children of the former prisoners are laughed at in school and even by teachers as children of traitors and become objects of ridicule, making their school life very stressful.

“Children were discriminated. It was very hard life for them wherever they go for reason of their mother who defected from her fatherland. (this was a great pain even though they were not actually disadvantaged in school). My children quarreled with other children in school many times.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“My children did not have good time in school as they were often called children of reactionaries. Even teachers called my children reactionaries. They could not go to school and were harassed if they stopped going to school. But, eventually, they stopped school and my sisters gave them

private tutoring. My children were badly hurt and still angry with father and they complained that they suffer because of daddy. They are still like this. They could not join army and have no hope of going to college.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“My cousin was in military service and had his party membership application rejected because of the record of my father. Once he came to my home and was very rough and angry with us because of that.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

After release from the camp, former prisoners needed help from relatives but those relatives were reluctant to help them for fear of an adverse impact on them.

“Relatives were reluctant and afraid of helping us. We did not want anything bad befall on them because of us. So we stopped visiting them. When we happened to meet them on the street, we just said hello and that’s all. Wife of my father’s brother gave us a lot of help. We stopped visiting my brother, uncle and cousins.” (A23, former prisoners, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

The purpose of political prison camps is to imprison political prisoners, reform those prisoners through hard labor and brain-wash and make them faithful members of society loyal to the party. In many cases, however, continuing surveillance, disadvantages and discrimination make it very difficult for former prisoners to re-integrate with North Korean society and lead them to hate North Korea and defect to China or South Korea.

“I had stayed with a relative for about a week after release when my

brother told me not to come home. So, I went to another area for business. I went to another relative's home, a fish market area, to handle marine products for business. Then, I defected from North Korea over Tumen river in 2006.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

“It took about a year to adapt myself to the society after 10 years of imprisonment at a political prison camp. Until that time, I was really confused...I returned to Yodok by myself, unable to overcome discrimination and stress of my colleagues in my employment. I returned to Yodok because there were many former prisoners like me. We had many things to share, in common and talk about. I met Hyok at that time...There we boldly criticized the North Korean society. We listened to South Korean radio broadcast. Then, I sensed that they found out about me. So, I planned to defect to South Korea. I had no feeling whatsoever for North Korea.”⁸⁷⁾ (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

87) Cheol-hwan Kang, “Diary of Kang Cheol-hwan, Life and Death in North Korean Prison Camp No. 15,” *Monthly Chosun*, February Issue, (Seoul: Chosun News Press, 1992), p. 683.

Operation of Political Prison Camps

1. Operation and Security Systems

1) Responsibility for Operation

Legal grounds for the establishment of political prison camps (PPCs) do not exist in the North Korean law system. Information about the function, operation, and present situation of camps is based on testimonies by North Korean defectors who had personal experiences with the camps.

No official documentations or records of camps in North Korea are available because the North Korean regime denies their existence. However, it is assumed from the following two articles of the North Korean Criminal Procedure Law that the State Security Agency (SSA) is responsible for the investigation of political prisoners and plays a main role in arresting and punishing them:

Article 122: Anti-state and anti-Korean crimes shall be investigated by State Security Agents.

Article 1244: Preliminary investigations of anti-state and anti-Korean

crimes shall be conducted by investigators from the State Security Agency.

For this reason, the assessment of camps is solely based on anecdotal evidence provided by defectors. Defectors have commonly stated that the SSA, a department under the National Defense Committee, controls the prison camps and that there is a seventh subordinate division in the SSA that directly handles day-to-day operations in the camps.

However, this operational structure does not seem to be the case from the beginning. According to the witness A08, a former SSA officer at Camps No. 12 and 13 in On-song, North Hamgyong Province for nearly 20 years, the SSA took over the operation of the camps in 1975. Before this time, he claims that prison camps were managed by the 9th Division of the Ministry of National Police.

“In the beginning, PPCs were under control of the 9th Bureau of the Ministry of National Police. The 7th Bureau was responsible for the management of prisons. The operation of camps came under the control of the State Security Agency in 1975.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camps No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

Still, a few camps such as Camp No. 18 at Pukchang, No. 17 and 23 at Toksong, and No. 19 at Tanchon were placed under the control of the police until they were shut down. They are now closed.

“The camp was operated by the police. There were always SSA officers present and they followed orders from the police.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“Public executions were carried out by the 7th Bureau of the Police

Ministry. The execution site was always a big playground, which had been originally used for physical exercise.” (A21, former family of camp officer, Camp No. 19, 1984-1990)

A08 also stated that prison camps were originally operated by the 9th Bureau of the Police Ministry. However, testimonies by 0 Myong-o, A18 and A20, who was a camp official at Camp No. 18 for 20 years, reveal that the camps were also under the operation of 7th Bureau, which oversees ordinary prisons. For this reason, the police at PPCs are identified as Korean People’s Guard Unit 0000 (4 numbers) by North Korean society.

“It is the Peoples’ guards that operate the camps under the 7th Bureau of the Police Ministry. So, the camps are operated in the same way regardless of whether guards or policemen operated. It is policemen who are running the camp.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

These police-run camps, although they are technically under the authority of the National police ministry, are clearly under the influence of the Party. For example, according to A20, the Central Committee of the Party appoints top-ranking party officers and the police appoint other high-ranking officials at the camps. In other words, the influence of the party on camp operations is strong. The same rule is applicable to SSA-run camps where the arrest and treatment of prisoners are under the direct authority of the party.⁸⁸⁾

88) Park Young-ho and et al., *North Korean Human Rights White Paper 2010*, (Seoul: Korea Institute of National Unification, 2010), p. 126.

“Originally, Camp No. 18 was under the authority of police, but top officers who worked there were usually appointed by the Central Committee of the Party. The second highest-ranking officers were appointed by the Party Committee of the Police Ministry, the third highest-ranking officers by the Prison Bureau and the lowest-ranking by the 18th Party Committee. The Central Committee of the Party appointed the highest-ranking officers.” (A20, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Prison No. 25 used to detain prisoners with heavy penalties, and it is thus listed as a political prison camp under the police operation. Witness A27, a former prisoner, testified that Prison No. 25 is under the control of Provincial Police of North Hamgyong Province. Another witness, interviewed by Korea Institute of National Unification (KINU) in August, 2008, testified that the camp is under the auspices of the police, not the SSA. Further information is necessary to verify whether or not the prison No. 25 is under the control of SSA.

“Prison No. 25 was under the operation of the Provincial Police, North Hamgyong Province...We were supervised by the chief of prisoners when the policemen were not around.” (A27, former prisoner, 2005, Prison No. 25)

2) System of Operation

The organizational structures and operational systems of PPCs in North Korea are two-fold: one is for camp officials and one for prisoners. The percentage of former camp officers among witnesses is lower than that of prisoners. Thus, there are testimonies available about organizational

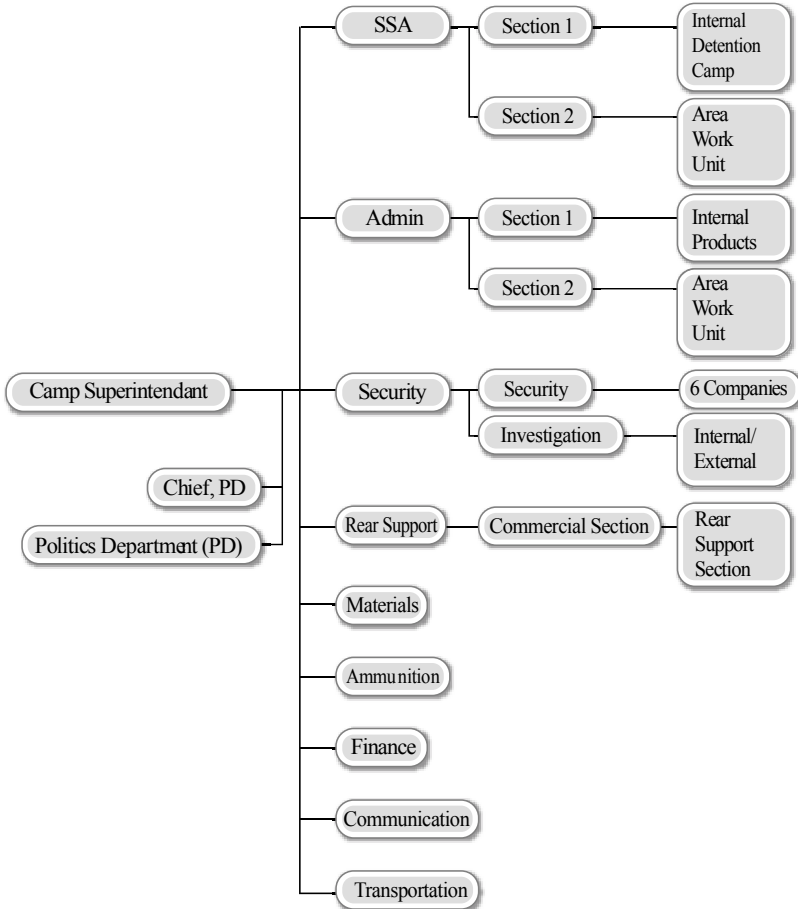
structures of the camps. According to Ahn Myong-chol, who worked as a guard at camp No. 13 and Camp No. 22, the organizational structures of each political prison camp were similar, but sub-organizations and the composition of prisoners vary a little depending on a particular camp. There are no clear regulations of organizational structures in PPCs.

(1) Systems for Camp Officials

In the case of camps run by the SSA, a chief of the camp (chief administrator) retains the highest authority, followed by a political officer who assists him for the operations. Each camp has a political bureau, a SSA bureau, and a security and guard bureau, and an administrative bureau (in charge of maintenance, procurement, ammunition, finance, transportation and communication sections). The SSA maintains a system of vertical chain of command, starting all the way up from the SSA officers at the lowest level of supervising prisoners at work sites.

“The chief administrator is responsible for the entire operation of the camp and there are Departments of political matters and administration. There are 10 sections under the Administrative Department. There is a Court Section under the Political Department for conducting trials. Section 1 is for administration and Section 3 for engineering work. There is a separate SSA office for the control of prisoners at the coal mine.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

Figure 3-1 Operational System, Camp No. 13



The operation system of Camp No. 13 is shown in detail in the charts below. These charts were made based on testimony by Ahn Myong-chol.⁸⁹⁾

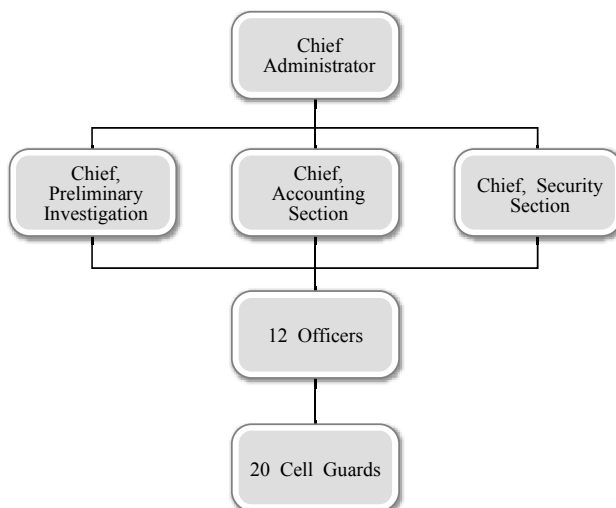
Prison No. 25 is categorized as a prison camp under the control of

89) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

the SSA and has a simpler structure than other camps. Prison No. 25 has one more section and the size of security staff there is smaller than one battalion but larger than a company. Operational systems and the number of officials working there are more or less identical to those of Camps No. 14, 15, 16 and 22, but are bigger than a full company.

Operational systems and the size of staff are similar to those of other camps, including Camps No. 14, 15, 16 and 22.

Figure 3-2 Operational System, Prison No. 25⁹⁰⁾

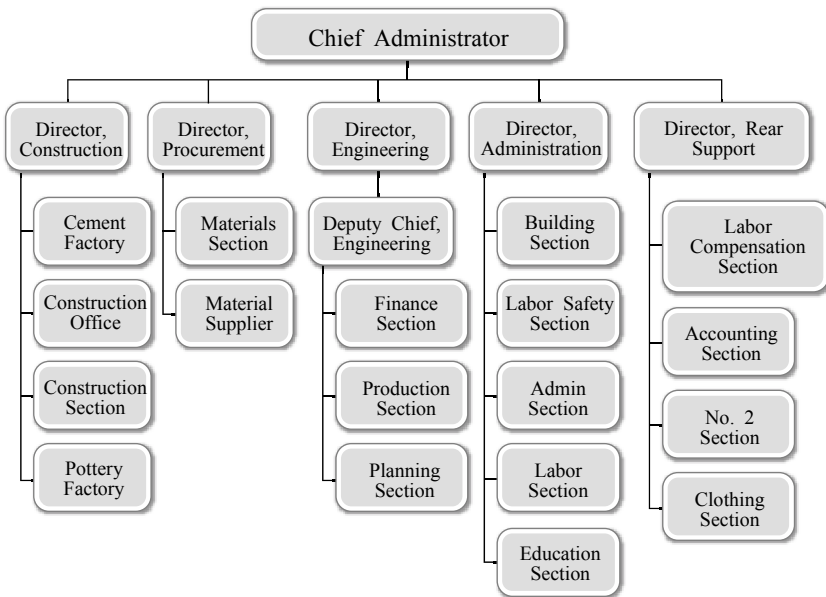


90) A testimony by A27 about Prison No. 25

The structure of a police-run camp such as Camp No. 18 is different from that of camps run by the SSA. First, there is also a police office and party structure is subdivided as the ordinary society for party activities.

As seen in the chart below, A20, who used to work as an officer at Camp No. 18, offered a precise explanation. A20 explained that Camp No. 18 had administrative, security, and police departments, as well as

Figure 3-3 Administrative Organization, Camp No. 18⁹¹⁾



-
- 91) · Labor Supply Section: A body that provides workers at the gang with alcohol, rice, shoes, gloves, etc.
 - No.2 Section: A body that stores food in case of a war and emergency
 - Security and Traffic Section: a body that handles explosive material, automobile and road maintenance. This body also issues a permission to travel.
 - Ammunition Section: A body that handles arms.

party organizations. He has provided important and detailed information on the organizational structure of the camp and the size of staff by charts as available.

Figure 3-4 Police Organization, Camp No. 18.

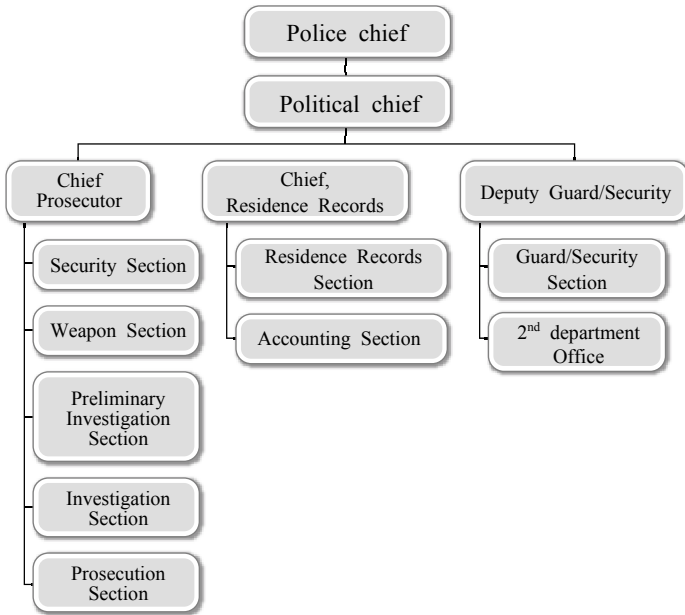


Figure 3-5 SSA Organization, Camp No. 18.

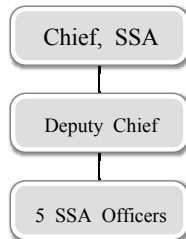
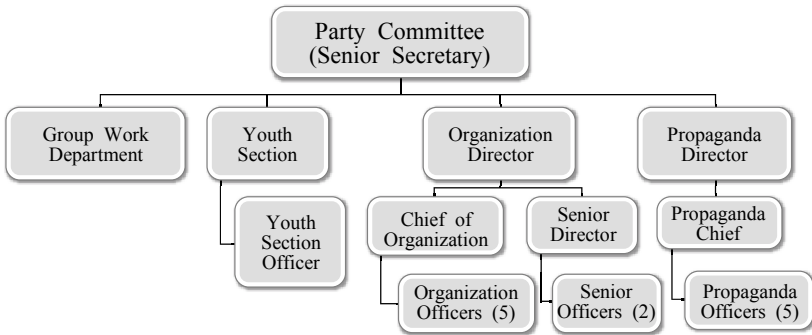


Figure 3-6 Party Committee Organization, Camp No. 18



The organizational structure of prison camps varies according to whether they belong to the State Security Agency or to under National Police Ministry. It also has slight difference according to the size of prison camps and time.

(2) Prisoner Organization

The camps have a very strict rank and order system for the control of prisoners. In general, the prison camps in North Korea has a system of control over prisoners by prisoners as an effective means of controlling large number of prisoners with a minimum number of supervisors. However, again, there are slight variance in camps in terms of the size and main products of a camp.

At all agriculture farms in the camp, there is a chief, a deputy chief, chief engineer, production and operation officers, a chief clerk, clerks, a chief of the work unit, chiefs of the work sub-units and ordinary prisoners.

Similarly, there is a chief in the mine, followed by a deputy chief, a company commander, a platoon commander and a work unit chief. When it comes to industrial manufacturing, there is a chief of the worksite on top, followed by other subordinates.

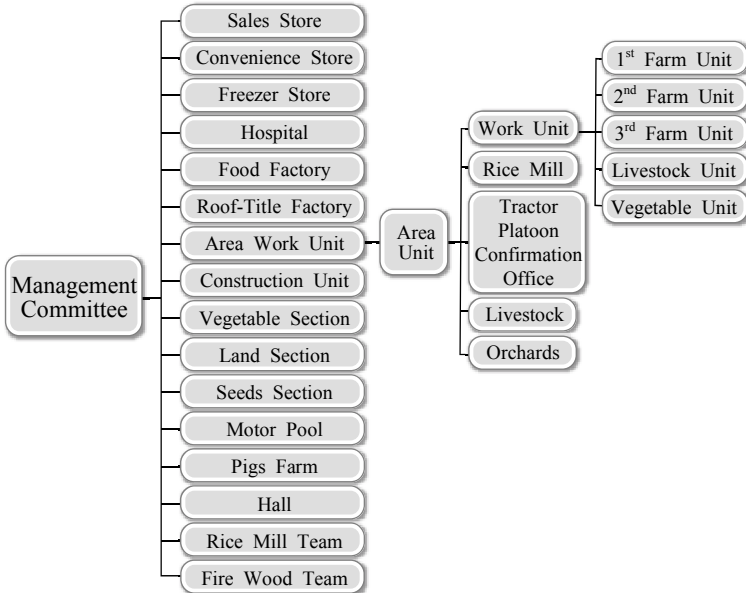
“Just like in a society, at a camp everyone is given a position. The only difference is in the vocabulary. There were five units of workers at each village. There was an SSA officer, a chief worker and an inventory clerk at each work unit.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camps No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“The various work units were composed of farms and factories, and SSA officers were assigned to them. There is only one SSA officer for every three work units. For the purpose of controlling prisoners, the SSA officer directly appoints a senior unit chief to oversee all work units of the worksite.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“The Camp has a strict system of chain of command with the SSA officer at the top, then a senior unit chief and the work unit chief third in the rank. In the garment factory where I worked, there was only one senior work unit chief for 2,500 prisoners. The senior work unit chief and work unit chiefs under him were all male.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“In the garment factory, there were no guards. There was an SSA officer and a senior work unit chief and the work unit chiefs that were under him.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Figure 3-7 Farm Structure, camp No. 22⁹²⁾



According to A08, a former camp officer, in the beginning there were no party activities because the prisoners were without citizenship, but later, prisoners became members of party organizations in the camp through the process of ideology sessions.

“There were party organizations for youth, women and others. They met once a month for ‘ideology sessions.’ At first these didn’t exist, but later it became mandatory for officers to take part in the sessions.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

92) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

The system of command was similar in maximum security camp and re-education zone of Camp No. 15. Under the command of the chief of the administration committee, there are divisions for agriculture, accounting, administration, enrollment, storage and a guesthouse for visitors. Individual prisoners are divided into a platoon with an chief of workers' union committee and a chief of young workers' union committee that controls prisoners outside of worksites. An SSA officer is also assigned to each work unit to supervise prisoners.

“Every work unit has a chief, a clerk and a prisoner-in-chief of the bunkhouse. The prisoner-in-chief of the bunkhouse is responsible for security and there are three other guards assisting the prisoner-in-chief. All work is carried out in accordance with instruction from the administration committee. All prisoners must obey the SSA officer unconditionally. The SSA sub-station is staffed by a section chief, party leader and SSA officers, each responsible for overseeing the work of four work units. The chief administrator, director of the political department or their deputies visited the office once or twice a month. The administration committee was comprised of the chairperson, an inventory clerk, a junior level party secretary, chief of the workers' union committee, a young workers committee chairperson and telephone operators. They have different offices and take daily instructions from the SSA sub-station to pass on to every work unit and report the feedback to the sub-station every day.”
(A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“The administration committee meetings were attended by the company commander, the platoon commander, junior level party secretaries and work unit chiefs. Junior level party secretaries are those who had previous experience in supervising others before their arrest. Inventory clerks or warehouse supervisors were also included. They were prisoners themselves

but were supervising other prisoners.” (A06, prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

Camp No. 18, which was managed by the national police, resembles SSA-run camps. However, the two unique classes of “the preferentially treated”⁹³⁾ and “discharged prisoners”⁹⁴⁾ are deeply involved in production system and are placed at the top of the organizational hierarchy of prisoners. In the case of a mining operation, there was a chief of the shaft, a deputy chief of the shaft and party workers who were all the preferentially treated.

“A mineshaft has a chief, a deputy chief for rear support, a deputy chief of administration and a shaft officer in charge of mobilizing the prisoners, digging and the collection of coal. Depending on the size, some shafts have two companies for digging and two companies for the collection of coal. Below them are first, second and third platoons. The digging platoon is divided into a work unit that consists of some 20 prisoners. A work unit is also composed of three smaller groups. Each work unit has a chief who has two shift chiefs. During shift changes, two female prisoners and four male prisoners are assigned to shift the work crews. The rear support group has an accountant and a dining service. There are some twelve maids working in shifts as well. In addition, there are three checkers counting the number of prisoners at each shift. For example, if a prisoner fails to be at work on time, camp officials make a visit to the prisoner. A deputy administration chief has three messengers who work together in each shift. There is also a group called the “working group.” (A32,

93) They are not military officers but family members of SSA officers and policemen. They are called “the preferentially treated” because they are as preferentially treated as military officers and work in the prison camps.

94) They are former prisoners who are now exempt from imprisonment due to hard work. They stay in the prison under loose control.

former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

“A farm is composed of an Operational Committee Chief, two deputies for administration, a deputy for business and someone else I don’t remember now. The farm also has a farm officer and chief engineer who has officers for production and administration under his command. There is a chief for book-keeping and an accountant. Under the command of a work unit chief, there is a technical officer who instructs the sub-unit chief. The farm officer has a deputy and three assistants. The party committee of the farm has functions for administration and party operation. The shaft deputy chief and officers of workers’ and young workers’ unions are the preferentially treated. Some discharged prisoners who are highly intelligent are often appointed deputy chairman of the operational committee. The preferentially treated and discharged prisoners may be appointed as a messenger. The company and platoon commanders in the mine are all prisoners.” (A32, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

“There are workers’ unions, young workers’ unions and women’s unions. A chief may be the preferentially treated. They take instructions from SSA officers. The shift messengers are former prisoners who have been cleared of charges against them. Three groups work in shifts, eight hours each shift. Each group has a shift deputy, which makes a total of three shift deputies for three groups. The chief of shaft is in total command of them. The chief has a deputy and shift messengers under his command. Under their control, there are checkers making sure that all prisoners are at work. The checkers are former prisoners who have been cleared of the charges against them. Their job is to count the number of prisoners in the village while doing the same work with prisoners. If any prisoner should be late for work, the prisoner is immediately detected in the system.” (A17, former prisoner, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

Figure 3-8 Mine Organization, Camp No. 18

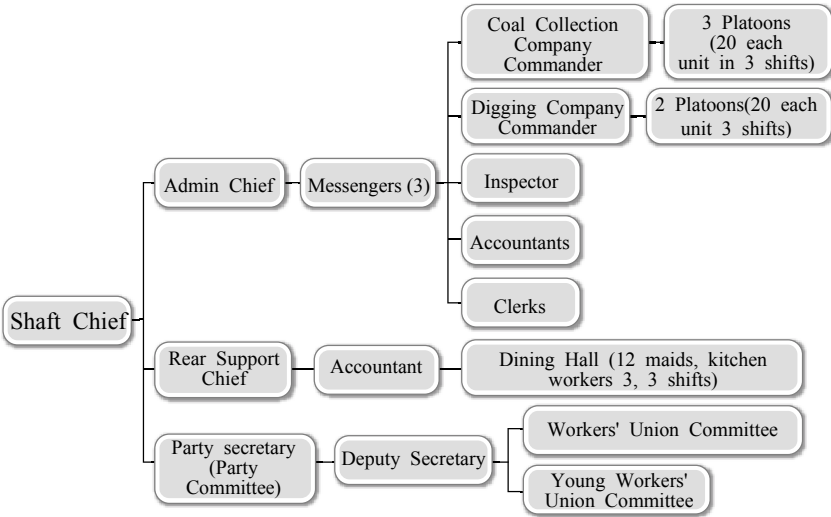
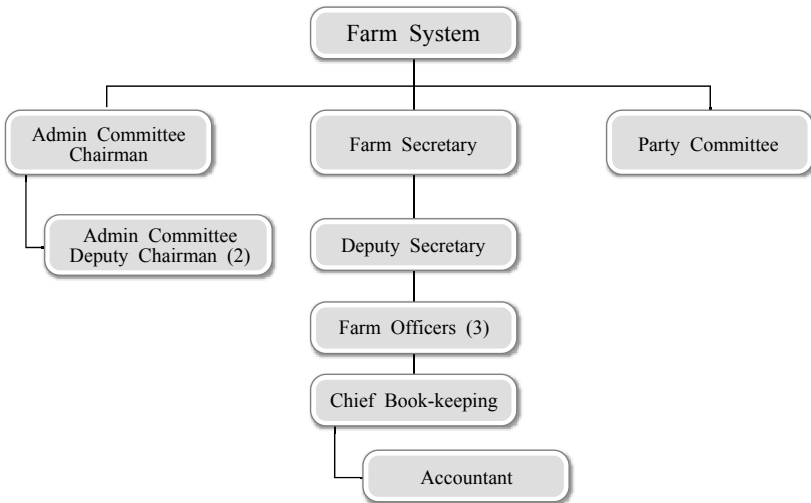


Figure 3-9 Farm Organization, Camp No. 18



Recruitment of security officers and guards is selective. They are recruited on the condition of keeping the camp operation secret. The regime chooses candidates who are less likely to make contacts outside. For example, A08, who worked as a camp officer for nearly 20 years at Camps No. 12 and 13, said he was chosen because he was an orphan.

“I was assigned to Chongsong camp after graduation from my university. After graduation, I was asked if I would be interested in the Ministry of Police. I was sent to that ministry in Pyongyang and to the Chongsong camp. I was told at that time that I was being sent there because I was an orphan. I was in Pyongyang for about 15 days. I was interviewed at the 9th Bureau of the Ministry of Police and given instructions about my duty. I received my uniform. I had previously never been to Chongsong County, North Hamgyong Province. A man with the title, Chief of Politics, Chongsong camp, came and picked me up and took me to the camp. This is how I was assigned to a camp.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“The central party endorses the appointment of camp officials, chief administrator and executive officers. Appointments of junior officers are made by an office at a lower level. The police chief is approved by the Central Party, while his deputy is approved by a junior level office.” (A32, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

3) Security Systems

Due to the absence of legal grounds, political prison camps are kept secret from ordinary people. Prison camps are mostly located in isolated

places, such as a spot in a deep mountain range, which serves to prevent prisoners from escaping.

Security systems are installed, and camps which are already located in remote mountainous areas are surrounded by electric barbed wire. Underneath the barbed wire deep traps are scattered and filled with sharp spikes at the bottom. The surface of the ground is covered by sand to show tracks of escape. Along the fence are guardposts to watch, patrol, eat and sleep.

Security around the fence serves three purposes: first, preventing prisoners from escaping; second, banning outsiders from entering the camps and finally, concealing camps from being exposed to the outside world. This is evidence that the regime holds a tight grip on dissidents, violating basic human rights in their treatment of them.

“The barbed wire walls served not only to prevent prisoners from running away, but also to prevent people nearby from entering.” (A03, former resident near Kuwup-ni, mid 1960s-1998)

(1) Political Prison Camps under the SSA

Camp No. 11 had 2.5-meter-high barbed-wire walls, two-meter deep traps inside the wall and a sand field. Booby traps were also installed⁹⁵⁾, but the barbed wire wasn't electrical.⁹⁶⁾

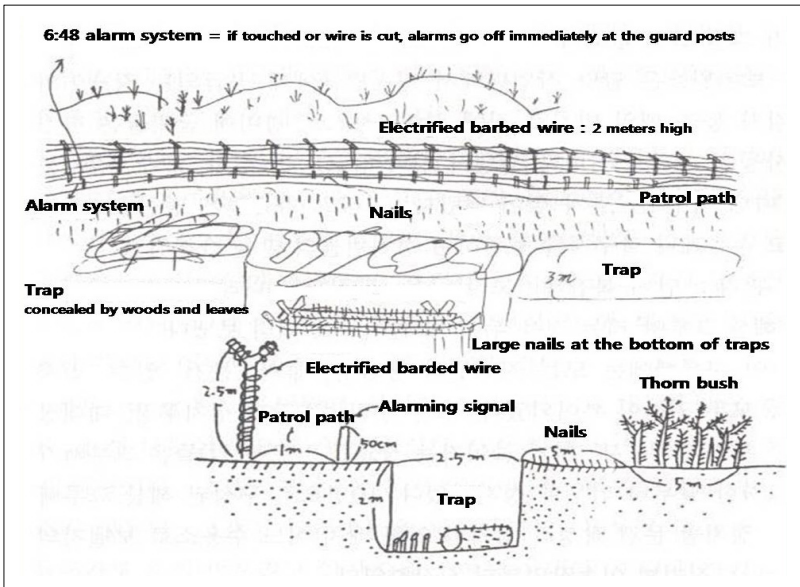
“My camp was called People's Guard Unit No. 2911. It housed 250 guards.” (A29, former guard, Camp No. 11, 1977-1986)

95) Booby trap refers to explosive devices such as hidden grenades or mines.

96) Yong-sam Kim, “Thanks to the South Korean media which widely reports on the human rights violation in the North, the situation is improving”, *Monthly Chosun*, April Issue, (Seoul: Chosun News Press, 1996), pp. 133-139.

In the cases of Camps No. 12 and 13, which were close to civilian villages, security was tighter. According to Ahn Myong-chol, who was a guard at Camp No. 13, there were long, two meter-high barbed wire walls between the camp and villages. At the nearby mountain ranges, guards established concrete forts and bulletproof walls. Between the walls were four mounted machine guns⁹⁷⁾.

Figure 3-10 External Security Systems As Testified by Ahn Myong-chol⁹⁸⁾



97) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

98) *Ibid*, P. 56.

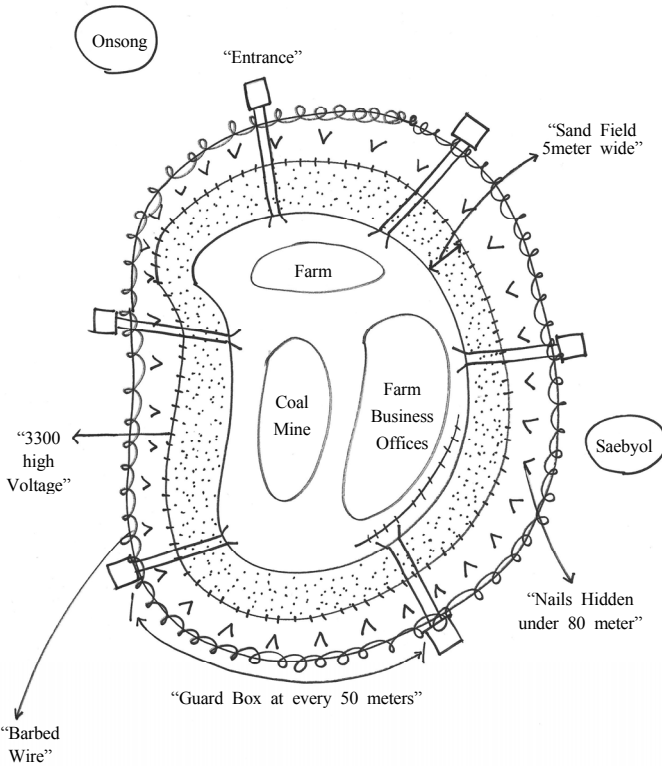
“There were about 200 control officers in the camp headquarters alone. They would total some 500 officers if the number were to include the officers assigned to each village, mines and factories inside the camp. They all operate in three shifts. Military troops alone are tasked with guarding the outside of the camp. There are two lines of barbed wire fences with boards studded with poisoned nails between the barbed wire. There is a battalion force of security guards. Guard posts are positioned in such a way as to command views of the entire area within the sight of guards. In the flat areas, the distance is quite far between guard posts but very short, less than 50 meters, if any obstruction limits visibility between posts. Guards patrol very frequently with dogs.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

Most prisoners did not seem to be aware of the security along the fence or notice that they had no freedom of movement in the campsite.

“Each farm and factory consists of several work units, with an assigned officer. There is an SSA officer for every three work units. Guards were stationed at every 50 meters, but I never knew if there were guards inside.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“The various work units were comprised of farms and factories and SSA officers were assigned to each of them. One SSA officer was given responsibility for three work units. For the purpose of the camp’s security, temporary guard posts (mobile posts) were set up at intervals of 50 meters. I can’t be sure that there were guards at every guard post. A large guard facility was located at the entrance of the camp.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Figure 3-11 External Security Systems As Testified by A22



The witness A19, a former prisoner of Camp No. 18, on the other side of Camp No. 14 across the Taedong River, also provided information on the security system of Camp No. 14.

“Camp No. 14 was nearby and was under tight security by the SSA. They buried blades near the walls so that prisoners on the run would get injured by stepping on them. In fact, as a warning, SSA officers showed prisoners a dead body of a prisoner who was killed for attempting to escape. The

body was torn into pieces by these hidden blades.” (A19, former prisoner, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

Camp No. 15 also ran on tight security. A tall wall or a fence and a pitfall with poisonous spears were set up along the walls. Guards patrolled the fences round-the-clock. According to Kang Cheol-hwan, Camp No. 15 had approximately 1,000 guards who were under the direct authority of the Seventh Division of the SSA. Testimonies by defectors tell us about the strict security system of the camp.

“SSA officers were responsible for maintaining control of the camp. The barbed wire near our living quarters was about two meters high. There were five or six lines of electrified wires with one carrying 220 volts in the middle. The lines of electrified wires were perhaps 60-70 centimeters wide. The camp areas inside the guard posts were under the control of SSA officers.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“I was told that a regiment force of guards was assigned to the entire security area of Camp No. 15. They told me that ambush units were placed even on the top of the mountain, so there would be no chance of escaping. Furthermore, the entire surrounding area was covered by steep mountains, making it difficult to run away. All the nearby villagers were keen to keep watching and gave reports (of unusual activity) to the SSA on a daily basis. So there was no chance. Many prisoners were shot to death during escaping attempts.” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

“Three SSA officers were responsible for spying on us. The security system was so strict that we were literally bound. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire and there was a battery every 200 meters. Wooden poles

sharpened at the tip were driven into the ground outside the barbed wire to prevent escaping. In fact, the system was designed to cause all the prisoners to hate and watch one another. So, there was no chance for escape. In this way, the SSA was able to maintain an extremely strict security system.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“Altogether, there were some 1,000 guards for the security of Control Center No. 15 under the command of the 7th Bureau, SSA. There were two watchtowers within my view, approximately seven to eight meters high, and two guards with machine guns were posted at each tower. The guards were armed with AK automatic rifles and hand grenades. Each watchtower was surrounded by walls, two to three meters high, with barbed wire all around for a seemingly endless distance. The guard system in Control Center No. 15 was very tight. Barbed wire could be seen on the hills and mountains, three to four meters high. Walls, two to three meters high, with electrified barbed wire on top, could be seen in lower elevations. On high mountains, traps were set around the barbed wire. Sharp, pointed sticks were driven upright in the bottom of the traps. There were watchtowers at intervals of a kilometer along the barbed wire. The watchtowers were always manned by guards equipped with a machine gun, their eyes always alert.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“There was an officer for each unit and five officers at the SSA sub-office. Although small in number, it worked because they carried guns. At Yongpyeong-ni, one guard group was about the size of a brigade. If one person was missing for 15 minutes, the entire brigade was mobilized to search for them. It took less than 30 minutes. There was no exit and it was almost impossible to escape. Yodok camp had a mountain that is extremely remote. A person who escaped had a risk of running into a tiger,

a coyote or a bear. It was hard to escape. The electric fence stretched for almost eight kilometers from where I was living. The security facility had a sand-covered area that tracked a person who escaped. It was two-meters wide and surrounded by a wire fence and an electric wire. The wire fence was two meters high and traps were probably there. Just as one person went missing for 10-15 minutes, an alert went off, and guards ran to search for him/her. All I was thinking was how I could find time and a place to eat a bowl of corn. It is literally a survival game.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

All witnesses stated that they had limited information about the security systems outside of the camp because their movement inside the camp was under control and they had little opportunity to access information.

“There’s no way of learning about the security outside the wall/fence. When I entered the camp, I was forced to stay at the worksite and keep my head low at all times. It was impossible to see things around me.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“I knew that right in front of the gate there was an electric fence, but the rest I didn’t know. There’s always speculation about how those who escaped had managed to do so. They must have found a wireless spot.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

For individual prisoners, security is even tighter with an additional number of guards in place.

“The bunk house we lived in was surrounded by a cement wall with barbed wire attached to the top of it. In the beginning, our living quarters were

located relatively close to the main gate by car. The area was monitored by cameras. Among male prisoners, a system existed where prisoners monitored the movement of each other. In the case of female prisoners, a platoon chief was tasked with monitoring them. Generally, we were watched by SSA officers at the gate both day and night. They watched people coming in or going out during the daytime. Watches were set for possible defectors at night.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

Testimony by A03, who had lived outside Camp No. 15, describes the tight security outside the camp which affected people in the village.

“On the outside, the fence was surrounded by trees, blocking the view into the camp, and electricity ran through the fence. When there wasn’t electricity, a few people escaped. But they were all caught immediately, for there wasn’t any place to hide. The wire had two purposes: to prevent people from escaping the camp as well as to stop villagers from entering the camp. Wires initially didn’t have electricity. I dug underneath the fence, and entered the camp to get vegetables. But from 1998, the authorities ran electricity through the wires. There were people who were killed by it when it was first changed. On each side of the fence were sand fields to track down people who escaped. Some hid in the guard post. When caught, they were beaten and sent back to the camp. A guy named “Shin” worked at a farm. He ran over the fence but got caught by a soldier. He went insane after being beaten too hard. There was a forest inside the wire fence and it had a big trap with sharp-pointed sticks at the bottom. The trap was two meters deep, camouflaged by sticks and leaves. I know one person who fell into the pit and became disabled.” (A03, former resident near Kuvup-ni, mid 1960s-1998)

A few defectors testified about the security systems of Camps No. 22

and 25, which are believed to be maximum security camps. A22, a former SSA officer at Camp No. 22, has detailed the security situation of Camp No. 22 with drawings. One regiment, which consisted of four battalions, guarded the outside of the camp. Each battalion has three companies and each platoon has three squads for a total of 2,000-3,000 guards.

Prison No. 25 bears resemblance to a prison found in South Korea where detaining facilities were sealed off with a wall. The wall was fortified with electric wires on top, and guard posts were stationed next to the gates.

“There was an iron gate covered with electric wires on top. Guard posts stood next to the main gate and one armed guard stood at the top of the post all times. People registered themselves at the front gate and detention facilities inside the camp were usually unguarded.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

(2) Prison Camps under National Police Ministry

Security at police-run Camp No. 18, which closed in 2006, was relatively loose, and at one point it was even fenceless. A few defectors testified that some prisoners actually left the camp temporarily and returned. Nevertheless, prisoners showed extreme fear of punishments, including public execution. This fear discouraged them from leaving. At some locations, the border of the camp was not clear and villagers came in. Another interviewee said outsiders who were caught inside the camp were not allowed to return to the village without an investigation.

“There is no barbed wire in No. 18, but nobody escaped. Nobody could escape. Where could he go when mountains are all around and checkpoints

are posted on all the roads coming out from the mountains? Of course, one could try to follow along the top of the mountain range and find a way out of the mountains. However, no prisoners were bright enough to do so. Of course, they also feared the horrendous punishment if caught trying to escape. I have never witnessed an escape attempt.” (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1972-1984)

“Day-to-day operation of the camp was done by the police, but training was conducted by the SSA. The SSA was present as usual, but we didn’t have a guard unit. No fence – some even went over the mountain for shopping. If caught, you were sent to short-term prison.” (A17, former prisoners, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973-1982)

“The overall security was operated by the police. If you were caught in an attempt to escape, you were executed in public, and if outsiders were caught in the camp, he/she couldn’t leave the camp. Authorities patrolled the camp a few times a day, but it wasn’t very tight.” (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

“I did not know how many policemen there is, because it’s a military secret. On the border of the camp were traps –two meters deep and three meters wide. They were filled with nails as long as 50 centimeters and other sharp subjects at the bottom. Some traps were so old that they may not have worked. This side of the mountain was so steep that you didn’t actually need a fence. I haven’t heard of any fence up there. Guards patrolled on top of the mountain as well. For South Koreans, the conditions there would have not been acceptable. For North Koreans, it was tolerable and they gave up all hope and accepted their fate without any attempt to escape.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

In 1995, when the camp size shrank, the security arrangement underwent a drastic change. In an attempt to keep a close eye on detainees, the authorities stepped up security measures, including building iron fences around the border and digging more pitfalls. However, due to a deteriorating economy and a subsequent shortage of electricity, the authorities failed to maintain new facilities.

“When the authorities had the Tukchang location under their control, they mainly set up guardposts along the border – more posts in spots where it was flat and open land, and fewer posts in spots where it was mountainous and remote. We didn’t have any pitfalls, either. At a new location in Pongchang, the authorities added fences but no pitfall. People said there were some in the mountains. But basically it was meaningless at Camp No. 18 because it was very open anyway.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“The fence was supposed to be electrified, but it didn’t have electricity due to energy shortages. Some parts were destroyed, but they couldn’t afford to fix or replace them. If the authorities saw people escaping, they’d shoot him/her. That’s why it was so dangerous to try to escape. Nine out of ten were caught on the run. Mostly, the reason why they were caught was because they didn’t know how to grab a car or where to go. And when one goes missing, the authorities search the hometown of the escapee where his/her relatives live. Some make it – one or two a year – and it’s the most serious crime. No trial is required – they are immediately shot to death. It’s a public execution.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Tall barbed wire is set up very densely in Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18.

The security troops come from Camp No. 14 and there's a lot of barbed wire, even located at the tops of mountains, and this extends to Sang-ni. Whether or not the barbed wire is electrified, I don't know. At Camp No. 18, young male police guard the camp.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“There were few cases of escape attempts as the prisoners concerned were detained there without any knowledge of why they were arrested and they could not get past the barbed wire fences. Once, I watched the set-up of barbed wire fences and the work was so shocking and murderous. Electrified barbed wire was installed all around and deep ditches were dug directly beneath the barbed wire fence. Sharp, spear-like poles were sunk very close together and pointed upright from the bottom of the trench. Hidden snares designed to catch wild boars are also set so that anyone attempting to escape will have his arm caught by one of these hidden snares. A wooden board is hidden and connected to a clever-release device using thin ropes, and attached to nearby trees close to the barbed wire fence. Heavy stones placed on the platform fall on prisoners attempting escape when the device is triggered. So, no one can escape from the camp.” (0 Myung-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

A20 testified about the number of guards at Camp No. 18.

“In the Pongchang-ni alone, the number of policeman reached approximately 120, who were constantly patrolling along the fence and throughout the camp. Each guard post - it was stationed every two or three kilometers - was monitored by nine guards. The security of the camp fell on the shoulders of the security division under the police. The division had three platoons, each of which was composed of thirty guards. One platoon had four subordinate organizations, and each of the four was given one

guardpost in charge.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang--ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

It was the same camp security system in Camps No. 18 and 23, which were closed in 1987. Surrounded by mountains, pitfalls were installed around the camps. Prisoners who were individual and considered to be leaders were under close watch. However, there is only one witness of this and the testimony was secondhand. Below is the testimony.

“I could see the facility where individual prisoners were detained through the fence. They sometimes were out at work. Around them were several guards watching every movement of the prisoners so I couldn’t even reach them. All of the guards were in fact prisoners. People in the office nearby were the police officers. Every building had a guardpost which was made of wood. The post was small enough to fit only one guard. We didn’t see any guards standing there. I guess the security on the campsite was much looser than outside. Nearby mountains had fences installed. People said the mountain was also filled with pitfalls that were as deep as a man’s height. Upon my arrival, I was told that being caught meant death. I wasn’t sure how much I had to believe it, but it was scary enough to discourage me. I knew I would be caught.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

In conclusion, security of the political prison camps in North Korea aims at blocking access to the camp for outsiders and preventing prisoners from escaping. The camp authorities employed diverse methods to achieve these goals. The security, despite a few exceptions, is extremely tight and escaping is impossible. More importantly, the futility of escape is widely acknowledged and accepted among detainees.

2. Control and Administration of Prisoners

1) Surveillance through Organizational Systems

As previously mentioned, the police set up a rank and order system among prisoners to be able to control them more effectively. The police chooses a few prisoners who would be a good spy between the police and the prisoners. Those who are picked are given some form of incentives and responsibilities. Failing to meet the demands of the office means a dismissal from the post, but it rarely happens because most would do anything to keep their post. In some cases, they might be forced to harass their fellow prisoners to keep the job. Physical and verbal attacks occur because of this. Making prisoners watch each other is one of the most effective way to control prisoners. Spying on fellow prisoners is believed to lead to promotion, better food, and less work.

“An SSA officer is assigned to several work units in every factory. There is only one SSA officer for every three work units. For the purpose of controlling prisoners, the SSA officer directly appoints a senior unit chief to oversee all work units of the worksite. The camp has a strict system of chain of command, with the SSA officer at the top, then a senior unit chief and the work unit chief third in the rank. In the garment factory where I worked, there was only one senior work unit chief for 2,500 prisoners. The senior work unit chief and work unit chiefs under him were all male. In the garment factory, there were no guards. There was an SSA officer and a senior work unit chief and the work unit chiefs that were under him. In fact, a single SSA officer was in full control of 2,500 prisoners by using selected prisoners to control other prisoners.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“Two SSA officers worked in shifts at the SSA office of the administration committee but, with the exception of the SSA officers, the chairman of the committee and other workers were all prisoners. It was simply like that. There were many SSA officers but they were elsewhere, and not many of them were seen at the worksites. I saw many SSA officers outside our sector. Taesuk-ni is situated most deeply inside the camp. At night, prisoner-guardians visit us every hour and turn on the light to check the number of prisoners. There are five guards and they are well-treated.”
(A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

“A platoon leader in the camp neither works nor takes a turn on guard duty. All he does is to check the number of prisoners. They have a good life there. Certain long-term prisoners with a good work record and without a history of complaining, are normally appointed as a platoon leader or a guard. Platoon leaders are appointed by SSA officers-in-charge and guards are selected by the SSA sub-station. Prisoners who were former high ranking officials from Pyongyang are normally appointed as guards, chiefs at a threshing floor, for an independent work project. Prisoners who've quarreled with other prisoners or disobeyed the platoon leader are sent through the process of self-criticism. The administration committee holds meetings for self-criticism by prisoners on ad-hoc basis and these are typically attended by the SSA officer. While I was there, the meetings were scheduled every other day. There is something called a 10-day meeting. The prisoners here include former members of the workers' union, young workers' union or party members. Prisoners must continue meeting the schedules of their former organizations, even in this camp. Meetings focused on ideological struggle are held frequently. You have no chance to avoid punishment for any mistakes you make. The meetings are compulsory and, above all, you must be extremely careful to control your tongue, and not say something wrong. Don't say anything about what you

have seen or heard to others, what happened at the worksite or passing on rumors. You will be called up to give account to the SSA officer and be given punishment for any faults.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“A company commander is responsible for checking and controlling the prisoners while the platoon commander would actually work in the field with prisoners. If anyone disobeys them, he/she can be beaten.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“Company commanders carried a bundle of twigs with which they used to beat prisoners who didn’t work hard enough. I think the responsibility of the commanders was serious and stressful. Imagine if they were relieved of their post. It would probably mean spending the rest of their lives in a mine or a prison.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

Prisoners are not authorized to be alone and ordered to be in groups of three or five prisoners.

“A group of five prisoners watched one another. If one reported wrongdoings of another prisoner, the accused had to skip a meal, while the person who made the report would receive a double meal.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“Here is a company commander under the control of the SSA officer in the sector of individual prisoners, and one work unit chief and many sub-division work unit chiefs under him in the family sector. There is a system of five prisoners per unit to watch each other to prevent escape. Everyone is watching everyone else. This is all done in secret. We are often

called up to the SSA officer to give him information in writing about other prisoners. There is no particular benefit for doing this.” (A05 former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

Control goes beyond the workplace through people’s unit as in the society. In a facility where prisoners sleep and carry out daily activities, the police would select one person as people's unit chief of monitor whose responsibility is to report to the police⁹⁹⁾ about the daily activities of other prisoners. But this duty did not exist outside the prison.

“At Camp No. 18, nothing like three-person or five-person groups existed. I had a person who was assigned to make daily reports to the authorities saying, ‘everyone in the district has come to work this morning.’ The preferentially treated was chosen for this position. There are a few other people with different responsibilities.” (A32, former camp officer, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

“Under the district office, known as “Dong,” there was a people's unit. It had an people's unit chief of monitor, which was to report issues to the police.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Each district office has 12 sectors, with a chief assigned to each sector. Each sector is made up of four people's units, with unit chiefs assigned accordingly. Instructions arrive from the district office for the sector chief,

99) The administrative structure of camp no. 18 has similarity to the DPRK communist social structure in that it is operated on the basis of people’s units. However, within the camp’s structure, there is an additional position called people’s unit chief of monitor while there is only people’s unit chief in the society.

who in turn passes instructions on to the people's unit chiefs. Prisoners have to be on night vigilance or security duty every night, rotated in shifts. So, a prisoner can expect to be on night vigilance duty every 2-3 nights. Such duty is not based on hourly assignments. You stay near a fire and watch residents all night. You have to watch the comings and goings to the houses within your responsibility, for example, who slept at the prisoners' houses, as a basis for a report to the sector chief the following morning. Daily reports are submitted to the district office, then up the chain to the administration section chief. This system of surveillance makes life very hard for everyone." (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2005)

"Running away is almost impossible. Prisoners were always under surveillance by a guard and an officer. Every night between 9 and 10, they inspected prisoners. For us, taking a short leave or an overnight leave was impossible. Once you enter the camp, it takes a good ten years to wash off your 'wrongdoing.' The situation isn't much different for guards and officers, who were mostly chosen by the SSA. Luckily, they earned credibility from their superiors, and got promoted to the guard position." (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

2) Informants

One method of controlling detainees is to keep informants among the prisoners. The fact that one of the prisoners could be a spy creates a perfect environment for distrust, making their daily movements very circumspect. This is a very common method of control in North Korean society

"Food is so scarce in the camp that spies are all around; everyone spying

on everyone else, in the food factories particularly. It is not a question of keeping yourself clean of missteps. If you happen not to be liked by someone, you will find yourself accused, for example, for having a few beans in your pocket. Teachers encourage children to spy on other children, giving a reward for the recruited 'spy' of a one-time reduced daily work quota, or pouring praise on the compliant child in front of other children for his/her high revolutionary spirit, etc.” (Kang Chul-hwan, former prisoner, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“Every group has an informant, at least one. Those who are chosen as informants are the prisoners whose imprisonment term may expire within a year. They select informants-to-be at their will.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“Imagine that an SSA officer summons and asks you: ‘You said this on this day at this location, didn’t you?’ Who would not be surprised by a question like that? That made me believe someone was always watching on me.” (A17, former prisoner, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

The witness, A20, from Camp No. 18 testifies:

“Roughly, every second or third person is an informant. I quickly realized that I was also being watched by the SSA and the police.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Top priority in selecting a spy is to choose a person with an ability to stay undercover. Those who like to be around people and who have a level of trust among other prisoners are chosen. When the authorities want to mobilize them for a specific mission, they need the endorsement of a higher authority. From time to time, one individual officer hires a spy for himself.

Compensation varies based on the value of information.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“To be able to control other people, you first have to learn about him/her. You have to learn the behavior and activities of prisoners to spy on. For example, in the camp where composition of members is varied, I needed to learn every movement of the person who was regarded as dangerous. That was the only way to figure out who would create problems. In our own words, we described the whole thing as “a secret business.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Life in the camp causes everyone to suspect everyone else. You have to be extremely cautious with what you are saying to anyone, even though you may have a harmonious relationships with someone. They just may be spies for the SSA or police. Police and SSA officers at different times took me to their offices and said such things as, ‘All the sons-of-bitches here are landlords, members of the capitalist class or supporters of South Korea. So, you must report to me immediately anything that looks suspicious.’ The surveillance system here was of such a nature that whenever I spoke to anyone, I became very careful and nervous. The best policy here is to use rough and foul words and act like a fool.” (0 Myong-o, former prisoner, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

“If you didn’t report an incident, even though you knew about it, you would get punished. But, if you said it was your mistake, the situation was even worse, for you would have to speak directly with an officer in a much higher position. That induced me to report it, when I saw something. Why? If I did otherwise, I would have to bear many burdens and it makes the entire camp atmosphere distrustful. (A08, former SSA officer, Camps No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

3) Preferential Compensation

Camps spur competitions through preferential compensation. By controlling the amount of food, sleeping hours, marriage or sexual desire, authorities keep detainees under control, or triggered competitions. Prisoners gradually lose fundamental humanity in their struggles for food, longer sleeping hours or sex.

In particular, getting married with someone is the most glorious honor, allowed only to very few. In order to win, prisoners must show absolute obedience to authority and perform unthinkable actions to win favor of officers.

“If you don’t accomplish your daily work quota, you are not allowed to go home. You are only allowed to go home once in a few days. I’ve seen people who could not go home for days for a failure to accomplish their work quota.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“The SSA officer sat on the chair and used a fishing rod, baited with pork fat to entice the naked woman prisoner crawling like a dog, and this made her jump like a frog to catch the meat. The SSA officer enjoyed it by holding the meat higher to keep the prisoner from catching the meat and lowering it again to give her another chance.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camps No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

“If you squeal on another person and it turns out to be true, you can have that person’s meal. The person accused is told, ‘Since you did something wrong, you have to skip a meal.’ There are only two meals a day. If you are skillful in squealing, you can have more than three meals a day.” (A22, former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“Pretty much everything is made at the camp. Prisoners are very skillful, Food or clothes are given to reward those who discover new objects. Everyone runs everywhere to try and win the prize.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“Marriage is possible, but only one couple a year. If you made a recognizable contribution to the prison or invented something, you are allowed to marry. You are also given a home to live in. But it is far from ordinary family life. The couple needs to work different shifts and hardly have time to spend together.” (A22, former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“In exchange for marriage, prisoners are forced to work in cruel conditions. The highest happiness in prison is marriage, for which they would dare to do anything. The prisoners want to be recognized because that’s the only way they can enjoy this highest of honors. It’s not just the work that guarantees marriage though. It depends on how obedient you are to the authorities and how well you spy on other prisoners. In other words, you have to work hard and spy on others.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

4) Collective Responsibility

Just like in a society, guilt-by-association exists in prison camps. If one member of the group fails to meet a targeted goal, all of the members are held accountable, which coerces everyone to monitor one another.

“Let’s say we raise cows. If they don’t grow healthy, it’s your fault. If you don’t get work done on time, the entire group gets punished.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camps No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“Completing work means not only getting done the work allocated to an individual, but also to the entire group. If one gets rest when others don’t, he/she has to bear verbal and physical assaults. Indeed, if work isn’t done on time, all the other members of the group are punished with prolonged working hours. The purpose of collective responsibility is to have everyone in the group monitor one another and to increase effectiveness.” (Kang Chul-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

Some testified that, if proven guilty, the entire family of the accused is killed. This extreme response is designed to intensify the monitoring system and obedience.

“Prison camps run a system of five prisoners in a group for collective responsibility. If one of them should commit a serious crime, the rest in the same group are also killed. The life of the informant in the group may be spared at that time but, eventually, they would also be killed later. I know this because I have actually killed them in such cases. No prisoner can leave the camp dead or alive.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

5) Discipline Session, Ideology Study and Lectures

Among the measures to control prisoners are discipline session, study sessions and lectures which are the main activity of the North Korean people.¹⁰⁰⁾ In particular, the discipline session where prisoners are forced to report about faults by other prisoners is an important means to control prisoners. A08, a former camp guard, testified that prisoners

100) Jae-song Yang and et al, *Understanding North Korea*, (Seoul: Institute of Education for Unification, 2008), p. 219.

organized in small groups had the same purpose.

“We had three party organizations; a Youth Group, a Women’s Group and a Worker’s Group. These groups, which didn’t exist in the beginning, were designed for the purpose of brainwashing. Security officers came to participate in the group session.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camps No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

At the maximum security camps – Camp No. 14, 22, 25 and the Yongpyong area of Camp No. 15, the discipline session is regarded as the most important social activity.

“After dinner, I went to the discipline session between 9 and 10. It started with an instructor who basically announced the beginning of the session. Everyone in the group stood up to make a report about other prisoners. Then the officer and prisoners begin to beat the accused prisoners.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“In prison camp, it’s mandatory to participate in ideology re-education sessions for one and half hours between 7 and 8:30. You are expected to criticize yourself and others.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“I attended the discipline session once a week. If you confessed that you had been lazy at work or that you had pulled cabbage out of the ground, you were punished.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

“At work, I attended a discipline session everyday. Also, every week, every month, every quarter, every six months and every year, I had a special

discipline session called an “ideology struggle session.” There was a worksite session after work led by the squad leaders. At home, I had to attend ideology struggle session everyday. When something happened, the session went on throughout the night.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

Kim Yong-sun testified that the accused were taken for a public execution, or sent to an unknown place where he/she lost contact with his family and friends. For this reason, prisoners became silent and distrustful.¹⁰¹⁾

At Camp No. 15 and other prison camps run by the police, prisoners were given a choice for attending one of the following operations: a discipline session, a study session¹⁰²⁾ or a lecture.¹⁰³⁾ Those who kept their party membership card from outside the camp were involved in political life at the camp. Discipline sessions usually end up with physical assault as well as with criticism and accusations.

“I attended the discipline session there too. The light was too dim to read anything. It was a group discipline session with eleven members of the party, including myself. Those with a party membership card were mostly given a rank. They were from everywhere but I don’t know where exactly they were from.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Just like in a society, camps had small party organizations. The authorities

101) Kim Young-soon “I was a friend of Kim’s Wife.” 2008.

102) Jae-song Yang, *op. cit.*, p. 219. A project to consolidate the framework of unique ideology of the Workers’ Party and to enforce the party’s policy.

103) Jae-song Yang, *op. cit.*, p. 219. In the session, participants learn about leaders’ vision.

tried to brainwash them by forcing them to attend discipline sessions regularly. Those who resisted at the sessions were sent to a punishment chamber. A security officer was present at the sessions once a month.” (A06, prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“I had a discipline session every other day. Sometimes it took place every ten days. The camp had political groups and party members, and they could continue their political life as they were used to outside the camp.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“Every morning, a supervisor made a head count. If you were absent from work for three days, you would be sent to forced labor center, which was frightening.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984)

“The disciplinary sessions in the camp were conducted in the same manner as those in North Korean society. Discharged prisoners or staffs all have the party membership id and participate in party activities. A few of prisoners who did not submit their id sometimes do party activities but individually. Individual prisoner for re-revolutionization retain their party membership and do engage in party activities. We didn’t have a women’s union in our camp. The workers’ union took up the role instead. We have a young workers’ union. A discipline session took place every Saturday. Some groups had it on Thursday. A farming group had it every ten days. Study sessions took place every week; whereas lectures took place every other week. Other than these sessions, there were no other sessions that prisoners were forced to attend.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“At discipline sessions, prisoners would accuse one another of committing such offenses as breaking a hoe or for being lazy. The work unit chief might

sometimes call a few prisoners to the front and beat them. After dinner, we were taken to a lecture hall where we were told about the life stories of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il and had to memorize them. If I couldn't remember them well, I might have to stay up through the night until I did, or they would beat me until I could do it.”¹⁰⁴ (Kang Myong-do, former prisoners, Camp No. 18, 1990-1992)

“Of course spies were everywhere. During discipline sessions, a prisoner accused me of making inappropriate statements. I wouldn't voluntarily stand up to admit them. What was scary was when people had spied on me through clandestine dialogues. If I denied them, I would get beaten or have to write a report. It only took three to four slacks to get me to confess. Discipline sessions encouraged everyone to accuse everyone.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1997-1987)

104) Myong-do Kang, *Pyongyang Is Dreaming Asylum*, (Seoul: Chungang Ilbo Sa, 1995).

3. Regulation and Punishment

Strict rules and regulations are enforced in North Korea's political prison camps to maintain control over prisoners. Even in cases where there are no written or clearly specified rules, prisoners are subject to severe restrictions. There is a set of rules for prisoners and another set for camp officials. The camp officials are also at risk of punishment or demotion and could even become political prisoners themselves if they violate prison rules. This chapter analyzes these rules and methods of punishment.

1) Rules and Regulations for Camp Officials

Understanding the rules for camp officials requires an understanding of how the camp officials treat prisoners. The camp officials regard the prisoners as enemies. The officers view political prisoners as individuals who committed crimes against the state and Korean people, which is the worst of all crimes, so they were not to be treated as human beings. In his book, Ahn Myong-chol, a former guard at Camps No. 13 and 22, describes this mentality well. When he was first assigned to Camp No. 13 and completed his training as a guard, the chief administrator of the camp made the following speech:

“Our Camp No. 13 is a scene of a fierce class struggle against the wicked elements of factionalists and their children who betrayed the party and the leader. These fellows are always ready to betray our leader and rebel. Dear comrades, it is your duty to destroy their conspiracy at the appropriate time. As you learned during your recruit training, the political prisoners here in this camp are all wicked reactionaries and you must be ready at

all times to protect yourself. These fellows are so wicked that they will smile at you and then stab you from behind when you feel pity for them or sympathize with them”¹⁰⁵⁾ (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

Choi Dong-chol, a guard at Camp No. 11, stated that he heard that SSA officers killed prisoners arbitrarily for fun and testified that he also believed the prisoners were class enemies who rebelled against North Korea and that they thus deserved to be killed. He confessed that he was constantly on alert at the camp as if he were in enemy territory because he was taught not to view them as humans. Anger and hostility were boiling and swelling up in his heart¹⁰⁶⁾. The witness, A22, who worked at Camp No. 22, testified to the same effect.

“The main emphasis was that you must not be kind generous to prisoners. Prisoners are sworn enemies and one could not be sympathetic towards them.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

Camp No. 18 was under the control of the police and operational systems there were relatively less harsh. The atmosphere of the Camp No. 18 encouraged guards to hate prisoners even though there were no direct orders to hate them.

“This is also a human relationship and we received no such education against prisoners. The treatment of prisoners was totally different from

105) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-32.

106) Yong-sam Kim, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-139.

those of ordinary villagers in the entire atmosphere of the camp as the difference between heaven and earth. We were above them in status as they were the prisoners and we were their bosses. There was no specific instruction to treat prisoners inhumanely. Once, in 1997 or 1998, there was an instruction from Choi Mun-dok, the Political Bureau Director for the National Police Ministry, to exchange prisoners' blood for coal. Officials were told not to be worried about their deaths because human life is not important. Prisoners should be made to work harder to increase coal production. You know that there are many accidents in coal mines. The instruction meant that officers should not worry about accidents and just keep increasing coal production with little regard to human life. As a result of this instruction, we were really tough with prisoners at that time. It was a serious violation of human rights. There were many cases of tragic accidents.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

The concept of viewing prisoners as enemies who should not be treated as humans is fully reflected in the rules and regulations. Choi Dong-chul testified that there was a rule to shoot prisoners to death if they should resist and that, because of this rule, there were cases of unnecessary shootings. He further testified that a camp rule specified that all camp officers and guards must move around in teams of three carrying loaded guns as if the camp were a battle field.¹⁰⁷⁾ Naturally, under no circumstances should camp officers show sympathy for prisoners as human beings. It was prohibited to socialize with prisoners or accept any requests. The camp officer would be subject to denouncement and punishment if they helped or had any relationship with a prisoner.

107) *ibid.*, pp. 133-139.

“Often, camp officials had meetings. It was emphasized at the meetings that we have not any relations with prisoners. We as camp officials had much land and we needed to have our prisoners work on our land unofficially. In fact, this was against the rules. It was also emphasized that we should not help prisoners contact the outside world. We were able to travel outside and often received requests from prisoners who were from Pyongyang to take a message to someone outside the camp for payment in US dollars. Camp officials were punished for this and discharged from the service if such assistance was provided. At these meetings, all of the behaviors in violation of the rules were punished. The attendants were all equal colleagues but were treated very badly if they were criticized by a senior party member for violating the camp rules. Denunciations were made in detail, showing everyone the amount of money involved. These meetings were held once a month.” (A32, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

“When we first arrived here on our appointment of duty, they showed us the rules and regulations. We were punished if we violated them. We were not allowed to bring prisoners letters, messages from their relatives or anything like this. We were punished for breaching the rules. The rules said that officials should not negotiate with or have any relations with prisoners, have anything to do with them, marry a prisoner, barter, use them for private purposes or allow them to visit you. They were strictly discriminated against in schools, shops and hospitals.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“There was someone who was expelled for being too nice to prisoners.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

Camp officials who had sexual relationships with prisoners were fired

and lost all of their social status. Ahn Myong-chol showed such cases in his book. In one case Sergeant Choi Chol-nam had a sexual relationship with a girl from Japan and attempted to take her letter to her relatives. He was criticized, relieved of duty, expelled from the party and dishonorably discharged from service.¹⁰⁸⁾

Choi Dong-chol also testified that there were seven or eight cases a year of sexual relationships between guards and prisoners, in which case the guards were criticized, demoted and denied a university education after discharge.¹⁰⁹⁾

One of the most important rules is to keep all information regarding the camp secret. Outside the camp, officials must keep the existence of and conditions of the camp secret and inside the camp, they must keep all information about the outside world secret to the prisoners. Ahn Myong-chol testified that guards had lied to others about their posts when they were outside the camp to keep their camp secret. Inside the camp, they kept in their pockets half-smoked cigarettes that were wrapped by a newspaper to block all information about the outside world from prisoners.¹¹⁰⁾ Ahn said that North Korean authorities began to be concerned with maintaining secrecy since 1993, when the political prison camp in Sungho-ri was disclosed by an international human rights organization. This is an indication that even for the North Korean authorities, the operation of such political camps is something to be ashamed of and needs to be hidden.

108) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-48.

109) Yong-sam Kim, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-139.

110) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-27.

2) Rules and Regulations for Prisoners

The rules and regulations for prisoners may vary by camp but some rules are uniform throughout all camps in North Korea. Such rules include “You must not escape,” “You must accomplish your daily quota,” “You must watch other prisoners,” and “You must not have sexual relationships.” The rules and regulations of the maximum security camps are more severe, more strictly applied, and require harsher punishments than in re-education camps or police camps. This is clearly revealed by the testimony of A20, who was a camp officer at Camp No. 18, which was near Camp No. 14.

“Yes, we were very close to Camp No. 14 and I know some things about it. Camp No. 14 is for political prisoners convicted of anti-state conspiracies and revisionists. They have operational systems that are totally different from the systems here. The prisoners there were denied civil rights and citizenship. They can only get married if they work very hard. Denial of citizenship implies that they are not human beings. In other words, they are simply animals...and they are not allowed to look camp officials in the face on the streets or at work. When they meet camp officials, they must stop and give them a deep bow and greet them by saying, “Sir.” Camp No. 14 is quite different from others. Since prisoners there are not citizens, there is no such thing as a trial. Because they are not citizens, they are executed without trials. They are executed after an announcement and that’s all. Prisoners there can be killed for failing to meet the daily quota. They are also executed for falling in love. The rules are that much stricter there.”
(A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Shin Dong-hyuk, a former prisoner at Camp No. 14, testified to the

rules and regulations of the camp in detail in his book. The rules and regulations were composed of ten principal provisions and over 50 sub-sections. The rules begin with the phrase, “All things in accordance with the demand of rules and regulations,” and all children in school were forced to memorize them. Children were not allowed to go home until they memorized them. All prisoners were required to keep in mind and thoroughly observe the camp rules at all times.¹¹¹⁾ The following ten principal rules show a general picture of life in the camp.

First, you shall not escape.

Second, you shall not be with more than three prisoners.

Third, you shall not steal.

Fourth, you must absolutely obey SSA officers.

Fifth, you shall report immediately anyone from outside or any suspicious figure.

Sixth, you shall watch each other and immediately report any suspicious action.

Seventh, you shall exceed the workload assigned to you.

Eighth, you shall not be in any relationships with other prisoners other than work-related business.

Ninth, you shall deeply reflect upon your mistakes.

Tenth, you shall be immediately executed by firing squad in case of violation of the rules or regulations of the camp.

The testimonies by former guards and officials were not detailed about the rules and regulations for prisoners since they were not prisoners themselves. Nevertheless, their testimonies summarize that the camp rules

111) Dong-hyuk Shin, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-62.

required prisoners to be absolutely obedient to officials, to accomplish work quotas, stay within the limits of their area at all times and admit and confess to errors.

“Whenever a prisoner encounters a guard or an SSA officer in the camp, the prisoner must stop his/her work and acknowledge the authority by dropping to his knees with eyes downcast, or by giving a deep bow in which the back is in 90 degrees to stiffened legs. Prisoners are mercilessly beaten or taken to a punishment chamber for violating this rule.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994).

“There were no rules for prisoners. All prisoners were required to work like cows. There were no rules for them. They had to obey their chief of the work unit. They were not allowed to have gatherings of more than three of them at one place. Other than that, there were no such things as rules for them.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“There is something they call a “travel area.” Prisoners may move around within their travel area. If they are outside their area, sometimes they are not able to return, and sometimes they starve to death.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“Marriage is allowed if the girl is younger than 27 and the man is younger than 30. If they have sexual relations before they reach that age, they are punished.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“Prisoners are punished for not reporting what they know. In case of any error, the prisoner reports to the SSA officer and other prisoners all report the same error. Failure to report was subject to severe punishment.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camps No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

There are no specific rules or regulations for prisoners in re-education zone or police-run camps, but new prisoners learn camp rules from old prisoners or through a natural process of life and work at the camp.

In the re-education zone of Camp No. 15, there were rules that prohibit escape, relationships between men and women, three prisoners being in the same place. The rules also does not allow prisoners to fail to accomplish work quotas, to discuss a prisoner's experiences before the arrest, to possess prohibited items, to greet between prisoners, to eat anything other than the food rationed and to speak to prisoners about political crimes. Of all the rules, the prohibition against escape was the most important, and in reality, escaping attempts were punishable by execution. Violation of other rules may be lightly treated with criticism and beatings or heavily with detention at a punishment chamber according to the degree of seriousness. But overall punishment is comparatively lighter than that in maximum security area.

“There was no such thing as written rules to memorize but there were many prohibitions. You understand these unwritten rules from old prisoners and SSA officers on arrival and frequently during the ideological struggle sessions. For example, prisoners were often warned against any contact between men and women. Some women would leave a little food for other male prisoners. They were punished if they were caught. If they were caught, they were denied food rations, given harder work and forced to stand on the platform where they would be criticized by other prisoners.”
(A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“We were in a team of three prisoners at all times. The three prisoners

must move collectively. We had to go the toilet together. One of the three was always a spy. I was not a spy. I never confided with any prisoners because many of them were spies.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“The rules forced us to accomplish a daily work quota, not to talk about life before arrest and be subject to execution in case of attempts to escape.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

The followings are testimonies from Kang Cheol-hwan, a former prisoner in the re-education zone of Camp No. 15. and from other former prisoners of the same camp who discuss camp rules in detail.

“Firstly, committing suicide is prohibited. Pae Chong-chol was my friend. His father, Pae Yong-sam, left a will apologizing to the entire family for the severe suffering he caused and said he could no longer endure the pain. He went up to Limsan valley and killed himself. SSA officers declared that Pae Yong-sam betrayed the country and the Korean people, was a traitor, and therefore, the term of imprisonment for his family must be prolonged. In the camp, not only the offender, but also his family were branded as traitors and their imprisonment term was extended by five years. The dead body was taken away from the family to an unknown location. The body was buried somewhere under the road so that no one could find it again. Second, prisoners are prohibited from greeting each other. The camp rules state that all prisoners in the camp are criminals, whether the prisoner committed the initial offence or the prisoner was there because of guilt-by-association. Therefore, no prisoner should greet another prisoner. Third, the rules are about prisoners at work. Morning call starts at 5:30 a.m. If a prisoner is late for the morning formation three times, the offense is equivalent to an absence of a day. In this case the prisoner loses meals

for one day. The work quota must be met and working hours are strictly observed in accordance with regulations. There is a study session after work everyday and two lectures a week, which are essential processes for ideological reform and promotion of a revolutionary spirit.”¹¹²⁾ (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“The rules state that prisoners who carry such foods as salt, dry meat, marinated foods, corn or any cooked plants are subject to a punishment. You cannot also stay in the toilet for more than 10-15 minutes. You must not leave your file or work. There are no written rules to memorize. During a orientation class after arrival at the camp, prisoners are always cautioned not to carry food. Many prisoners hide food inside their pockets. If food is detected, the prisoner may be sent to Yongpyong, which is a maximum security camp. You cannot carry around rice, cooked rice or salt. If you plan to move far away in preparation for an escape, you are also punished. If old people are caught, they are severely beaten. The SSA officer may suspect any prisoner and suddenly summon any prisoner at any time and demand that they give them their hidden rice or other things.” (Lee Yong-kuk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“The most fundamental and important rule is about the system of groups of three prisoners. One of the three prisoners may go to a toilet. The other prisoners must be within calling distance so that they can immediately check the prisoner who is staying in the toilet for more than ten minutes. If there is no movement from the prisoner for five minutes after being called, it is considered an escape attempt. If caught, the prisoner is sent to a punishment

112) Cheol-hwan Kang, *op. cit.*, pp. 293-294.

chamber...You must keep yourself in the team of three prisoners at all times at the re-education camp. It is also written on the camp's gate.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“Prisoners in the maximum security zone are those who are guilty of political crimes. There is a rule that makes speaking to them an offense. During the orientation class, officials clearly tell us that we were in the re-education zone. They told me that political prisoners are there for life, and we would return to society some day. Therefore, we should not have anything to do with them. If we violate this rule, our imprisonment term may be extended for one year. This is a punishment for violating the rules. We will be taken to a punishment chamber if any prisoner is discovered to speak with political prisoners. The rules also tell us not to escape and not to associate with political prisoners. The rules also tell us to accomplish the work quota. There are many fish in the river but the rules say that we aren't allowed to catch a fish. If you are caught fishing, you will be punished. We were not allowed to eat grass in the mountains. Every work unit has a threshing floor. If any prisoner was so hungry that he or she attempted to steal cereal from the threshing floor, the prisoner would be taken away to a punishment chamber.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

Even in the police-run camps, prohibition against escape is the most important rule, followed by accomplishments or work quotas. The other rules are more or less the same as ordinary rules outside the camp, such as prohibition of murder, stealing, etc.

“There were no written rules. No one has to memorize any rules. Escape was prohibited but we could go walk around at night. They told us that

we would be immediately shot to death if we were outside the authorized areas.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“When you first arrive at the camp, you take classes by sectors for safety rules, etc., then all prisoners are pushed into an underground tunnel that turns out to be a mine. There are 10 rules in the camp including one that forbids prisoners from speaking to anyone outside the camp for the duty of protection of the Leader and his reputation. It is made clear to the prisoner that he will be rearrested again for a violation of those rules. Since I was sent there when I was only a small child, I cannot remember all the rules. They read those rules to me when I was being released. I understood that theft and murder were among the violations of rules there.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“There were no particular rules for prisoners. All they wanted was to make prisoners work hard in mines. It was a fundamental requirement to accomplish the daily work quota. They warn prisoners not to cause accidents in the mine. All they wanted from us was to increase production.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“All we did in the camp was to eat and farm and nothing else. Family members of the offenders were slightly better off than other prisoners. There were no particular rules or anything like that. There were no rules that prohibit a group of more than three prisoners.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

3) Penalty System for Prisoners

In the political prison camps in North Korea, several methods of punishment are used to control prisoners. Punishments include routine

beatings, ideology struggle sessions, reduced food rations, extended working hours, time in a punishment chamber, preliminary investigation, detention in forced labor center, prison term, transfer to other SSA prison, forced disappearance, and public and secret executions. There is no standard punishment, but the level of punishment varies by the type of offense, camps and times. Beatings occur routinely and immediately when minor mistakes are made at a worksite or during an ideology struggle session. Reduced food rations and extension of working hours are immediately applied without due process for failing to accomplish the work quota or another minor offense.

The level of punishment is sometimes determined through an internal process of investigation that resembles a trial. If a prisoner is caught or suspected of any offense, the prisoner is first arrested and punished through a simple process of investigation and decision or trial. Human rights violations routinely occur during the punishment process. Food is reduced and prisoners are beaten and tortured during the process of investigation. Punishment is decided after the investigation. While there are cases of prisoners being released after an investigation, prisoners are usually ordered to perform hard work at the most severe worksite in the camp, or imprisoned in a prison within the camp. In extreme cases, the prisoner is transferred to another prison under the SSA for a fixed prison term. Some prisoners are executed openly or secretly in the camp for serious offenses.

(1) Reason and Type of Punishment

The most common causes of punishment are the failure of meeting work

quotas, stealing food and materials, having sexual relationships and pregnancy, discussing the outside world, having complaints, damaging tools or facilities, and attempting escape. Sometimes, prisoners are punished for no good reason or without any understanding of why they were punished. In the police-run Camp No. 18, where control is comparatively less harsh than other camps, it was revealed that being late for work, quarrels among prisoners and commercial transactions were the most common reasons for punishment. Punishment varies for the same offense by camps. Immediate beatings, reduced meals, hard labor and ideology struggle sessions are commonly used for such minor offenses as a failure to meet the work quota, being late for work or eating vegetables or grains while at work on a farm. However, a prisoner may be transferred to a forced labor center, a punishment facility in the camp or be investigated or detained in the punishment chamber.

In the cases of prohibited sexual relationships or pregnancy, abortion is mandated and prisoners are detained in the punishment chamber for 15 to 40 days or sent to a forced labor center. If an SSA officer in a maximum security camp is involved in sexual relationships, the SSA officer is fired and the woman is tortured or secretly executed in extreme cases.

Discussing a life outside the camp or making complaints are considered a serious offense in the camps. A prisoner found guilty of such offenses is arrested and taken away from other prisoners. In many cases, the prisoner never returns. In fact, the prisoner is investigated at the punishment chamber and secretly executed. In the Kuwup-ni and Sorimchon re-education zone of Camp No. 15 in Yodok, the punishment was

admonition by a camp officer, reduced meals and standing on the platform to be criticized and disgraced by other prisoners.

Prisoners testified that at Camp No. 18, inmates were transferred to a maximum security camp for making critical remarks about the political system (reactionary) until 1982. Since then, no similar cases have been reported. The damage of facilities that results in financial loss and any escape attempts are considered the most serious crimes in the camp. The prisoners in these cases are executed publicly or secretly. In severe cases, prisoners are hanged.

(2) Process of Punishment

There are two patterns of punishment of prisoners in North Korea's political prison camps. Punishment is meted out immediately according to personal decisions by an SSA officer based on the situation or punishment is announced after an investigation and administrative procedures such as a trial are conducted. The SSA officers might impose a punishment, such as a reduction of daily meals and/or additional, more difficult work.

In cases of serious violations of camp rules, the prisoners are subject to a process of investigation, which produced human rights violations, such as reduced meals, torture, beating and sexual harassment. Camp authorities make a final decision internally. Witness A22, a former SSA officer at Camp No. 22, testified about the arbitrary punishment decisions made by camp authorities.

“Prisoners are dragged straight to the punishment chamber without a trial. It was my decision whether to kill him or to give him work. To prisoners,

our chief of SSA used to shout, 'You pig! You useless puppy! You son of a bitch!' This is what we used to say." (A22, former SSA Officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

Witness A08, a former SSA officer at Camp No. 13, testified that there was a political department in the camp and there was a section inside the department that handled trials.

"If a prisoner commits a crime, he/she is sent to the Susong Prison No. 25. When the prisoner's prison term expires, the prisoner comes back to the camp. There is no such thing as permanent release. There are trials. There are internal courts. The courts are under the control of the political department and there are judges also. They are all SSA officers. The trials are public. Preliminary investigations take place in the jail." (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

Further information is needed to decide whether the trial process in Camp No. 13 was unique and existed only for a specific time, or is common for all camps. Some witnesses testified that there is an open trial in cases of public execution, but some trials where execution has already been decided and all the necessary arrangements have been made for the execution. These arrangements included reading an indictment against the convict and declaring a death sentence, which clearly terrorized other prisoners. According to a witness testimony, in Camp No. 18 the decision to publicly execute a prisoner is not made by the camp. Then, the 7th Bureau of the National Police Ministry requests a public execution on the basis of the camp's request and their request is reviewed and authorized in turn by the Central Party.

“Public executions are reviewed by a bureau of the Police Ministry and approved by the central party. When a public execution is approved, a senior official from the prosecution office announces that someone is sentenced to death in accordance with some sections of law. That’s the trial.” (A32, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

“In North Korea, instructions from an individual are more powerful than any laws and trials. Public executions must be approved by the Police Ministry. Officers in the field make a request and high officials simply sign the approval without any knowledge of the situation. The life or death of a prisoner is determined by officers in the field office.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Prisoners are often punished arbitrarily based upon personal decisions by camp officers in the political prison camps in North Korea. Even when punishment is determined by a due legal process, in most cases the process appears to be a mere formality. Details of punishment are as follows:

① Beating/Ideology Struggle Sessions

Beating is the most basic means for forcing prisoners to accomplish daily work quotas in the camps. SSA officers often beat prisoners, but primarily, it is prisoners who beat other prisoners. Prisoners are appointed to supervise other prisoners and are responsible for fulfilling work quotas, so they will beat prisoners without any hesitation if a prisoner falls behind others in their work. Unfortunately, this is not the end of it. The prisoners who were beaten at work during day time are forced to stand on a platform

during ideology struggle sessions in the evening to take all of the blame and endure the psychological distress by other prisoners.

In Camp No. 14, a maximum security camp, beatings at worksites are very common, but beatings in school by the chieftains of students are also very common for any minor misbehavior.

“It is violence that rules the camps and it is violence that maintains the camps...In the camp, prisoners are not under the direct supervision of guards but under a work unit chief, who makes prisoners work hard despite being a prisoner himself. In school, children are severely beaten by teachers, but also by the class monitors at the order of the teacher.”
(Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

It has been revealed that the perpetrators of physical violence are both SSA officers and prisoners in Camp No. 15, even though there are some distinct differences.

“Hard labor continued without rest. The work was so hard that if you sat down a little, they would shout “You Dogs!” at you, kick you very hard and crush your hands with their boots. In Yongpyong-ni, prisoners were forced to beat each other during ideology sessions. Tips from prisoner informants led to the arrest of many prisoners for making mistakes in their remarks.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“Beating is the most common punishment in the camp. All prisoners are beaten for any minor errors. For serious offences, prisoners are sent to the punishment chamber.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“The Company Commander may report to the SSA officer in charge about a particular prisoner who is not working hard, so the SSA officer will come to the spot and severely beat the prisoner. In the General Work Unit, a prisoner was caught stealing food and beaten with a stick. The SSA officers beat prisoners several times a month. You must be alert at all times. I was beaten with a stick and kicked at a number of times for being liberal. Wherever you go, mistreatment and contempt follow you.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1997)

“When your work falls behind others, the SSA officer beats you, not the squad leader or the platoon leader. The SSA officer may be at some distance away and instruct a prisoner, “Bring him over here.” Then, he beats the prisoner with a stick. Normally, the work unit chief, a prisoner, does not use a stick to beat prisoners. Yes, there are fights between prisoners and they beat one other, but there weren’t any cases where a prisoner was beaten by another prisoner for failing to achieve the work quota. Almost all prisoners have been beaten by SSA officers. Yes, they beat you with a stick. Beating is prevalent at the levels of battalion and company. They have a bundle of 20 sticks. They beat prisoners one by one until all the sticks are broken.” (Lee Young-guk, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

However, reports have showed that beatings by the prisoners were very common in the Sorimchon area. All former prisoners from this area have reported that they never saw any SSA officers beat prisoners in the presence of other prisoners at worksites. If a prisoner failed to accomplish work targets, the company or platoon commanders were usually brought to the office and they were beaten there by SSA officers. The commanders who were beaten by SSA officers, in return, beat prisoners in anger. All of the witnesses from other areas were there before the year

2000, while all of the witnesses from Sorimchon were there after the year 2000. Therefore, further information is needed to determine whether there was a difference in the practice of beating prisoners and whether it was unique to the Sorimchon area or if general practices have since changed.

“At work, SSA officers yell at prisoners, but do not beat them. The company commander would beat prisoners. He is forced to be tough with them to accomplish the work quota.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“The SSA officers normally did not beat prisoners. But prisoners were beaten sometimes in the office of interview. The company commanders were often beaten by SSA officers for any problems in his company, such as fighting between prisoners. In return, the company commanders beat and gave the prisoners a hard time. In essence, the SSA officers are beating prisoners indirectly through platoon leaders or company commanders.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“If there are delays in work, the company and platoon leaders may beat prisoners and handle prisoners who complain at their discretion. A prisoner may kick at another prisoner or a woman may grab the hair of another woman prisoner during altercations with each other. Everywhere there is a practice and law to settle problems, isn't there? They often punish the prisoners by making them sit and stand repeatedly. Women were not severely beaten, but men were beaten by other prisoners or the company or platoon leaders. For the same offences, men were beaten. Bad prisoners beat other prisoners.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

In Camp No. 17, policemen watched and beat prisoners at work sites.

“They made prisoners work like horse. You will never understand this unless you have been there yourself. The police sergeants followed us and beat us at work.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

It appears that, in Camp No. 18, prisoners were frequently beaten at worksites by the preferentially treated.

“It was very common that prisoners were beaten at work. Prisoners were discriminated by the preferentially treated. They beat prisoners very violently. Sometimes, they looked for an excuse to beat prisoners.” (A17, former prisoners, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“Prisoners are watched at work but beaten during the ideology struggle session after work.” (A19, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni and Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

It is also reported that prisoners are commonly beaten by other prisoners at worksites in Camp No. 22. In his book, Ahn Myong-chol told a story of Ham Bok-sun who was a prisoner clerk at Camp No. 22. He describes how Ms. Ham mercilessly used a stove hook to beat a prisoner who made an error at an ideology struggle session. Ahn testifies that prisoners selected to supervise other prisoners controlled and administered prisoners with violence in lieu of SSA officers.¹¹³⁾ A22, another witness from Camp No. 22, also testified to the practice of prisoners beating fellow prisoners.

113) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-162.

“Beating is also a punishment. SSA officers do not beat but we make prisoners beat prisoners.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

A former prisoner from Prison No. 25, an SSA-operated camp, testified that a prisoner was beaten by guards on the spot for stealing food. Unlike political prison camps elsewhere, prisoners are detained in cells at Prison No. 25. It is reported that prisoners are punished for minor errors by being forced to sit on their knees and hold up both arms.

“You are badly beaten for eating cabbage while at work. You are usually beaten with a stick ten times. Prisoners are also badly beaten for eating corn in the corn field during harvest. Because of the beating at that time, I still feel pain in my leg on rainy days. Prisoners were forced to sit on their knees and hold up both arms as a punishment.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

② Reduced Meals and Additional Labor

Prisoners get reduced meals as a punishment for failing to fulfill their daily work quotas or for inadequate supervision of other prisoners.

“The most serious punishment was the reduced rations from the half-meal punishment.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“You are punished for violating camp rules, for failing to accomplish your work target, for failing to return at a given time, or for taking a stroll at night, etc. Types of punishment are various, including denied meal for the offender, possibly for everyone in the company. Once, ox carts were on fire and all prisoners who were nearby put out the fire. Very strangely,

the oxcarts caught on fire again and were destroyed. Then, all prisoners were given the additional work duty of felling three trees. We had such poor meals at that time.” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

“For punishment, they made prisoners work harder and stand on the platform to take criticism during the evening discipline session of prisoners.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“Prisoners were punished for being late, even by one minute. Lateness three times was equivalent to one day’s absence and meals were denied the whole day.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“There was no food punishment.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

In cases of serious offense, but not so serious as to execute the prisoners, the prisoners are punished by hard labor and sent to a worksite where the work is the hardest in the entire camp. During this time, half rations are provided to the prisoners to aggravate the suffering.

“In the case of serious offenses that didn’t merit execution, political prisoners were punished with hard labor. In the case of working at a mine, prisoners were not allowed to leave the shaft for days and given half-rations during the period.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camps No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

“For having a sexual relation, the prisoners were sent to do the most

difficult tasks, such as pushing a coal cart in the shaft of coal mine or irrigation work at a farm. During the period of punishment, prisoners are not allowed to come home and are forced to continue irrigation work, spending nights in a tent. This is really a dreadful punishment.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

③ Detention at Punishment Chamber

There are facilities in the North Korean political prison camps for the detainment, investigation and punishment of prisoners who breach camp rules. They are called punishment chamber, detention rooms, detention houses, secret prisons or disciplinary prisons. The facilities are used to punish and detain prisoners for the period of investigation and final decision. The period of detention is normally anywhere from fifteen days to two months. The period is extended in cases of complex involvement in the crime. The facilities are noted to be the worst spot in the entire camp in terms of human rights violations because of beatings, torture and reduced food rations. A report from a former prisoner who was detained there for an extended period of time shows that the facilities are a prison within a prison.

Prisoners are so shocked when they see the horrible body of a fellow prisoner who is just released from a detention facility. Prisoners obey the rules and work very hard so that they are not sent there. The facility is the cruel place because many prisoners die shortly after they are released.

“At the punishment chamber, preliminary investigations are also conducted. The detention house is at Tongpo. There are five chambers for preliminary investigations. Prisoners stay there until their trial. At trials, prisoners may

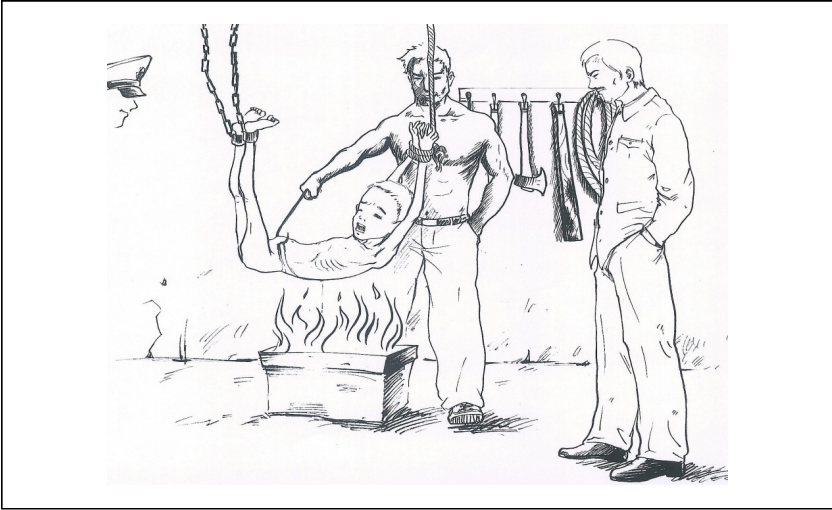
be pardoned or sent to Susong prison No. 25. The camp is already such a difficult place but the punishment chamber is much worse, which is why all prisoners fear it. On release, one prisoner needed someone to take him to his shelter because he was not able to walk by himself.” (A08, SSA officer, Camps No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

Of all the witnesses, Shin Dong-hyuk is the only one who had experienced with the punishment chamber and describes how cruel the facility is.

“I am a victim of torture in the torture chamber of the secret prison in the camp, when I was fourteen years old. I was stripped and hung upside down from the ceiling. Someone started a charcoal fire and brought it close under my back. I felt the heat in my waist and I shrieked. I struggled hard and moved my body away from the fire. They kept moving the fire so that I could not escape burning. Eventually, they hooked me near my groin to stop my struggling until I fainted. I was detained in a solitary cell for about twenty days. After that, I was allowed meals three times a day.¹¹⁴⁾” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

None of the witnesses from Camp No. 15 was ever detained in the detention house there. None of the available witnesses from Camp No. 15 has ever been detained in the punishment chamber there, but they had heard about it or had seen the victims when they were released and been able to imagine the horrible conditions there. They know that prisoners, as a standard rule, were forced to sit on knees for many hours with hardly enough food for survival. It is reported that men’s survival rate

114) Dong-hyuk Shin, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-176.



Source: Shin Dong-hyuk, “North Korean Maximum Security Camp Out to the World, NKDB

was lower than women’s. Having a sexual relationship with another prisoner or expressing political views were the most common charges against them.

“They send prisoners to the punishment chamber for speaking about their life before arrest, expressing political views, complaining about conditions in the camp, poor work records or complaining about the camp system. They send prisoners to the punishment chamber for criticizing the North Korean society or having sexual relationships. There is a punishment chamber in the camp. I know someone who was sent there for having a conversation with a prisoner from another area while collecting wild herbs in the mountain. I know another prisoner who had been there for a month for not obeying a camp officer.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“There are solitary and punishment chambers in the area of Yongpyong. The chamber is about 1.5 meters by 2.5 meters and the height of a door. They say there are many chambers like that. Those prisoners who defied work orders are sent there. I know a prisoner whose name was Lee Chon-kun. He had been in such a chamber for two months for stealing corn. When he returned, he looked so wretched and badly undernourished. Somehow, he survived it, but he did not say a word about the solitary confinement chamber. He knew that he would be killed if he said anything about it. He was very closely watched. A woman prisoner, by the name of Han Shin-ok, who had been in the Yodok Camp for two years, died at the solitary chamber in Yongpyong. Han Shin-ok was there for about a month. Prisoners were half-dead when released from the chamber and most of them did not survive more than fifteen days after the release.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“Many prisoners were arrested during the ideology struggle sessions. They were sent to a punishment chamber in the office of SSA in Camp No. 15. The SSA office building is at a location about 100 meters from the main gate. No one survived there.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“For any offense for which beating is not a sufficient punishment, prisoners are sent to the punishment chamber. This is a place where prisoners are detained for the violation of camp rules, stealing, having secret love affairs or disobeying orders. The most common charge is stealing corn or beans at work. Many prisoners are sent there for no good reason except that SSA officers simply did not like them. Normally, a prisoner is detained there for about a month. The punishment chamber is located at a corner of the residence area where families of SSA officers live. There are many small chambers partitioned by barbed wires with a corridor in the middle that

is patrolled by guards repeatedly for surveillance of the inmates. Prisoners are forced to sit on their knees from five in the morning until midnight, when they are allowed to sleep. The only time they can stretch is when they are eating and using the toilet. Sitting on your knees without any physical exercise for so many hours for a month makes even strong men crippled.¹¹⁵⁾” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“For whatever reason, they will sentence prisoners to hard time and sometimes send them to the punishment chamber.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“A woman was sent to the punishment chamber for creating internal confusion and disorder. When she was released, the prisoner was half dead. She looked as though she would die soon, having been forced to sit on her knees for 30 days. In normal prisons, you are forced to sit down with your legs half-crossed, but in the punishment chamber, you are forced to sit on your knees. When prisoners are released, they are skeletons.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“One day, a prisoner was called by an SSA officer and put in jail. Nobody knew why. Prisoners are normally jailed for about a month. The prisoner is dragged like a dog from the jail when released. It was said that, in the jail, prisoners would be given three spoons of grain at each meal and forced to remain in a crouched position, without any movement. All prisoners who had been to jail died shortly afterward.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006, 2003-2006)

115) Cheol-hwan Kang, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

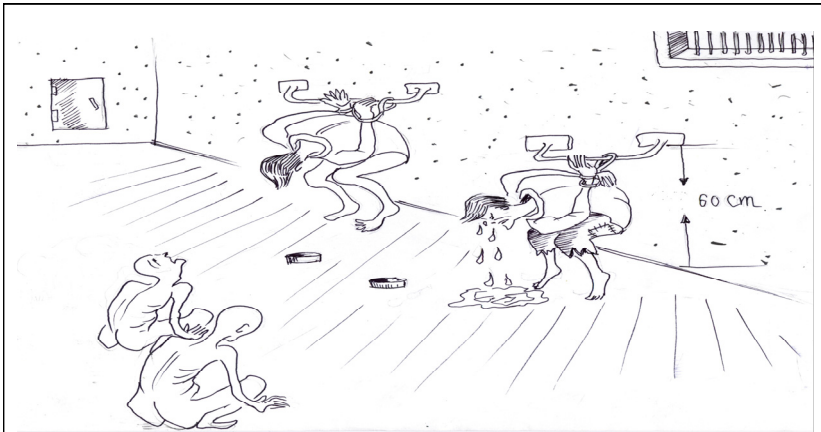
The police detention center or punishment chamber in Camp No. 18 is similar to a police cell in a society and the suspects are detained there for investigation. In other words, the detention center exists not for punishment, but rather, for investigation of a crime. One witness, A32, testified that prisoners, the preferentially treated, and camp officials were detained in the punishment chamber in Camp No. 18. As in other camps, people were detained there for expressing political views or having sexual relationships, but the most common offense was related to economic affairs. During the preliminary investigation, the suspects were normally tortured, as is common everywhere in North Korea. Further information is required to determine whether or not the torture practiced here is more severe than torture elsewhere in North Korea.

“This is a true story told by a policeman in the Sohak area police station. The policeman arrested someone who was doing suspicious spying activity. The suspect strongly denied the charge. This was a serious case, warranting execution, if he admitted to the crime. He vehemently denied the charge. He was held there during an investigation and the police used all kinds of torture such as electric shock, no food for one week, water torture and pushing a needle under one’s fingernails.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“Additionally, there are cells in police stations. Thieves, escapees, those involved in love affairs and slow workers are detained here. Mostly, their crimes were economy-related. The length of detention depended on the type of charge against them. Certain charges, which require the detention of suspects for an extended period of time, needed an approval from the 7th Bureau of the National Police Ministry. For example, those who were arrested for gambling with a

large number of people were detained for a long period of time since the charge requires an approval from the police ministry. Some suspects were released and others were sent to prison outside the camp. Those with minor offenses may be released by giving a bribe to junior officers or deputy chief of the police and individual prisoners for re-revolutionization, who were former high-ranking officers may be easily released. But, some people were sent to Camp No. 15 at Yodok for attempting to go to South Korea or for superstitious practices. Those arrested include the preferentially treated and camp officials.” (A32, former camp officer, 1987-1990, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18)

Ahn Myong-chol testified that even the guards were horrified at first by what they saw in the punishment chamber beside their bunk house. He testified about the process of detention at the punishment chamber. All prisoners, men or women, have their heads shaved on arrival, and



Both hands tied at a height of 60 cm for many hours, unable to stand or sit down. This is called the pigeon torture.

they are beaten to near death and then dragged into the chamber and forced to sit on their knees for 24 hours. Prisoners are severely beaten or denied even meager food portions (100 grams per day per prisoner) for any slight movements. In order to receive the small amount of food for survival, all prisoners endure the pain of their legs which get paralyzed, while sitting on their knees without movement. They are fully crippled after three months and killed after five months.¹¹⁶⁾ A22, another witness from the same camp, who was an SSA officer in the camp, has told a similar story and described the torture there in detail.

“There is a disciplinary prison in the camp, a prison inside the prison. You can understand the camp to be like a city. Prisoners are detained in the prison for three days for eating unauthorized food. They are badly beaten without any food during the period. Guards seriously beat prisoners every two hours in shifts. The informants get half of a cent for their reporting and all prisoners compete to tattle on other prisoners for this small amount of money. Prisoners are brought here without a trial. I could kill them or let them keep their life at my discretion. I made the decision. Lawyers? Never heard of them. An SSA officer would sit by the stove and make them sit and stand up ten times with firewood under their arms. Because of this they are half dead. The prisoner is forced to sit on their knees by the stove and their knees are beaten with firewood, which is very painful for them. Then, two prisoners are hand-cuffed, one hand to each other, side by side. Then their hands are beaten so hard that they are smashed and bleeding. After this they cannot even hold up chopsticks. They are also often stripped and hung from the ceiling upside down for a violent beating.” (A22, former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

116) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

“In the camp, prisoners are commonly sent to a solitary cell in the detention center for stealing, fighting or beating other prisoners. Stealing is the most common crime. There is something they call solitary cell water tank torture. There is a small glass tank with a prisoner standing inside on his toes and water is filled up to his nose for 24 hours. Prisoners are detained in a small solitary chamber for three days or one week during which time no food is provided. It is a small chamber just barely enough for a prisoner to sit.” (A22, former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

Camp No. 23 is for the detention of economic prisoners, not for political prisoners. Control systems in Camp No. 23 are less harsh than Camp No. 18. Nevertheless, there is also a detention center for the purpose of conducting preliminary investigation and punishment of prisoners in case of violations of camp rules.

“Yes, there is a solitary detention chamber in the area of individual prisoners, not our area for prisoners with families. I was told that there were prisoners who fought with other prisoners in the camp. I was told that they were confined to a solitary chamber where a lot of beatings occurred.” (A23, former prisoners, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“Someone I know was there for approximately ten years. Once, he visited a law enforcement officer and made a request for his release. He came back with bruises on his face. I think he argued in his protest that, “I have such a good performance record, why I am not released?” He was beaten on his head with a handcuff by an officer there and was detained in a cell all day long. In fact, the officer was nice to him before. After this, the officer was cool to him. If someone else had made a similar request, he would have been detained there much longer.” (A24, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“Someone I know was arrested for brewing wine with wild fruits and he was sent to a detention center for one year. He was taken to the detention center after having his head shaved.” (A25, former prisoners, Camp No. 23, 1982-1989)

“There were rules and some prisoners were sent to a detention cell or a prison. The detention cell was in the administration building in the camp. They don’t shave heads and prisoners are detained there from fifteen days to a month. Prisoners sit there during the given period and are released on expiration of the term.” (A31, former prisoners, Camp No. 31, 1976-1987)

Witness A27, the only former prisoner from SSA-controlled Prison No. 25, states that there were solitary cells in the prison. However, the solitary cells there were supposed to be for long-term prisoners, not for short-term punishment.

“There were solitary cells with eight prisoners confined there. I don’t know their names. The solitary cells were at the end of the 3rd floor. Nobody had been there and it’s good that we had not been there. They ate after we all finished eating. They were not with us when we were exercising on the grounds. They didn’t work like us. I don’t know why. They had been there for over two years. They were even separated from us when eating. We could see them only when they ate. They were all skin and bone.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

④ Short-Term Prison and Forced Labor Center

In Camp No. 18 and the re-education zone of Camp No. 15, there was a facility called a short-term prison to detain and mobilize prisoners for

harder labor in case of violations of camp rules. It was also called a 'Kompaqu', 'forced labor center' or 'labor training camp', which appears to have performed the same functions as labor training camps elsewhere in North Korea. It is reported that work in forced labor center was much harder and more backbreaking with less meals than that of standard prison camps. Victims were found in serious states of malnourishment when released.

As for the forced labor center in Camp No. 15, we have substantial testimonies from former prisoners. One witness testified that the center is the most dreaded, and prisoners were detained there for a maximum of three months and were forced to perform backbreaking labor for very little food.¹¹⁷⁾ Witness A15, testified that the forced labor center was located between the 1st and 2nd company and that prisoners were detained here for a maximum period of three months for unauthorized fishing and stealing. There were a very small number of prisoners, possibly approximately 25. It is reported that there was an escape attempt and that the camp was closed in 1984, only three months after its establishment. He testified in detail about the establishment of the forced labor center, the reason for its closing, its system of operation, the type of labor work forced on prisoners, its daily routines and other characteristics.

"We called it Kompaqu after the Russian pronunciation from the origin of the history of such center in Russia. When a prisoner breached a camp rule, the prisoner was punished for from fifteen days to a month at the punishment chamber and then was forced into forced labor for three months

117) Cheol-hwan Kang, *op. cit.*, pp. 326-327.

after that. Two prisoners escaped from there and the forced labor center was closed three months after its establishment because of this escape. There were some 25 prisoners. They were there for the offenses of unauthorized fishing, stealing and eating anything other than what was rationed. Violation of the rules usually was related to eating. They said there was no such center before. There was a punishment chamber for punishment. But many prisoners kept violating the rules because they were all starving so badly. So they built their own forced labor center within the camp to stop this but, in vain, some took off. Nevertheless, they couldn't close it right away because they needed to keep the already-detained for three months. It was the prisoners who made other prisoners work harder. They were normally the guys who were there by guilt-by-association. They were worse than camp officials. The main work here was to build an embankment. Prisoners were carrying stones even when eating meals, and they started the work in the morning. They worked and slept there. They were supervised there. They worked for about 12 hours a day. They got up at 7:30 and started work from 8:00 in the morning until 12:00 for lunch break. They resumed work at 12:30 and worked until sunset. They did not need an embankment there but it was built for the sake of making prisoners work. It was for punishment, so they were provided with a very little food, soup and cereals half the amount of standard meals.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

It was reported that there was a forced labor center in Camp No. 17 which has now been closed.

“If any prisoner was absent from work for three days, the prisoner was sent to the forced labor center. One prisoner was sick and could not continue his work. He was arrested for that and was sent to the labor camp. His family went to the camp to see him. When he was released, he had

a swollen belly and a thin face. He died one day after the release.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984)

The prisoners in the short-term prison of Camp No. 18 are divided into two groups. The first group of prisoners serves short-term sentences for six months without wages, while the other groups are imprisoned for relatively longer periods usually from six months to two years. The long-term prisoners are called “culture trainees” and have their heads shaved like prisoners in other prisons in North Korea.

In the Tukchang area, a forced labor center was located in Popi and a short-term prison in Kalkok. In the Pongchang area, a forced labor center was located in Sang-ni inside the short-term prison. Witness A09 testified that he was detained in the labor training camp in Popi in 2007, after Camp 18 had been transferred to Kaechon. It appears that the forced labor center of Camp No. 18 remained and was converted to a normal labor training camp in society after Camp No. 18 was relocated. According to O Myong-o, the short-term prison in the camp had a steel gate, heavy concrete walls and high-voltage electric barbed wire on top of the wall.¹¹⁸⁾ In particular, it is noted that the functions and operational systems of the short-term prison of Camp No. 18 were very similar to the normal labor training camps in North Korean society. It was more so with the short-term prison in the Pongchang area in later stages than in the Tukchang area which was closed in 1995. The reasons are as follows:

First, it must be noted that the preferentially treated, who were classified as normal citizens, were also detained here. Their percentage was

118) Ryu Kyong-won, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

comparatively lower in Tukchang (which was closed in 1995), while the percentage was higher in Pongchang. Witness A32, a former officer from Pongchang, explains that prisoners were needed for coal production and therefore, they were not arrested and not sent to short-term prison. This situation in turn resulted in the number of the preferentially treated being greater than the number of prisoners in the prison.

Second, offenses by prisoners were largely similar to, or more serious than, labor training camps in society, such as helping prisoners for money, involvement in traffic accidents, violations of human rights, errors of financial records, or habitual gambling. A close observation reveals that people were arrested on the same charges also applicable anywhere in North Korean society, other than the crime of helping prisoners for money. In particular, witness A32 testified that ordinary people were detained in the camp in an effort to settle problems within the camp rather than sending them to prisons outside the camp. In the short-term prison, there was a special privileged unit of senior officials, and hard labor was forced only on ordinary prisoners.

According to such opinion, the short-term prison is devised to accommodate ordinary criminals and to help out senior officials who committed a crime rather than functions as punitive facilities to punish inmates.

“Additionally, there was a place where the preferentially treated were collectively detained for having commercial dealings with prisoners or other illegal activities. The forced labor center was in the same place as the short-term prison. It was on top of a hill in Sang-ni with a wall and guardposts around it. Terms of imprisonment were from six months to two

years. Normally, there were 170-180 prisoners. The short-term prison was larger than the forced labor center. Depending on the type of offense, you were sent to short prison term or forced labor center. There were many cases of cover-ups of such crimes by the camp authorities as fighting, injuring others, or the accidental killing of people by drivers that were not serious enough for imprisonment in a prison outside the camp. In the short-term prison, Male inmates comprise drivers, camp officials who were violent to prisoners and financial clerks who usurped funds. Some policemen may have been involved and punished. So, in order to protect policemen and have easy control over prisoners, the prison officials gave such criminals a lot of works to do at the same worksite. Therefore, in the short-term prison, most of them are the preferentially treated, and apart from them are some discharged or drives. In the prison, there was a special work unit for former senior officials. Ordinary prisoners were forced to work.” (A32, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

“The most common crimes by prisoners are fighting or the absence from work. They are punished with additional work without wages instead of being sent to the short-term prison. Prisoners worked very hard for one year and received food rations but no cash. The notice from the Legal Committee of the Police said my punishment was for one year and six months. The committee was composed of five members or so. Prisoners are normally very obedient and they hardly violate the rules. Even though prisoners violate some rules, they are not sent to the short-term prison to make them work at mines.” (A32, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

“In the camp, there is a short-term prison. There are 'prison inmates' and 'workers without wage' in the short-term prison. Workers with no wages are there for six months. Prison inmates are there for up to two years.

Prisoners of light offenses such as injuring others and stealing are ordered to work without wages for six months, while prisoners of serious offenses are sent to the short-term prison. Some prisoners are sent to prisons outside because they committed more serious offenses, but they are not large in number. There were some 20 workers without wages and some 15 inmates, making a total of less than 50. There is a prison director, a prison official and a financial clerk. The preferentially treated/camp officials are also sent there for committing crimes. Working there without any wage is not a legal punishment. It is, rather, an administrative punishment. Prisoners are forced to work as if paying off a fine.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“There was no such thing as a forced labor center. Inside the short-term prison, there were free wage workers and prison inmates. They were not separated. They just used different rooms. The difference is that the free-wage workers did not have their heads shaved. The prison inmates had their heads shaved like ordinary prisoners in other prisons.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

As explained above, the punishment of prisoners may have not been as harsh as in the SSA camps. Nevertheless, it appears that the human rights of prisoners were seriously violated with the exception of prisoners who were senior officials. Observation of the forced labor center shows that the center functions to detain prisoners for such petty crimes as the absence from work, stealing or habitual offenses. They usually carry out such hard work as collecting coal, repair and maintenance of river embankments, house construction, road repair, etc. According to the testimony by A17, who was forced into hard labor in the Tukchang area, the daily schedule of the forced labor center was as follows:

Table 3-1 Daily Schedule of the Forced Labor Center

Hours	Schedule
06:30	Wake up
06:30~8:00	Movement to work site
08:00~12:00	Work
12:00~12:30	Lunch
12:30~17:30	Work

Working hours appear to be short, but his testimony suggests that work here was harder than working in a mine. The number of prisoners was always more or less the same level at around 70-80 with a maximum of 100. Prisoners and discharged prisoners were detained together, but the discharged prisoners were given easy work such as supervising prisoners.

“Inside the camp is a distinct area that is comparable to hell, and the area was called a short-term prison. Prisoners there are called prison inmates and they are there anywhere from six months to two years. On arrival, they have their heads shaved. The objective of the short-term prison in the camp is to discipline prisoners who are not obedient. Work is so hard and food is so scarce that prisoners can be easily killed. After two months here, even healthy and strong prisoners become skin and bone.”¹¹⁹⁾ (O Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

“There is a work unit in the Popi Sector. That is a short-term prison and there is a wall. Prisoners living inside the wall do farmwork and other hard labor, such as splitting and carrying stones. They are prisoners from

119) Choi Jin-i, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-51.

the camp who have committed some kind of crime while there, such as having sexual relations with a woman, stealing, and breaking tools at work.” (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1972-1984)

“There was a short-term prison in the Popi area. Prisoners were sent there because of the absence from work for three days, stealing, and fighting. Everyone worked hard not to be sent there.”(A16, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

“It was not the police that arrested me. It was the camp officials who took me to the police station for confirmation, and then to the forced labor center. In the unit, all the prisoners were assembled at a large hall and I was forced to explain to them why I had been brought there. If I hesitated or spoke slowly, they picked up anything nearby and beat me. This is a process to discipline prisoners and make us fear them so that we would not want to go back there again. I was beaten for 15 or 20 minutes. They beat me with sticks, kicked me and punched me. It was so painful and I was so injured that I could not work for the next two or three days. If I could not get up, they carried me to the worksite on a stretcher. They wanted me to be at the worksite even though I was sick.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

Short-term prison is for prisoners who committed more serious offenses than the forced labor center. Witness A18, from the Tukchang area, testified that prisoners are sent to a short-term prison for killing a prisoner at work, stealing, damaging equipment or tools, or having a sex. A company commander may be sent to the short-term prison for failing to accomplish his work quota.

Witness A17 testified that the prisoners who are denounced for violating

the rules during evening discipline sessions are sent here, while O Myong-o testified that unruly prisoners are sent here.¹²⁰⁾ There is no detailed testimony as to the conditions in the short-term prison in the camps since none of the witnesses available to the NKDB have been in such prisons. Witnesses, however, state that when prisoners were released from these prisons, they were skin and bone and seriously undernourished due to little food and hard work.

“Some prisoners are left to rot there for three years. There are three imprisonment terms: six months, one year and three years. Prisoners are totally disabled upon their release. Small quantities of food and hard labor make prisoners look like walking bones with skin. They eat only a little barley but no salt. They are there to feel pain.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“The work is cruel and prisoners are forced to accomplish work quotas. In the beginning, prisoners repeatedly worked for the sake of work, but later they began to cut limestone for a cement factory. They are not allowed to sleep without accomplishing their work quotas first. Guards are right next to them at work outside. Drinking and smoking is not allowed. After work, they are confined to the prison chambers and not allowed to be outside.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

⑤ Executions: Secret and Public

Prisoners are executed publicly or secretly for the most serious offenses. The executed are people who have made escape attempts or female prisoners who are pregnant after sexual relationships with an SSA officer.

120) *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Public executions are carried out to make prisoners fearful as they are all forced to watch it. Further information is provided in Chapter V: Human Rights Abuses in Political Prison Camps.

“If sexual relationships are discovered between a female prisoner and an SSA officer, the prisoner involved is executed, while the SSA officer involved is dishonorably discharged from service. Choi Chol-su, the SSA officer in charge of work unit 3 in the Sawul area, made a female prisoner pregnant in the fall of 1992. He was dishonorably discharged and banished to work at a coal mine. The female prisoner was executed secretly. However, there are cases in which the life of the female prisoner is spared when she has some value, such as spying on other prisoners.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

“I have actually witnessed public executions about 5 times per year. The victims were from other valleys. The camp authorities tell us why they are executed. The reasons for execution I can remember now were defiance of North Korean system, espionage acts, or refusal to be reformed. The most common charge for public execution is attempting to escape” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No.15, 1996-1997)

⑥ Extension of Prison Terms, Imprisonment in SSA-run Prisons and Disappearances

For the purposes of control, prisoners in North Korean PPCs are sometimes sent to a prison operated by the SSA outside the camp or prisoners in the re-education camp are transferred to maximum security camps. In these cases, families of the prisoner are not informed of the decision and the family and other prisoners feel much grief since they

do not know what has happened to the particular prisoner. Even in the maximum security camps, there are cases of the disappearance of prisoners. The surviving prisoners simply think that the prisoner is secretly executed without any precise information about what has happened to them.

“I didn’t see any punishment chamber there but I saw prisoners being taken to punishment chamber in another valley. I didn’t know what the charges against them were. There were cases where prisoners were released from this additional hard work in not escapable place for doing good work.” (A10, former prisoners, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

“Prisoners are forced to beat each other or snitch on other prisoners during the ideology struggle session. Some prisoners are also arrested because of tips from others. Some prisoners are taken in shackles to an unknown place. In such cases, they never come back.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“Twin brothers were brought here for a term of one year. They were under re-investigation as the SSA authorities found out that their parents had defected to South Korea. The twin brothers feared they might be taken to a harsher camp. One day, they were arrested at the worksite with their hands handcuffed. They were taken away in a car.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“Prisoners were more severely punished. In our camp, No. 18, prisoners were sent to an ordinary prison outside camp. According to the regulation, the prisoner must return to the camp upon the expiration of their prison term. They are happy when they come back to camp because work there may have been lighter than in prison. The downside is they couldn’t be with their families in the camp and missed them very much. On the other

hand, we did not have such things as imprisonment terms in the penal system of Camp No. 18. Prisoners are informed during a trial of which prison they are transferred to. Most of them are sent to Kaechon Prison. Frequently, they are sent to another political prison camp run by the SSA. The camp authorities decided which of the Camps No. 14, 15 and 16 they were transferred to.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Another type of punishment is to extend the re-education term. A witness, A15, testified that the extension of a term was more feared by prisoners than the punishment chamber in the camp. An administrative process appears to be involved in the extension of a detention term, but the decision is made by SSA officers with no reviews or investigations of the situation.

“Inside the camp you can be also investigated. If you are found to be in breach of the rules, your detention term may be extended.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“There was a female prisoner by the name of Cho Bong-ae. She was there for a fraud and once she was sent to the punishment chamber and had her term extended by one year and in total four years.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“Extension of a term was the most fearful punishment. The decision is not made by ordinary camp officials but by SSA officers. If you are caught by SSA officers, you get your term extended. SSA officers don’t send you to the punishment chamber because physical hardship there is too short. SSA officers would say, ‘hey, your term is now extended and you must stay here longer.’ These words from the lips of an SSA officer are the

most dreaded punishment. They make the decision instantly right on the spot. For example, an SSA officer calls you into to his office and will force you to write a statement of confession and fingerprint it. Then, the officer will tell you that your term will be extended by one year or so. Then, he sends a report to his boss. That's it! Your fate is determined by the pen held by SSA officers.” (A15, former prisoner, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

⑦ Others (Physical Injuries and Amputation)

Physical injury and amputation are other forms of punishments. A typical case is about Shin Dong-hyuk. He had part of his third finger cut off for dropping a sewing machine while moving. At that time, the SSA officer in charge scolded him for his mistake and immediately ordered the general chief of all work units to cut off Shin's finger with a kitchen knife in the presence of SSA officers.¹²¹⁾

Ahn Myong-chol, a former guard at Camps No. 13 and 22, testified about the case of Han Jin-dok, a young girl, who was taken to the punishment chamber for having sexual relationships with one of the guards. The guard at the punishment chamber seriously injured her breasts with a stove hook.¹²²⁾

Prisoners are almost always punished cruelly and arbitrarily in PPCs in North Korea. It is believed that punishment is more severe in maximum security camps than in re-education camps or prison camps under the auspices of the police. Instant killing or injuring prisoners for insignificant offenses without any due process indicates that camp officials totally disregard basic human rights and dignity of prisoners.

121) Dong-hyuk Shin, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-233.

122) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-221.

Table 3-2 Comparison of the Severity of Punishments of Prisoners by Camps

Location		Work Quota Failures	Late Arrival/ Unauthorized Movement	Stealing	Sexual Relations	Pregnancy
Camp No. 11 (Kyongsong county, North Hamgyong)						Execution
Camp No. 12 (Onsong county, North Hamgyong)						
Camp No.13 (Onsong county, North Hamgyong)		Additional hard labor and reduced meal		Additional hard labor and reduced meal	Additional hard labor and reduced meal	
Camp No. 14 (Kaechon, South Pyongan)		Reduced meal and violence		Arbitrary and Serious Violence	Disappearance after discipline session	
Camp No.15 (Yodok(1))	Re-education zone	Ipsok-ni				Killed after one month in the punishment chamber
		Taesuk-ni		Collective punishment-added time to work	Punishment chamber	

Fighting with Other Prisoners	Commercial Transactions	Making Prohibited Remarks	Damaging Facilities	Escape Attempts	Punishment for No Good Reason
		Public Execution			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Killing prisoners arbitrarily by SSA officers or guards (hearsay) • Prisoners forced to hold an ax or sickle so that guards can kill him for reason of defiance
		Killed during training of special force troops at night in the mountain		Killed during training of special force troops at night in the mountain	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferred to Susong Prison after trial • Secret execution at a trap outside the wall 	Public Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public execution • secret execution at a trap outside the wall 	
		Torture and investigation at a secret prison	Punishment on the spot and physical injuries	Public execution (firing squad or hanging)	
				Public Execution (firing squad)	
		Punishment chamber or transfer to maximum security camp, disappearance	Collective punishment, added work, reduced meal	Public execution (firing squad or hanging)	

Location		Work Quota Failures		Late Arrival/ Unauthorized Movement	Stealing	Sexual Relations	Pregnancy
Camp No. 15 Yodok (2)	Re-education zone	Sorimchon	Ideology Session		Meals denied	Punishment chamber for 15, 20, 30 or 40 days	
		Kuwup-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beating • Working hours extended 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punishment chamber for 15-30 days • Forced labor center for 3 months, half ration meals, • Beating (children) 	15 days in punishment chamber or additional forced labor	SSA punishment chamber for 15-30 days and extension of detention terms and forced abortion
	Maximum security zone	Yongpyong-ni	Ideology struggle session				
Camp No. 17 (Toksong county, South Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beating and extension of working hours 		Forced labor center for 3 days of unauthorized absence for 3 days			
Camp No.18 (Pukchang county, South Pyongan) (1)	Tukchang Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beating • Working hours extended 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meals denied for one day for unauthorized absence from work for 3 days. • Arrested for skipping sessions and lectures • Forced labor center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Forced Labor center for 6 months -Short-term prison for 1-3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 months at Forced Labor center • Short-term prison for 1-3 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solitary Detention by Police • Squeezed into a small solitary chamber (60 centimeter high)

	Fighting with Other Prisoners	Commercial Transactions	Making Prohibited Remarks	Damaging Facilities	Escape Attempts	Punishment for No Good Reason
			Punishment chamber for 15, 20, 30 or 40 days		Public execution (Firing squad)	Detention at the punishment chamber
	Ideology session		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warning, punishment chamber for 15-30 days and reduced meal Ideology session 		Public execution (Firing squad)	
			Disappearance after ideology session		—	
			Disappearance		Public execution (Firing squad)	
	Forced labor camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demoted to political prisoner Status from the preferentially treated-Short-term prison 	Disappearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term prison for one year Forced labor center for 6 months 	Public execution (hanging or firing squad)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced meals or transfer to a maximum security camp as per Kim's instruction in 1978

Location		Work Quota Failures	Late Arrival/ Unauthorized Movement	Stealing	Sexual Relations	Pregnancy	
Camp No.18 (Pukchang county, South Pyongan) (2)	Re-revolutionizing residence,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beating by prisoners • Beating by work unit chief during discipline session 					
	Pongchang-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beating by camp officials • Extension of working hours until accomplishment of work 	Short-term prison up to 2 years for unauthorized absence from work	Short-term prison for 6 months	Extension of working hours until work quota accomplished		
Camp No. 22 (Hweryong city, North Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beating by prisoners • Various tortures and beating by SSA officers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beating • Punishment chamber for 3 days for eating unauthorized food (beating and torture) 	Detention at solitary cell for 15 days		
Camp No. 23 (Toksong county, North Hamgyong)				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced labor center • Punishment chamber for one year for drinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced labor center • Public execution for rape and incest 		
Prison No. 25 (Chongjin city, North Hamgyong)		Sitting on knees with arms raised					

	Fighting with Other Prisoners	Commercial Transactions	Making Prohibited Remarks	Damaging Facilities	Escape Attempts	Punishment for No Good Reason
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beating by prisoners • Beating by work unit chief during discipline session 		
	Sent to prison outside camp and then return to the camp in case of serious crimes such as beating someone to death	Transfer to prison and return to the camp on expiration of prison term. (trial O)	Transfer to maximum security camp (not often after 1982)			Prisoners related to political cases secretly executed
	Detention at solitary cell (beating & torture)					Sent for human experimentation
	Solitary cell and beating				Public execution (hanging or firing squad)	
					Serious beating	Solitary cell at the end of the 3rd floor

4. Facilities and Operation of Industrial Production

1) Functions and System of Work Unit

The basic unit of all industrial production in North Korea is a work unit.¹²³⁾ Kim Il-sung emphasized that “the work unit is the lowest level in the cooperative work system practiced in North Korea. The success of a cooperative work depends on the success of a work unit. Therefore, work units and the junior officials responsible for the work units must be strengthened in every possible way.”¹²⁴⁾ In other words, the work unit, which is a basic means of work, has work force and must reach the annual work target. The North Korea PPCs are also operated based on work unit levels and through this they manage production and control prisoners. In some cases, individual prisoners or miners are placed in a military system rather than work units.

The number of workers in a work unit ranges from 50 to 200 according to the type of work being done. Work may be done on farms, in mines or in factories. The number of work units in a prison camp gives some idea of the total size of a camp. A work unit is controlled by a chief prisoner and is usually sub-divided into platoons. The chief prisoner of

123) Samilpo Information Center, “Grand Korean Dictionary, Samhung, Version 3.0” Pyongyang, 1998-2004. “an industrial production or business unit, the lowest level of employment or farm directly performing production. It is a form of labor and production organization based on standardized uniformity in the process of labor or work site, production target and collective responsibility for the industrial output. Size, members of organization and magnitude vary. There are sub-units in the cooperative farm.”

124) Kim Il-sung, *Collection of Kim Il-sung*, Vol. 15, (Pyongyang: Publishing Company, Korean Workers’ Party, 1981), p. 33.

a work unit takes instructions from the SSA officer. Testimonies about the operation of work unit as follows:

(1) Camp No. 13

“There were approximately five work units in each village. The chief of a work unit is responsible for the work unit’s operation. There is an SSA officer and a clerk for each work unit.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

(2) Camp No. 14

“In the garment factory in the No. 2 valley, there were approximately 2,000 female prisoners and 500 male prisoners divided into 12 or 13 work units. These work units were further divided for 6 different types of work: repair, transportation, cutting, sewing, operation of boiler and electricity. The work unit for repair had about 40 electricians whose job was to repair electric motors and sewing machines. The work continued for 24 hours in two shifts. There were approximately 1,000 cutting machines and cutters with the machine. A work unit was usually sub-divided into four or five platoons, with about 20-30 prisoners in each platoon, for a total of 100-150 prisoners per work unit.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

(3) Camp No. 15

Camp No. 15 is composed of several independent areas, and work units in the Camp are administered by areas. The witnesses from this camp, therefore, were only able to provide information about the specific areas in which they worked and they were not able to give information

about the entire situation of the camp. In this camp, it appears that work units are organized on the basis of families. A group of individual prisoners (called a Company as in the army) become part of a work unit or are administered independently as in Company 1 or 2, not as a work unit.

Taesuk-ni in the camp was for both families and individual prisoners until 1995, when all the families were relocated to an unknown location, making the area only for individual prisoners.

① Taesuk-ni

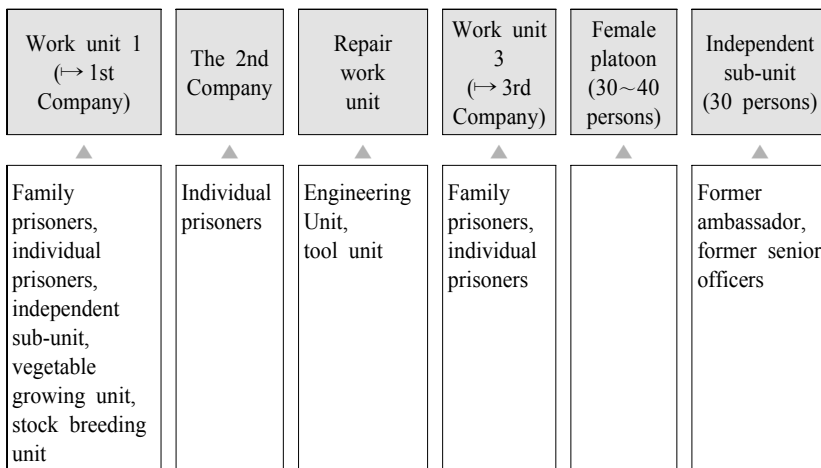
"I was assigned to a work unit from an orientation class. There were three work units. Work unit No. 2 was also called "Company," as in the army. We all worked in the farm but work units 1 and 3 were called work units. In work unit 1, there were many families with fixed prison terms. There was an independent platoon in work unit 1 and there were some 10 individual prisoners. The platoon was also engaged in farm work. The number of prisoners in work unit 1 ranged between 50 and 100. There were approximately 120 prisoners in my company. There were three platoons in the company that grow vegetables and raising farming livestock. Each platoon had about 20 prisoners, nine files including a platoon leader. Additionally, there were three guards, a work unit chief, a prisoner-in-chief of the bunkhouse, a clerk and four kitchen workers including two to three prisoners for cleaning dishes, a foreman and a fireman, all male prisoners. There were about five prisoners in the firewood platoon. Thus, the total number of prisoners at a work unit is over 120 prisoners. Work unit No. 3 was almost the same size as us, perhaps a little larger. There was a work unit for female prisoners also. There were a few families in work unit 3. Prisoners working in the kitchen were also all male prisoners. When I first arrived, there were less than

20 women; this number gradually decreased. The family prisoners were divided and assigned to work units 2 and 3. Most prisoners in work unit 1 were families and those in work unit 3 were individual prisoners along with a few families. I think, there were over 10 families in work unit 1, and five to six families in work unit 3.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“Work unit 1 became company 1 in 1995 or 1996. The second company was for engineering and repair work, and work unit 3 was a female platoon with an independent sub-unit. The members were mainly former diplomats. Work unit 1 was further divided into sub-units 1 through 4, and a sub-unit for vegetable growing. In work units 1 and 2, there were companies. These companies were for young prisoners who were ready to work. There was a repair work unit, work unit 3 and a platoon. Members of the independent sub-unit were old and had been former ambassadors who had worked overseas. Here, there were sub-units 1 through 4 and a sub-unit for vegetable growing for prisoners that were ordinary North Koreans. Sub-units 1 through 4 were responsible for growing corn. The repair work unit was for engineering work. There were two work units, one for tools and the other for engineering. Here, they manufacture farming equipment and agricultural tools. All the others were engaged in farming. The independent sub-unit works apart from the other work units. This sub-unit is not under any supervision. They grew and ate potatoes, which were denied to other prisoners since potatoes were believed to strengthen the prisoners’ legs. They were privileged because most of the members were former ambassadors, diplomats and other senior officers assigned to missions overseas. They were intellectuals. There were some 30 prisoners in the independent sub-unit. There was only one female platoon and no sub-units. When I left the camp, more women started to arrive. There were not many female prisoners while I was there (roughly

30 to 40 women). In company 1, at times there would be as many as 300 to 400 prisoners, but there were always more than 200 prisoners. Many prisoners died in the camp due to undernourishment. In the women's platoon, there would be times when the number of women prisoners increased. In the beginning, there used to be only 30 to 40 female prisoners, but the number increased by the time I left the camp. I was there in the years from 1995 to 1997. We had a food crisis in 1997 and a huge number of North Korean women went to China. That's when many women started to arrive in the camp at Yodok. I was in the area of Taesuk-ni and there was another area called Yongpyong-ni. Down in the valleys, there are some other areas also. There were houses of camp officers and family prisoners working on a pig farm for life. 60 percent of our production went to the pig farm and only 20% was consumed here." (Lee Young-guk, former prisoners, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

Figure 3-12 A Work Unit at Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15



② Sorimchon

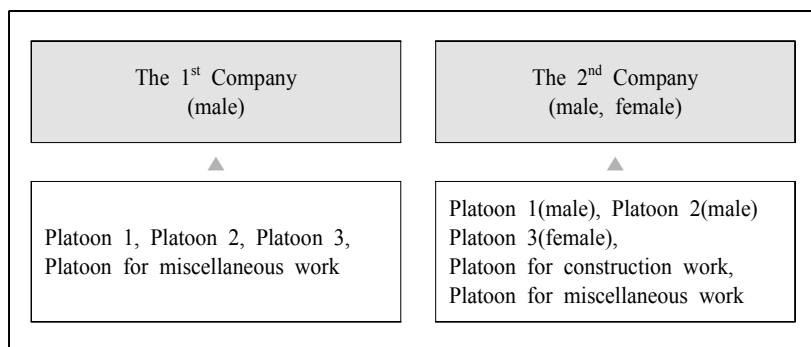
“Male and female prisoners were together in the 2nd company. The 3rd platoon was for female prisoners only. In the beginning, there were not many female prisons, maybe approximately 21 women. There were only five women when I left the camp. In around 2004, the women’s platoon was divided into two platoons because the women quarreled severely. They also wanted to increase production by putting the two platoons in competition. Later, they put the two platoons back together into one. They were farming food items, such as corn, potato, bean and etc. The work in the camp was much harder than work in ordinary farms outside the camp. Farming was performed strictly in accordance with textbooks.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorim-chon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“There were about 20 prisoners in a platoon. Platoons 1 and 2 were for men and the 3rd platoon was for women, mostly working at a threshing floor. We were all engaged in farm work, mostly for corn. We also grew beans.” (A06, former prisoner, 2003-2006, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15)

“First company was for men and second company for women. There were six platoons in a company. The sixth platoon was for old prisoners between the ages of 60 and 70 who do miscellaneous work. There was no exception for the aged and they had to work for the same work quota as young people. Men were recruited for the construction platoon. Women who were weaker helped male prisoners with timber work. All platoons are the same and no distinction is made between them. The work quota is by the number of hours of work. The work quota was given to prisoners by the individual work units every morning. If my work quota is for five kilograms, it is the same five kilograms for all prisoners. The old people work for the same work quota but take longer to finish the work. There are approximately 10 prisoners per platoon who are behind others in their work progress. There

were around 300 male prisoners. There used to be more men than there were women.” (A14, former prisoner, 2002-2004, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15) “At that time, the number of prisoners at this high security camp was over 200, but less than 250. A camp regulation says the number of prisoners in the area must remain constant, neither too many nor too small. So, there was always a limit in the number of prisoners in a particular area. There were about 200 prisoners. There were Companies 1 and 2. Company 1 had 3 platoons, 1 through 3, and a platoon for miscellaneous type of work. Company 2 had 3 platoons, 1 through 3, a platoon for construction work and a platoon for miscellaneous type of work. Company 1 was mainly for production. Work was carried out by company and prisoners did not have any opportunity to meet prisoners of other companies.” (A13, Sorimchon, 2003-2005, Camp No. 15).

Figure 3-13 Composition of Work Unit, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15



③ Kuwup-ni/Ipsok-ni

A numbering system appears to be common for such areas as Ipsok-ni and Kuwup-ni. According to the testimony by Kim Yong-sun, a former prisoner at the Kuwup-ni area, work units 1 through 4 were in Kuwup-ni,

and 5 through 10 were in Ipsok-ni. According to witness A11, a former prisoner at Ipsok-ni, work units were divided into two groups, work units 1 to 4 in the first group, and work units 5 to 9 in the second group; with no access between the two groups of work units. A11 further explained that prisoners in work units 1 through 4 were ethnic Koreans from Japan, and they worked mainly in the food factory. Former prisoners from the same area, Kang Cheol-hwan and Kim Yong-sun, also confirmed the existence of a food factory in the same area. Based on these similarities between the testimonies of the three witnesses about the same area, we think that it is highly probable that the two areas had a common numbering system for all work units in both areas.

“They were Koreans from Japan in work units 1 to 4. They produced candies and sweets. They were far away from us and we couldn’t meet them. We had no time to go and see them. We were not allowed to talk with other prisoners there. We simply should not talk to each other. That’s all. We all planted corn; they made our life very hard with work. There were offenders’ family members laboring in 5 to 9 work units. They were needed for farm work. Male ‘individual prisoners’ were in the 7th unit. Female ‘individual prisoners’ were in the 9th Unit.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“There were many workplaces near the second work unit in the camp such as the food factory near the village, sheep ranch, bridge construction work warehouse, light labor work site and timber work and etc. Each work unit performed work in accordance with its own manual.” Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“I was assigned to the timber drying furnace of the Engineering Battalion. We made fire with sawdust to dry timbers from all kinds of trees. My work was to dry the timbers. We worked for 24 hours in two shifts. In Camp No. 15, work units 1 through 4 belong to Kuwup-ni, and all other work units belong to Taesuk-ni and Ipsok-ni. Yongpyong-ni and Pyongjon-ni are maximum security zones where prisoners are imprisoned for life. There were about 50 or 60 families in my work unit until 1975.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“There were work units 1 through 10 in what was called Kuwup-ni. There was no work unit No. 8 or work unit No. 9. The Koreans from Japan were at work unit 10. individual prisoners were in companies; there were two companies for men and one company for women. A company consisted of several platoons. There were 22 prisoners in each platoon. There was one company for women and all the others were for men. Family prisoners did not stay with us. There were about 90 prisoners in my company. There were three platoons in my company, platoons 1 through 3. There were sub-platoons in each platoon, sub-platoon 1 through 3, and each sub-platoon had three prisoners. They say you are the leader of the sub-platoon of three prisoners. One sub-platoon must move together. If one of the 3 persons should go to toilet, the other two had to follow him to the toilet. The 3 prisoners must stay together at all times; at meals, at work and during sleep. It is a system of surveillance and the three prisoners in a sub-platoon must watch each other.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“There were three work units in Kuwup-ni and the houses of State Security Agency (SSA) officers were also there. Prisoners at this location were mostly former white-collar workers. There was comparatively more

freedom there than elsewhere. Work unit 10 was for Koreans from Japan. Prisoners like us were sent to Ipsok-ni where control is stricter. In Kuwup-ni, there was an engineering battalion and prisoners there used to receive a salary of 20 to 30 Won. They had the best life in the prison camp. Everyone in my company received 5 Won a month. This was a big amount of money and we could buy two cartons of cigarettes with that amount of money.” (A36, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1983-1985)

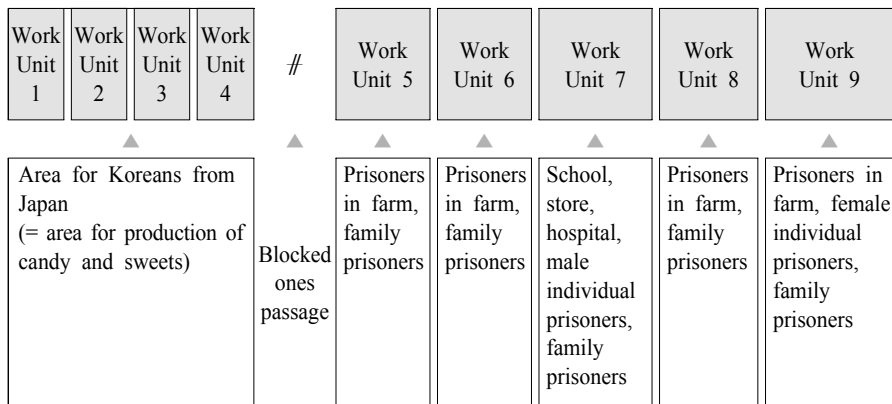
Kim Yong-sun, the only prisoner from the maximum security camp in Yongpyong-ni, testifies that there was also a system of work units in both Yongpyong-ni and Pyongjon-ni, the maximum security camp. Her testimony explains that there were 10 work units and 10 squads in each work unit. There were a total of about 400 prisoners per work unit, including about 100 prime prisoners¹²⁵⁾, support prisoners,¹²⁶⁾ children and their families.

“I was the chief of work unit No. 7 in Yongpyong-ni, Yodok. Here, I became experienced in all kinds of farm work including ordinary farm work in squads No. 1-8, stock breeding, orchard work and cigarette growing. Later, I became a skill leader, work unit chief and squad chief.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

125) adult workers

126) prisoners over the age of 60

Figure 3-14 Ipsok-ni, Re-education zone, Camp No. 15.¹²⁷⁾



It appears that the work units in Camp No. 15 were independent and that contacts between work units and companies was restricted.

“There were three companies. In company 1, there were three platoons. In company 2, there were also three platoons, along with a construction platoon. company 1 was mainly for production. Each company had different work and prisoners were not able to meet prisoners of other companies.”
(A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“Work unit 7 was larger than other work units because it was located at the center of that camp, and it had a hospital and a shop. All prisoners come to work unit 7 on Sundays. Work unit 5 and work unit 7 are 8 kilometers (approximately 5 miles) apart. Work units 1 to 4 use the same shop since they are also located in the center. There is a camp

127) The drawing is on the basis of the testimony by A11. The testimonies of prisoners from Ipsok-ni and Kuwup-ni appear to summarize that work units 1-3 or 4 and 10 were at Kuwup-ni while work units 4 or 5-9 were located at Ipsok-ni.

administration office in work unit 7. There was a shop there where we used to get rations. The Koreans from Japan are all together at another location. I did not pay any attention to them and I knew little about them. There is a camp officer for each unit. There was one officer for work unit 5 and also another officer for work unit 7. They carried pistols. He did not allow us to talk each other or have fun with each other.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

(4) Camp No. 18

In Camp No. 18, work units operated in the farms and factories. However, the operation of the coal mine was run by companies in a military system. The title was different but the basic system was not different in terms of the actual operation. There were four to six companies in each shaft. The companies were divided into smaller groups for work in coal collection, transportation, drilling and shaft maintenance. Additionally, there was a small-scale platoon for blasting and repair work. The witness, A09, testifies that a company is comprised of three platoons with approximately 20 prisoners each. She further testifies that the company system was switched to a ‘work force unit’ system later and that a work force unit consisted of three work units. The total number of prisoners in each work unit was less than fifty.

“After graduation from a school in the camp, I was first assigned to a platoon in a company to work in a coal mine, Shimsan shaft in Soksan-ni of Pukchang county. The company was later shifted to a work force unit, and there were work units under the work force unit. There were 15 to 16 prisoners in a platoon. There were 3 work units under a work force unit and the total number of prisoners was less than 50 per work unit.

There was a chief and a deputy chief in the work force unit. There was also a platoon leader. In the coal mine, we take over the work from the preceding team at 7:30 am to start work from 9 o'clock in the morning and continue until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The 2nd team takes over at 4 o'clock and works until midnight, and the last team works from midnight to 8 o'clock the following morning. In essence, we worked gruesomely long and hard to keep the mine operating for 24 hours.” (A09, former prisoner, Tukchang and Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“The farm consisted of 20-30 work units for a total of about 5,000 prisoners. All the agricultural products were sent to the dining room. The coal mine work was carried out by shafts, and there were four to six companies in each shaft, two platoons in each company and 10 prisoners in each platoon. There was a separate work unit of old and handicapped prisoners who worked by collecting manure and cultivating the land. No hand tools were supplied at all and prisoners were forced to work throughout the year.” (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang and Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

“At the cement factory, there was a factory supervisor and an engineer under him. The engineer is a deputy supervisor. There is a party committee chairman who is on the pay roll and a chief of workers' union committee who is a prisoner. The supervisor, the engineer and chiefs of the party organizations were all on payroll. There were three work units. The prisoners are the ones doing all the work. In work unit 1, there are drillers, prisoners transporting clinkers and four prisoners for crushing coal.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“In the Pongchang area, there were nine shafts and a farm. There were

11 work units in the farm. The coal mine was in operation for 24 hours in three shifts. Under the deputy shaft chief, there were work force units. The work unit chief was under the work force unit chief. There was a group leader under the work unit chief. There was a supervisor at all shafts. The work force unit for digging had several work units under it doing the same work. This is the kind of work system in the mine. There were two or three prisoners under each group leader.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

(5) Camp No. 22

In Camp No. 22, farms and factories have work unit systems and a coal mine company system as in the army. However, no detailed testimonies have been available about the number and size of work units.

“The coal mine consisted of squads, which were under a platoon. Platoons were under a company. Company commanders, platoon chiefs and squad chiefs were all prisoners who supervise other prisoners. There were work units on a farm. The supervisor for all work units was a woman of about 50 years of age who rode on horseback most of the time when she was supervising the work being done. If any other witness should testify that the farm was supervised by a woman, he is telling you the truth.” (A22, former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

(6) Camp No. 23

Camp No. 23 was for the detention of economic criminals and it was not very much different from the ordinary villages in North Korea. Basically, the camp was divided into the residents' unit at home and work

units at work. Prisoners were systematically supervised by camp and administrative officers. There were work unit chiefs and factory supervisor who were policemen, according to the witness, A31. Unlike normal North Korean villages, there was a bunkhouse for punishment like a prison. No information is available about the bunkhouse because no witness has experienced punishment in this bunkhouse.

“The camp was a district controlled by the police under an administrative system. There were about 60 prisoners in each work unit, each of which also had a policeman and a work unit chief. The individual prisoners and prisoners with families were all mixed together. There were approximately 4,000 individual prisoners alone.” (A30, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1987)

“There were 10 families in my residents’ unit. Some large units had 23 families. The bunkhouse was for individual prisoners without family. Life was harder there.” (A24, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“There was an SSA officer and an administrative officer in each work unit. They were always in uniform. I had never experienced such difficult farmwork before. The work unit chiefs and factory supervisors were all policemen.” (A31, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1981-1988)

“There were 250-300 prisoners in the bunkhouse for individual prisoners (Sangdol-li), divided into three units. There was a unit for the punishment of prisoners who were with families in the camp but separately live in the bunkhouse.” (A31, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1981-1988)

(7) Prison No. 25

We have limited knowledge about the work system at Susong prison. The witness, A27, appears to have experience with detention of petty crimes. According to her, prisoners were organized into three work units in order of the prisoners' arrival at the prison. Those prisoners with the longest period of imprisonment were assigned to work unit one, and so on.

“There were a total of 160 prisoners, 100 male prisoners and 60 female prisoners, in work units 1 through 3. There were eight prisoners in each cell. Male prisoners were on the 3rd floor and female prisoners on the 2nd floor. All prisoners were assigned to work unit 3 for the first 3 months, after which they were transferred to work unit 2. They are there for 6 months and then move onto work unit 1 thereafter. The new arrivals in work unit 1 have the toughest time and the most work to do. In work unit 1, prisoners are imprisoned for such a long time that they even joke with guards. The prisoners had been there for so long that they and the guards had gotten to know each other quite well. The newly arrived prisoners have a really tough time, since they are not allowed to talk or to even look at the guards.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

2) Handling of Industrial Products.

Prisoners in political prison camps in North Korea have a heavy workload. Even punishment depends on the ability of the prisoner to do work. Why is there such hard work in political prison camps? What do they produce through this hard labor? This book attempts to find out what they produce and how such products are utilized.

It was determined that political prison camps in North Korea generate such various products as corn, rice, fruits, vegetables, soybean paste and sauce, garments, coal, iron ore, furniture and agricultural tools, and much more. The location of the specific camp determines what items it will produce. For example, if a camp is located in the area of an iron deposit, the camp concentrates on the production of iron ore. If a camp is located near a mineral deposit, the camp focuses on the production of mineral ore. In areas without any coal or mineral deposits, the camps concentrate on producing agricultural products along with other products, such as food, garments, livestock, etc. A portion of the products are consumed by the prisoners who produced them through blood and sweat. However, what is consumed in the camps is limited to corn and agricultural hand tools. Some products are distributed to camp officers and most products are transported outside the camps. In particular, high-quality industrial, agricultural and livestock products produced by prisoners have been supplied to high-ranking party members in Pyongyang. Underground mineral products are supplied to factories and power stations outside of the camps. Witnesses have testified that such products were of such magnitude that productions from the political prison camps have provided substantial input to the North Korean economy as a whole. The following information on the industrial facilities, their magnitude, and the types of products and information on the ways in which the products are utilized by camps gives some idea as to how such products manufactured in the prison camps influence the entire North Korean economy.

Table 3-3 Production Facilities of Each Camp, the Size of Work Units in the Facilities, and the Use of Products

Location	Major Production Facilities and Work Units	Use of Products
Camp No. 11 (Onsong, North Hamgyong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal mines and woods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply to a thermal power station in Chongjin
Camp No. 13 (Onsong, North Hamgyong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm: corn, beet, pepper of Pongchun-ni, Pongkye-ni and Dongpon-ni (each ni has five work units), pig pen (thousands of pig), cow ranch (hundreds of cows), chicken farm, goats farm, sheep ranch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply of corns to food policy office in Chongsong • The supply of peppers to other prison camps; • The supply of pigs to Pyongyang (kill 40 pigs a day)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factory: garment (120 females and 20 males, production of clothing for exports); foods (total 80 persons, liquor, soybean paste, soysauce, candy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothing for exports; foods for Pyongyang and high quality
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal mines: Dongpo mine • Extra: construction work (300 persons), public work (50 persons), livestock (10 persons), butchers (10 persons), sub-station (6 persons), design office (60 persons) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use for Camp No. 13
Camp no. 14 (Kaecheon city, South Pyongan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm: Bon village (12 work units, 2,000 persons) • Livestocks raising: pig pen in six districts (each district has 200 persons, 800 pigs, goats, and feed farms) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corns for camp consumption • Pig: kill 50 pigs twice a year and send them outside
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factory: foods (over 2,500 persons, soybean paste); garment (2,500 persons, producing military uniforms); tire; cement (500 persons); paper, glass, china (production of jar, bowl, kettle) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothing for military uniforms, foods, tires, and cements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mines: 1-2 pit, silver coal pit (total 3,000 persons) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra: construction work, public work, in 1998, construction of power stations by 5,000 workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works inside the camp

Location		Major Production Facilities and Work Units	Use of Products
Camp No. 15, Yodok (Yodok, South Hamgyong)	Ipsok-ni, re-education zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm • Food factory: liquor, oil, soybean paste, soysauce, cookie, candy (1-4 work units) 	
	Taesuk-ni, re-education zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn farm, threshing floor • Duck farm, pig hen, chicken hen, sheep driving platoon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corns for Camp consumption • Ducks and pigs are for SSA officers' consumption and remnants are for sale
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated (industrial work units): production of furniture, tools, agricultural machines. Platoon of basic necessities produces wooden chopsticks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools and agricultural machines are for Camp consumption; furniture for SSA officers; wooden chopsticks for outside sale by SSA officers
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal mines (their presence needs verification): oil-squeezing factory, power stations, greenhouse • Public repair platoon, female independent platoon (250 persons) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flowers of green house for SSA officers • as of 2007, products of Camp no. 15, Yodok are sent to the Central Party
	Sorimchon, re-education zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural work unit (corn, potato, beans) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • corns, potatoes, beans: consumption for Camp 15, the use by SSA officers, the supply to outside
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-sized duck farm, pig hen (10 pig), chicken hen (1000 chicken and geese) • Production of noodles (1 person) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestocks (pigs and chickens for SSA officers) • Noodles: SSA officers sell them outside
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra: picking of acorn and matsutake, extra work (patients with malnutrition), forestry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picked matsutakes are for sale
	Kuwup-ni, re-education zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural work unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural products are for self-sufficiency
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food factory • Forestry work unit • Sheep pasture • Road construction storage, light workplace (Korean A-frame, sambari, samtaegi), quarry work unit (limestone), furniture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural tools: Camp no. 15 supplies them • Furniture are supplied outside (income source of SSA officers)

Location		Major Production Facilities and Work Units	Use of Products
Camp No. 15, Yodok (Yodok, South Hamgyong)	Yongpyung-ni, maximum security zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-8 squads (agricultural, livestock-raising, fruit-growing, cigarette) • Chicken pen (100 chickens) • Extra: machinery battalion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White rice are used for SSA officers and guards; the remnants are supplied to SSA officers in other camps • Cigarettes, fruits, and vegetables: famous for high quality and supplied outside
Camp No. 17 Toksong, South Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mine (iron core) 	
Camp No. 18 (Pukchang, South Pyongan)	Tukchang Area,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal mines (coal pits: Yongsan, Kalkol, Kilkol, Simsam, Paeso road coal pit, Chamsang) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used for the Tukchang area, Prison Camp 18 and also supplied to a thermal power station in Pukchang
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural work unit (20 work units per district): fruit-growing, vegetable-producing, pig-raising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruits and vegetables are consumed for restaurants in coal pits. Pigs are used for higher prison officials
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra: cement factory (150 workers), heavy machinery factory, coal briquette factory, noodle mills 	
	Pongchang-ni,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 Coal mines (2 Pongchang coal pits; 2 Suan coal pits; Sangni coal pit; Yungreung coal pit, etc) • Farm (11 work units): corn, vegetables • Pig-raising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coals are sent to factory corporations in each district (used for melting furnace for military supplies) • Agricultural products are for consumption inside the camp • Pigs are used as nutritional supplements for workers in coal pits
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra: cement factory (70 workers), construction business office (120 workers), coal mine machinery factory (200 workers), repair business office (70 workers), car business office (70 persons), jar factory (40 persons), china factory (120 persons), food factory (50 persons), liquor factory, roof-tile factory, coal briquette factory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China are supplied outside for sale at the street market • In principle, other stuffs are used inside the camp

Location	Major Production Facilities and Work Units	Use of Products
Camp No. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mines 	
Camp No. 22 (Hweryong, North Hamgyong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm: corn, rice, water melon, oriental melon, vegetables (red pepper and potato) • Orchard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural products are sent to other prison camps and are used for earning foreign currency
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food factory & soybean paste factory: Kamhongro (liquor for the Koryo Hotel), edible soybean oil, Korean style taffy, red pepper paste, soybean paste, soy sauce, candies, cookies, and cigarettes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foods and soybean pastes are packed and sent to Pyongyang. 10 year-old soybean pastes (fermented product) are sent to Kim, Jong-il
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal mine (Jungpong area) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coals are supplied to a thermal power plant in Chongjin
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factory of basic necessities; garment factory (production of military uniforms) 	
Camp No. 23 (Toksong, North Hamgyong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm (vegetables, duck, chicken), forestry 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coal mines (graphite mines) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply of graphite to a thermal power station in Chongjin and a Kim-Chaek steelmill
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garment factory, food factory 	
Prison No. 25 (Chongjin, North Hamgyong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm (corn, Chinese cabbage, eggplant, cucumber) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of bicycles (a seagull brand is famous) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply of bicycles outside

(1) Camp No. 11

The information available on Camp No. 11 mainly came from guards and visitors who did not have any direct contact with prisoners and has

been inevitably insignificant in shedding light on the industrial and agricultural production by the camp. It is assumed that the main products manufactured at the camp were coal and timbers. Further information is necessary for the verification of industrial products from this camp.

(2) Camp No. 13, Chongsong

Camp No. 13 was closed in 1992, but major products from the camp during its operation included agricultural, mineral and light industry goods. Agricultural products included corn, potatoes, pepper and sugar cane, while major livestock products were beef, chicken and goats. Coal was also produced from the Tongpo coal mine. There were factories for garments, liquor, soybean sauce, soybean paste and candies. The camp was self-sustaining like an ordinary village with teams for construction, civil engineering, livestock breeding, butchery, a transformer station and an architecture office. Most of the products in the camp went out of the camp. According to Ahn Myong-chol, most of the products were supplied for the national plan. Whatever little was left was first distributed to camp officials and guards, and the measly remaining quantity was for the consumption of the prisoners.

It was reported that during the 13th World Youth and Students Festival in 1989, the prisoners suffered a lot because they had to supply the festival with tons of corn, potatoes and all the livestock that was butchered and frozen in the camp.¹²⁸⁾ Only the intestinal parts of the butchered livestock were left for consumption by the prisoners for protein.

128) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155.

The garments produced from this factory were for export. Food products like liquor, soybean sauce, and soybean paste enjoyed a good reputation such that they were supplied to Pyongyang. In particular, the vodka produced from sugar cane in the camp was recognized for its quality and taste. Most coal produced here was sent out of the camp.

“There was an office in the camp who oversees the production and supply of agricultural products. It was a very powerful office. We produced sugarcane used for the production of liquor. The entire liquor product was packaged here and supplied to Pyongyang. Its brand name was “Vodka.” It had a very good taste. We butchered 40 pigs every day for supply to Pyongyang. All pigs that exceeded 90 kilograms in weight were butchered, frozen and shipped out of the camp by train. The pork, with all the hair removed and all the intestines ripped out, leaving the skin and toes, was frozen here for shipment. The intestines were for the prisoners. The entire quantity of liquor, soybean sauce, soybean paste and candies produced here was shipped to Pyongyang. We don’t know who got the shipments. but we believe that it was all for consumption by senior party members because of the products’ high quality and taste. All the garments produced here were for export and were always shipped to unknown locations.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

(3) Camp No. 14, Kaechon

Shin Dong-hyuk and Kim Yong are former prisoners from the Camp No. 14. However, only Shin’s testimony was analyzed here for the purpose of this book as Kim Yong’s testimony was partly controversial.¹²⁹⁾ 130)

129) Sun-haeng Heo, “A Study of Effectiveness of Political Prisoners Camps on the Control of People”, Master Thesis, (Seoul: Unification Policy Department, Public

According to Shin's testimony, there were farms for corn, pepper, cabbages, egg-plant, orchards, pigs, goats, cows, chicken and rabbits, and fodder.

There were light industry factories for the productions of foods such as soybean sauce, military uniforms, papers, glass, pottery, etc. Heavy industry produced tires, cement and minerals from mines. Additionally, there were teams for engineering and construction and a power station that supported industrial productions. Agricultural products are partly consumed in the camp but most of the products are shipped out of the camp. It was reported that since the camp was self-sufficient in terms of agricultural production, Camp No. 14 was not seriously affected by the food shortage in North Korea in 1997. Egg plants, pepper and cabbages were totally for the consumption of SSA camp officers. Pigs were butchered twice a year for shipment out of the camp. The garment factory was very large, with 2,000 female prisoners and 500 male prisoners mainly producing military uniforms.

“There were roughly 100 houses in the SSA officers’ village at Camp No. 14. Two families shared a house and that means that there were some 200 SSA officers’ families in the camp. There were mines and work units for repair and construction as well as factories for the production of various foods, cement, pottery, rubber, paper, and clothing. In the clothing factory, for example, there were six work units for repair work, transportation, cutting, sewing, maintaining the boiler system and electric work. In the

Policy Graduate School, Sogang University, 2008), p. 16, footnote and Kyeong-seop Oh, “A Study on the Structural Reality of Human Rights Violations in North Korea: With Focus on Political Prison Camps,” Master Thesis, (Seoul: Graduate School, Korea University, 2005), p. 63, footnote.

130) Dong-hyuk Shin, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-145.

repair work unit, some repair workers worked on motors, and others on sewing machines. There were electricians. Each work unit had about 40 prisoners. All prisoners were divided into two shifts and repair work was carried out even at night. There were some 1,000 sewing machines. In the clothing factory, there were cutters.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

(4) Camp No. 15, Yodok

It appears that the areas of Ipsok-ni, Taesuk-ni, Sorimchon, Kuwup-ni, Yongpyong-ni and Pyongjon-ni in Camp No. 15 have their own independent production system. Information is available in detail about production facilities in those areas, with the exception of the two areas of Yongpyong-ni and Pyongjon-ni, which constitute a maximum security zone. The summary of the testimonies reveals that the production was dominantly of agricultural goods by percentage. Other productions include livestock, timber, sweets, furniture and digging for lime stones and the collection of wild mushrooms and acorns.

Observation of industrial products by area shows that major production facilities in Kuwup-ni, which is largely resided by Koreans from Japan and is largely an agriculture base, includes a food factory for the manufacture of sweets, a goat farm and a furniture factory. Furniture manufactured here was shipped out of the camp.

“I recall the engineering battalion and administration committee in Ipsok-ni. The battalion had a total of six companies. There were units for furniture and painting. There was a dry kiln. Furniture made from dried camp lumber was sent to Pyongyang.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner,

Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

The following are testimonies of Kang Cheol-hwan and A15, former prisoner, who were at Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15 at the same time:

“First, it is the food factory near the village of work unit No. 2. My youngest uncle, a graduate of a science college in Pyongyang, was working there as a senior technician. His job was to test the alcohol content and taste-test the liquor. If he was caught eating something and was then beaten on the spot, kicked out of this job and was transferred to a forest work unit, which was notorious for its extremely hard work. There are so many spies in the food factory that no one can speak to anyone else other than the basic communication needed to carry out the assignment. Their bodies are thoroughly searched for any hidden food, both during work hours and before exiting the building.

Second is the pasture area for goats. To look after goats as they graze keeps prisoners excused from hard work during hot summers and cold winters, both day and night.

Third, work at the bridge construction warehouse. This involves warehouse work where construction materials are kept. Some prisoners work there.

Fourth, the less-strenuous or light worksite. Prisoners weave baskets and A-frames to be used on the backs of other prisoners carrying dirt. But they work longer hours due to the lighter type of work they are doing.

Fifth, the forest work unit. Prisoners work hard, often doing dangerous work of cutting trees and carrying the felled trees and limbs. Many accidents occur during this type of work.

Seventh, the quarry work unit. Prisoners cut stones and carry them. There are no safety devices and work here is several times more difficult than the work in the forest.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“Prisoners consumed all the agricultural goods that they produced. Prisoners were self-sufficient. There was a food ration when I was there. It seems that the food ration became erratic and SSA camp officers may have taken away some of the agricultural products from prisoners during the food crisis. It seems that many prisoners died of starvation. When I was there, no prisoners died of starvation. We manufactured wooden cabinets for storing blankets, which went to higher ranking SSA officers. It was their source of income. Maybe such income could have been used to operate the political prison camp. We also produced tables, chicken pens and other basic necessities.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

Corn is a main product in Ipsok-ni.

“Inside the camp, there is a farm. There was no such thing as a food factory. It was corn all over. Corn was stored in a warehouse and threshed when distributed. They do not send the corn elsewhere. All the corn is eaten inside the camp.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Koreans from Japan were in work units 1-4. They produce sweets, etc. I never watched them directly because they were far away. No prisoners had time to go and see them. In other work units, they all carried out farmwork. That’s all and nothing else. Everyone plants corn. Anyway, they made the life of prisoners so miserable.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

Agricultural goods were a main product from Taesuk-ni. It was testified that most of the products from this area, such as rice and livestock, were shipped out of the camp or consumed by SSA camp officers and that

prisoners consumed only a very meager share of the entire production. They also grew flowers in a glass house for SSA camp officers. The miscellaneous work unit here also produced chop-sticks, furniture, and agricultural or engineering tools. The agricultural and engineering tools were for use inside the camp. The furniture was produced for SSA camp officers. The chopsticks provided the SSA camp officer with extra cash income.

“In Taesuk-ni village, there was an administration committee office, a threshing floor, a warehouse, bunk house and a henhouse. Many products were produced in Camp Yodok, including those produced at Taesuk-ni. A lot of rice, coal and livestock were produced. There were factories, including one for oil expression. I heard that there were all kinds of supplies like a rear base.” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

“Work facilities included cornfields, duck farms and pig pens. Pigs were raised by family prisoners. When camp authorities moved the family prisoners away to another location, the pig pens also disappeared. There was a miscellaneous work unit that produced chopsticks and agricultural tools. The work units 1 through 3 were for farming while the miscellaneous work unit was for the production of engineering and agricultural tools to support farm work as well as for the production of various kinds of furniture at the order of SSA camp officers. There was a central warehouse where all grains were stored in the winter and distributed to prisoners after threshing. At the duck farm, ducks were raised for the SSA camp officers. There was a shop, which could hardly be called a shop because it only ever had a little quantity of cooking oil, soybean sauce and soybean paste, and only on holidays. We never found any clothing or shoes there. There

was a glasshouse for growing flowers for the SSA camp officers. SSA camp officers would fill their cars with chopsticks to sell to people outside the camp. Ducks and pigs were for the consumption of SSA camp officers. Excess was sold outside the camp. Each work unit was comprised of 3 or 4 platoons. Additionally, there were livestock farms and a support platoon. Products from livestock farms were for private consumption by SSA camp officers. Rarely, an SSA officer allowed the prisoners to butcher a pig for their own consumption.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“Yongpyong is located on the upper side of Taesuk-ni. There were other areas on the lower side. Further down, there was the camp officer’s village and a pig farm on which family prisoners of the maximum security zone worked. Sixty percent of our agricultural products were sent there, and we consumed only 20% of what we produced. Most of it goes to other areas and also to the State Security Agency Headquarters. This means that a lot of our products are sent out of the camp. I think SSA takes about 10% of what we produce. SSA officers raise chickens and pigs and consume them at their will. Cows were better off than the prisoners. Cows also had to work. We often found corn in the cow’s droppings, which the prisoners would collect, clean and cook. Each work unit has a cow. We keep them in the field. We built a cow-shed that one or two prisoners must watch. Each company looks after a livestock farm with chickens, ducks or pigs. I think there were chickens in the independent squad. Products from the livestock farm were taken away by SSA camp officers. They do whatever they want at their will. Don’t you know that there were so many slaves in the camp?” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

Sorimchon is also mainly an agricultural farm area, even though there

is a small scale livestock farm and a small forest. Products from this area were for SSA camp officers as well as for those outside the camp. Only a very small portion is left for consumption by the prisoners. Livestock products were for consumption by SSA camp officers, and timbers and pine mushrooms from the forest for supply out of the camp.

“There we learned how to survive. We were aware that we were producing for the SSA officers. I was told that they were selling mushrooms at the market outside the camp. At first when the camp just started, the food was so scarce and prisoners became so desperate that they ate grass in the hills. The prisoners who stayed here for a long time told us this.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“During the autumn in our sector, we threshed corn with machines and we put the entire corncobs with husks into the machines. Noodles are also produced by a machine, a very efficient machine. We raised livestock, like pigs, for SSA officers. There were over 10 pigs and more than 1,000 chickens. There was a pumping station. We harvested corn for internal camp consumption. We collected acorns, mushrooms and firewood. They gave us a bag that we had to fill. Pork and chicken were earmarked for SSA officers and gifts for officers at a higher level.” (A06, former prisoner Sorimchon, Camp No. 18, 2003-2006)

“There was a threshing floor, a machine operation center and timber worksite operated by the sawmill work unit. Furthermore, there was a rabbit farm, pig pens with several hundred pigs, and a fish raising pond. Raising fish in a pond was a project of the SSA camp officers. Chickens, ducks and geese were raised by prisoners of the threshing floor work unit. The chief of the threshing floor was specially appointed by a senior SSA

camp officer. Raising rabbits was also a private project of the senior SSA camp officer. The rabbits were consumed in the camp and also transported out of the camp. Some rabbits were taken away by the SSA officers for food. The SSA officers in the camp were also in a bad situation as they were also confined inside the camp by barbed wire with little knowledge of the outside world. Wives of the SSA officers inside the camp worked on their farms and worked hard in a special work unit for cash income. They also carried and used human feces for farming. They were completely separated from the outside world and could not meet their relatives or have visitors in their homes, but at a hotel at another location. I had pity for them also.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“In the threshing floor, there were chickens. They also raised dogs, chickens, geese and ducks by the threshing floor. But the animals were butchered for supply outside of the camp. There were some 30 dogs and some puppies. There were approximately 200 chickens, 20 ducks and 50 geese. Geese and ducks were in the same pen. There was a livestock site by the threshing floor. A selected prisoner was responsible for looking after them. We saw SSA officers taking them outside the camp on holidays. When the SSA officers told the prisoners to butcher some of livestock, the prisoners try to hide intestinal parts of the animals for their own consumption for nutrition. Prisoners would be in serious trouble if they were caught doing this. A lot of timber was produced to supply for areas outside the camp. Prisoners cut the wood into equal sizes so that they could be loaded onto the trucks. The agricultural products were also taken out of the camp. Prisoners were forced to work hard for farming, but none of it was for their own consumption. We piled the food up at the threshing floor and then SSA officers would come and take them away. We became bitter watching our food get taken away from us when we were so hungry. We always wondered who ate the products, or if Kim Jong-il may be using

the food for his soldiers.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

Kim Yong-sun, who had been detained at a maximum security zone in Yongpyong-ni, testifies that agricultural goods were the main product from the camp.

“The camp at Yongpyong-ni had recently opened when I was assigned there. There was an administration committee. There were work units for farming, cigarettes and fruit growing. The rice produced here was consumed by the SSA and guards. The surplus was shipped out of the camp for SSA elsewhere. They carried away all of the good cigarettes, fruits and vegetables from the camp.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

(5) Camp No. 17

No testimony was available about the products from Camp No. 17, located in Toksong county. However, a summary of testimonies about the camp in general is available. The summary seems to suggest that minerals from mines were the main products here. Magnetite was famous among other minerals. Hydrated iron crumbles easily but it is an important mineral because of its magnetic system in the steel industry. Hydrated iron is still produced from the area that once was a camp because hydrated iron was a very important product back then. The hydrated iron produced here is supplied to the 13 April Steel Factory in Hwanghae province.

“We arrived at the mine at 5 o'clock and started digging at 8 o'clock... When we moved from Camp No. 17 to Tukchang, all the machines and

equipment were also brought to Tukchang, such as rock drills and excavators.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984)

“We were told that Kim Il-sung once attended a mineral engineering conference in October of 1983. The topic of the conference was the magnetite from Toksong mine. At the meeting, Kim instructed that the camp return the Toksong mine back to society.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 17, 1977-1984)

“Camp No. 17 in Toksong was closed and prisoners were relocated to Camp No. 18 in Pukchang because of the magnetic iron deposit at that camp. Magnetite is very important in the steel industry, as in food condiments for cooking. No iron is produced without magnetite. The decision was made to return the magnetite mine back to society so that national funds could be used to increase the production. I was told that the mine is out of business and no longer in production now. For this purpose, the camp was closed and prisoners relocated to another camp in Pongchang.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

(6) Camp No. 18, Pukchang

Camp No. 18 is known as “Tukchang Coal Mine.” The mine was so famous that it was referred to in Kim Il-sung’s New Year message. It is a very large coal mine with over 15 known shafts at Pomgaegol, Chamsang, Yongsan, Kinkol, Kalkol, Popi, Paeso, Myonghak, Shimsan, Pongchang, Suan, Anyong, Yongdong, Hanjae, Sangni and Anchon, each shaft having 1 to 3 drifts. Accordingly, the most important product from Camp No. 18 is coal. The coal produced at the Tukchang coal mine is

supplied to Pukchang thermal power station, and the coal from Pongchang area is supplied to all important factories in North Korea. According to one testimony, Camp No. 18 was set up to provide a stable supply of coal to Pukchang power station. Another testimony states that when the coal produced from the area drastically decreased and the North Korean economy was adversely affected by the closure of the camp, the officials who were involved in the closure of the camp were punished. It appears that the coal produced from Camp No. 18 was very important in the national economy of North Korea. The camp thus performed an important role as a production base.

The farms in the camp were operated for the camp's self-sufficiency. But the internal production did not meet the demands of the camp, and food needed to be brought in from outside the camp, unlike other camps. Additionally, the camp had factories for the production of briquettes, cement, liquor, etc. While these products were mostly for consumption inside the camp, the SSA camp officers or camp officials often sold them outside the camp for their personal profit. However, no information is available after the camp's relocation to Kaechon city.

"It is usually called 'Tukchang Coal Mine.' Kim Il-sung even mentioned in his New Year message the dedication of the coal miners at Tukchang. Pukchang thermal power plant is very important in the North Korean economy. Yes, there is a power station in Pyongyang, but it is the Pukchang power plant that supplies power to most of the important factories in North Korea. It is very important that coal must be supplied to the power station. That's why we were forced to work hard here." (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“64 freight trains, full of coal, used to be supplied to Pukchang power station daily, each freight train carrying a total of 60 tons daily. This was the production per day. Kim Il-sung thanked workers for the production of coal here and even gave them gifts in 1960. But the coal deposit was slowly depleted and the number of freight trains was reduced to 42 in 1985 when I was released. Kim Il-sung actually stated that ‘You produced a good quantity of coal for Pukchang thermal power station in your loyalty to Party, a remarkable achievement and a good model for other workers. Thank you, miners.’ But he never mentioned Camp No. 18. I was told that in the beginning, the coal produced from Camp No. 18 was 70% of the total requirement of the power station, but was 60% when I was there. In the camp, there were also other work units for agricultural farms, orchards and vegetables. I was told that there was a work unit for livestock raising pigs. There was also a cement factory and about 150 prisoners working in the factory.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“Work units were organized by shafts. There was a people’s work unit, which was composed of the old, physically handicapped and infirm prisoners. They were responsible for producing manure and cultivating land without the use of any tools. The prisoners of this work unit worked all year around without any holidays. Each farm area consisted of 20 to 30 work units and approximately 5,000 prisoners. All the products from the farm were for internal consumption and were sent to the kitchen in the camp.” (A19, former prisoners, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

“There were nine shafts and a farm in the Pongchang area. There were 11 work units. There was the Pongchang shaft, the Pongchang shaft No. 2, Suan shaft, Suan shaft No. 2. Sangni shaft, Yongnung shaft and three more shafts that I do not remember the names of now. At Camp No. 18,

we supplied coal to 104 factories in North Korea. Most of the coal, in fact, was sent to war supplies factories in North Hamgyong Province. I do not remember all of the 104 factories, but we received the production plan for the supply of coal to each factory. Each factory was also told to pick up a specified quantity of coal from Camp No. 18. All the coal from Tukchang goes to Pukchang thermal power station. Tukchang and Pongchang produce more or less the same quantity of coal. Maybe Tukchang produced a little more than Pongchang because there were a greater number of shafts in the Tukchang coal mine. The camp used to produce 3 million tons, but this quantity decreased to 1 million tons and further to half a million tons as the camp began to shut down. On the farm, mostly corn and vegetables were produced. Corn was intended for internal consumption and for camp officials. Pigs were also raised to provide nutrition to coal mine shafts. Lately, as the food situation worsened, food was in short supply in the camp. None of it was shipped out of the camp. Additionally, there were factories for the production of cement, jars, potteries, food, liquor and mine machines. There were also additional work units for construction, repair and a motor pool. There were about 70 prisoners in the cement factory, 120 prisoners in the construction unit, over 200 prisoners in the coal mine and about 50 prisoners in the liquor factory. Products that were made were mostly for internal consumption. Pottery produced here was shipped out of the camp in large quantities. Production of pottery was not part of the social production plan and the pots were sold in the local market. Unlike the prisoners, the preferentially treated were able to earn a little more money by selling pottery outside the camp. There were many cases of business that provided extra income. There were liquor factories in the villas of the SSA Chief in Shimsan and Pongchang as there were sources of sweet water there. That's why they built liquor factories at those locations.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“They appealed to Kim Jong-il and transferred Camp No. 18 to Kaechon city but faced a serious problem. They failed to fulfill the production target as the prisoners were released and became villagers.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“The arrangement was that Camp No. 18 was to produce coal for the Pukchang thermal power station. There were five shafts in the Yongdung area. There was a contract for the supply of coal from one of the shafts to the Magnesia factory in Tanchon in the north. No agricultural products were shipped out of the camp. The land, which was dedicated to agriculture, was limited in the camp and there were only 11 work units, so none was shipped out of the camp. The agricultural products were for internal consumption.” (A32, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

“When I was there, they relocated the camp all of sudden. The chief administrator and chief secretary were punished for economic loss as a result. The authorities realized that relocation of the camp was a mistake. Furthermore, many motors dismantled from factories in the camp were stolen or damaged during the relocation, causing a big economic loss. (A32, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

(7) Camp No. 19

Little is known about products from Camp 19. According to information by the witness, A21,¹³¹⁾ about the process of closure of the camp, a major product was from Taehung mine. Today, this mine is in operation under the umbrella of 140 Magnesia Factory.

131) A21 has provided information only on the process of the camp closure for reason of personal security.

“In 1990, political prisoners who were punished for light crimes were released and given residence certificates and became ordinary workers under the instruction of Kim Il-sung. At that time, all the buildings also became buildings for the mine. Then, discharged soldiers arrived here in large numbers for work. At that time, female workers from Songchon garment factory and twin brothers from Wunyul Mine were among those working here. When the camp was closed in 1990, about 2,000 discharged soldiers arrived here. Additionally, many volunteers also arrived from all over North Korea. In the 5th sub-unit alone, at Taehung mine, there were over 300 such workers from Hwanghae Province and North Hamgyong Province.” (A21, former family of camp officer, Camp No.19, 1984-1990)

(8) Camp No. 22

A summary of testimonies about Camp No. 22 by witnesses who had been detained or worked in the camp, reveals that the camp is largely divided into areas for farms, coal mines and factories. According to the witness A02, corn, water melon, sweet cucumbers, vegetables, potatoes, peppers, tobacco, beans and more were produced. The products were offered to state commercial companies organized for the purpose of earning foreign exchange, organizations of higher level and homes of senior party members. There was a pig pen project and the pork was supplied to the State Security Agency every year. There were 3 large factories for food, garments and daily necessities.

Food factories produced soybean paste, spicy paste, soybean cooking oil, taffy, soybean sauce, candies and sweets. Ahn Myong-chol testified that liquor was produced from sticky rice, trademarked ‘Kamhongno,’ and sold to foreigners in Korea Hotel in Pyongyang.¹³²⁾ The soybean paste

produced here was unique in that it was stored in a cellar for 10 years and supplied to Kim Jong-il. The garment factory produced military uniforms. They also produced coal, but the mine was not properly supported in terms of safety rules and as a result, many prisoners were killed during work.¹³³⁾ The witness A31, a former prisoner of Camp No. 23, reported that he had heard from an SSA camp officer that the coal produced here was supplied to Chongjin thermal power plant.

It appears that products were supplied to organizations at a higher level, but at the same time, were frequently sold by SSA officers at the local market for personal profit. The products from Camp No. 22 were sold at high price in the market because of their good quality.

“There was a bunkhouse in the mine sector for individual prisoners. There were farm families in the Kulsan Sector. There were also farm families in the Chungbong Sector. There was an SSA officers’ family village nearby...There were farm families in both Naksang and Namsok Sectors...There were also farm families in Sawul Sector. The food factories in Camp No. 22 were operated by young girls between the ages of 20 and 30. Girls chosen for these factories had to be favored by SSA officers, attractive, susceptible to flattery and not known to be talkative. Food factory buildings had two floors with a pond in the center of the building complex; beautiful like a park. The mines were not equipped with safety measures and prisoners were at risk of accident at anytime. The underground tunnels were without protective brace supports and miners were killed almost everyday. Miners used primitive tools, such as shovels and picks, and were forced to work like moles. When loading coal onto

132) Myong-chol Ahn, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

133) *Ibid.*, p. 223.

a tall tram, prisoners had to climb up to the edge of the tram with coal buckets. They often lost their balance and fell into the tram and soon disappeared into the coal pile. The tunnel was just like something a mole would dig, and there would only be enough space for a prisoner to lie down on his back and chip away at the coal. Women were also forced to work like men. A ratio of gender of prisoners working in a mine was 5:5.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

“In the Sawul Sector, prisoners produced corn, watermelons and sweet melons. They cultivated all kinds of vegetables, including red peppers. We lived in abundance. Potato farina, which was so popular and expensive in the market outside, was also produced there” (A02, family of former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1994)

“Buildings in the camp include staff houses (2-story), food factory (1-story), garments factory (1 story), 4 battalions (1-story), an execution site, railway station, human experimentation site (1-story, 2-story basement) and people’s work unit. Saebyol area is for the coal mine, Hweryong area for factories and Chongsong area for agricultural farms. The human experimentation site is in Haengyon area. No one can enter the site. The food factory produces soybean paste and spicy paste for Kim Il-sung. There is a food factory that produces all kinds of daily necessities. The soybean paste for Kim Jong-il is stored in the cellar for 10 years. The garment factory produces military uniforms. Also produced are rice, corn and vegetables. Products from the camp are shipped out of the camp for foreign exchange earning and they are also supplied to senior party members on Changgwang street. The camp supplies what is needed for senior party members.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“SSA camp officers told me that they feel sorry for the prisoners in Camp No. 22. Everything is produced from the camp, including musical instruments, agricultural farm tools, pork, soybean cooking oil, accordions, etc. Coal produced from the camp goes to the thermal power station in Chongjin. Every year, SSA officers arrived to receive supplies of bean, pork, soybean cooking oil and other food items from the camp. It appears that they have an annual target for the supply of the above items to SSA. I think that the shipment of all kinds of products is made to Pyongyang twice a year. People just outside the camp said that some prisoners are so smart that even rockets are manufactured in Camp No. 22. They said that everything with the exception of salt is produced in the camp. I heard that rice, apples and watermelons are also produced. In North Hamgyong Province, fruits and rice were not produced because of the cold weather, but in reality, they are produced in the camp. Seeds were also supplied by Camp No. 22. There are several villages in the camp. I heard an SSA officer’s wife confess that she also felt deeply sorry for the miserable life of prisoners inside the camp. She also added that the prisoners were not offenders but were there by guilt-by-association. There are many smart and intellectual prisoners that can produce anything. They could have made a greater contribution to the national development if they were allowed to be a civilian outside the camp.” (A33, former resident near the camp, Camp No. 22)

“At that time, it was after 1990 and I was a pupil at a primary school near the camp. Some people received special food from a relative who worked inside the camp and saved the food for those outside the camp. This food included rice, corn, pork, spicy paste, peppers, etc. The products from the camp were more expensive in the local market by one third of the market price.” (A34, former resident near the camp, Camp No. 22)

(9) Camp No. 23

Agriculture was a major industry in Camp No. 23, which was under the operation of the police. There were also mines, factories and forestry. The agricultural products included corn, tobacco, pepper, Chinese onion, cucumber, tomato, cabbage and other vegetables. Additionally, they had chicken and duck farms. It was reported that the quantity of products in the camp was sufficient for internal consumption but much of pepper produced here was supplied to the 7th Bureau, National Police Ministry, to make kimchi.¹³⁴⁾

Major mineral products included graphite and coal. It was believed that the graphite was supplied to Kimchaek Steel plant and the coal to Chonjin thermal power plant. There were reports about a garment factory and food factory in Sangdol-li. No information, however, is available on the utilization of the products.

“We farmed in the camp and did nothing else. There was a coal mine and a place where they were making furniture. There were no other factories. I was told that the coal produced here is sent to the thermal power plant in Chongjin. They said there was a graphite mine where individual prisoners worked. The individual prisoners passed my house on their way to the mine for work every morning. I saw some prisoners were on bare foot and were dressed in old, worn-out winter clothing even in the summer as they were taken to work by policemen. Individual prisoners stayed at a bunk house. Their bunk house was far away from my house and I never saw it.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1986)

134) Sung-chol Kim, “Gloomy Valley, Note 3 of Visit to Economic Prison Camp,” *Free Public Views*, May Issue, (Seoul: Korea Freedom Federation, 2000), p. 143.

“Everyone worked in agricultural farms. There were other work units, raising chickens and ducks and growing vegetables.” (A26, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1986)

“At camp No. 23, most of the prisoners worked for the agricultural farm. There was also forestry and a graphite mine. The graphite produced here was packed and sent to the Kimchaek steel plant.” (A30, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1987)

“There was a mine in Shintae-ri. There were factories for food and garments in Sangdol-li. I never did farmwork before throughout my life but I had to do hard farmwork here. Farming was harder than construction work. I belonged to a work unit for raising vegetables. The major product was tobacco. We also raised pepper, Chinese onion, cucumber, tomato, cabbage and Chinese cabbage. All the vegetables we produced were for policemen. It was not for sale outside camp but for policemen and their families. The camp was self-sufficient. There were many policemen. There was a policeman in charge and a camp official at each work unit.” (A31, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1981-1988)

(10) Prison No. 25

The famous product from Prison No. 25 in Chongjin is the seagull brand bicycle. It is recognized as the best quality bicycle in all of North Korea.

“The Seagull bicycle, produced by the Susong prison, was very popular in Chongjin.” (A35, former resident near the Camp, Camp No.25, 1982-1983)

The witness, A27, is the only witness from the prison. It is assumed

that he was imprisoned there together with other prisoners through guilt of petty crimes, as he testified that he was only engaged with farmwork and never saw any factories in the prison.

“There is no big factory here. All we have is a plantation. The camp officers take us to the farmland and tell us what to do for the day and we work. Work units 1 through 3 work at different locations. The work unit chief and deputy chief do not work and just watch us work. There is no work unit chief in the room. Once the prisoners are all outside for work, the guards surround us to watch us. The work unit chief and deputy chief also watch us. There is a chief at each work unit 1 through 3. Our work included weeding the fields of corn, cabbages, eggplants and cucumbers. Some of the products may have been consumed here. They gave us nothing after the harvest.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

As observed in the testimonies above, a variety of production facilities and products exist in political prison camps. It appears that the products from entire political prison camps in North Korea are very important for the North Korean economy in view of the number of prisoners and size of land involved. The number of prisoners in those camps represents around 1% of the entire North Korean population, but their average per-capita production appears to be considerably higher than the national average. Former prisoners and camp officials have confirmed that the per-capita production of prisoners in the camps were considerably higher than the national average.

It has been frequently testified that coal productions from former camps significantly decreased when the camps were shut down. Society took over the operation of coal productions. It has been also confirmed that the

products from the maximum security camps have been evaluated to be of “excellent quality,” as most prisoners became skilled workers doing the same work repetitively for an extended period of time. It has also been revealed that most camps are self-sufficient, and products are also shipped out of the camp in large quantities. An increase in the shipment of camp products outside the camps since the mid-1990s, when food situations deteriorated in North Korea, underlined the importance of products from political prison camps in the North Korean economy.

As observed, production activities in political prison camps represent a classic case of low production costs through the exploitation of prisoners. The products from these camps come out as a result of hard work by highly skillful workers for long hours. Without doubt, they make a significant contribution to the North Korean economy. It further implies that the political prison camps in North Korea are very important for political and social purposes as well as for the economy. Therefore, the observation of political prison camps in North Korea must be made not only from the perspective of politics, but also from an economic standpoint.¹³⁵⁾

135) Hung-sun Park and et al., *Survey Report of Political Prisoners' Camps in North Korea*, (Seoul: National Human Rights Commission, 2009), pp. 91-98.

Daily Life in Political Prison Camps

1. Clothing, Food, Housing and the Supply of Basic Necessities

North Korea is a communist country and North Koreans depend on the central government for the supply of clothing, food, housing and other basic necessities.

However, since the 1990s, the continuing food crisis and economic difficulties have resulted in the expansion of private economic activities. Cultivation of small-sized land in residence areas by citizens has become widespread in an effort to obtain cereals and vegetables for private consumption due to the national economic crisis. These private economic activities have been largely connived in the face of the continuing economic crisis in North Korea.

In the political prison camps, due to the isolated environment, a self-sufficient production system has been in place, with the productivity of prisoners in the camps considerably higher than the national average of North Korea. Thus food shortages and starvation in the prison camps were not as serious as they were in North Korea during the corresponding period.

Since 2000, however, as North Korea's economic hardship continues, the supply of products from these prison camps for a society has increased, resulting in deteriorated living conditions of the prison camps. If North Korea's future economic situation does not improve and the food shortages become a long-term situation, the demand for products from the political prison camps will grow and the living conditions of the prisoners are likely to worsen.

The analysis of the living conditions of the prisoners in the prison camps has been done in terms of clothing, food, housing and other basic necessities.

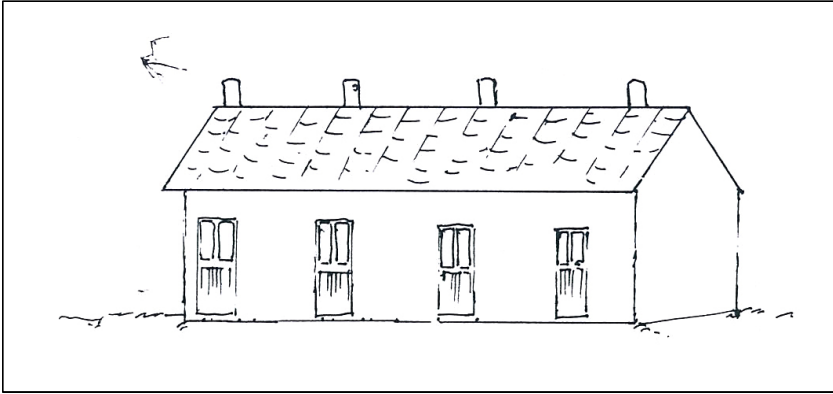
1) Housing Facilities

With the exception of Prison No. 25, Susong, prisoners in political prison camps in North Korea do not live in buildings. Rather, they live in rural villages and/or bunkhouses of factories to do hard work.

Camps, except for Prison No. 25 in Susung, appear to be similar to ordinary farm houses in rural areas. In other words, unlike South Korean prisons where prisoners are in a closed building, North Korea's political prison camps take the form of a rural village, and bunkhouses are provided for individual prisoners in the factories and coal mines. Depending on the particular camp, there are differences in housing types. Married couples and those who have families are provided with ordinary houses. Those, who are individual prisoners, live in bunkhouses. However, a house that is offered to families ¹³⁶⁾ usually consists of a room and a kitchen. Four

136) There are some testimonies that 2 rooms were provided in the case of big families.

Figure 4-1 Harmonica Style Housing in Political Prison Camps



or five members can live there because the house is divided into many small sections. It looks like a harmonica and is thus known as a harmonica-style housing.

Individual prisoners live in congested bunkhouses for work in factories and mines. The bunkhouses are built with dried mud/cement bricks or stones by prisoners. There are not wallpaper, flooring and glass windows in the bunkhouses, and windows are covered with a vinyl sheet. Electricity is provided during limited hours. Water and bathrooms are communally used. The walls are so thin that you can hear all the sounds from next door. You can hear your next-door neighbor talk, work and snore, thereby making it impossible to protect the privacy of individuals and enabling prisoners to watch one another at all times.

Even if housing is offered, heating and cooking equipments must be self-supplied. Aside from the sleeping area, all other places are communally used. In the bunkhouse, the kitchen is for common use.

There are separate bunkhouses for men and women; however, school aged children (usually less than 12 years) usually live with their parents.

We can figure out how the housing conditions in the camps are based on testimonies from former prisoners and camp officials.

“The house in the camp has a cement wall and floor. The wall was painted with white lime powder. There is no carpet and prisoners sleep on the cold cement floor. We heated the room by burning coal. There was no such thing as fence between houses. You just enter your kitchen right from the road and find your room. You can hear snoring in the next room. Unfortunately, there is no privacy. The windows are almost the same size of windows commonly found in South Korean houses, but they are covered with vinyl sheeting instead of glass. The vinyl sheet is misty and no one can look inside your room from outside, but it is of little help in winter. There is no system of piped water. You have to fetch water from a communal well.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No.14, 1982-2005)

In the case of Camp No. 15, living facilities are divided into two parts: a ordinary housing for family prisoners and a bunkhouse for individual prisoners. Ordinary houses were arranged in a straight line, and one or many families lived together in those houses. There were usually one to two rooms, and a separate kitchen area. Heating equipments were available but woods should be self-supplied. Because there were no floor mats, straw or straw bags were used. Some witnesses said that it was possible to raise dogs or chickens in the houses, but some said not.

“They gave us a house for each family. There is a little open space near the entrance of the house, but no walls. You could not raise livestock. No private farming was allowed. While I was there, new prisoners kept arriving. Then, there was a period when no new prisoners arrived for a month. The number of new prisoners was decreasing. So, no new houses were needed and house construction stopped. They all lived in old houses. We would cover the floor with straw mats made from rice husks and similar methods. They didn’t give us coal. If you managed to find some firewood from up the hill, it could be used to bring some heat to your house.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No.15, 1976-1980)

“They took seven of us and allocated a house. The house was a shack, which was about the size of three people (3m on every side). The house was interwoven with corn leaves and there was only a cauldron hanging on the wood burning stove.¹³⁷⁾” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No.15, 1970-1979)

According to a testimony, individual prisoners lived in bunkhouses. Although the bunkhouses were not spacious, they were not cramped. Heating equipments were also available in the bunkhouse but woods needed to be self-supplied. The bunkhouse at Camp No.15 in Sorimchon had some beds that were used by many prisoners, as they do in the Army. Another bunkhouse at Camp No. 15 in Kuwup-ni had

137) Hung-sun Park and et al., *Survey Report of Political Prisoners’ Camps in North Korea*, (Seoul: National Human Rights Commission, 2009), p. 146.

the Korean-style floor heating system. There were no furniture but there were personal lockers.

“Once you get into the bunkhouse, you see wooden flooring and wooden beds like in the military. There are personal lockers under the bed but we had nothing to store. The women’s bunkhouse was made up of two rooms as there were 60 of us to fit. One is used by elderly people and physically weak persons; the other one by everyone else. After getting back from work, two people from each group (a group consisted of six or seven people) go out of the back door to burn wood for heating. Prisoners are punished if they don’t find firewood on time.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“Our room can hold six people to sleep. It’s not a bedroom but it has a heated floor made of burnt wood. Wood was to be self-gathered during free time. We drag wood during working time in the winter, so we could keep them to use after work. The floor is warm but the upper part near the ceiling is cold. There were no furniture, and only personal lockers and a few hangers were available in the room. Restrooms are outside and were communally used.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

It seems that there were many hygienic problems in both the family houses and the bunkhouses because shower facilities were not equipped properly. Due to the absence of bathrooms, prisoners had to wash in the kitchen or in the river, and washing was not done so often. This situation caused many prisoners to be infested with lice. The hygiene level was thus very low.

“There is a bathtub in the bath room in South Korea. There is a bucket like that in the shower room in the bunkhouse but it’s not big enough for 60 people to use. And water does not flow well. You get used to not washing. If the water does not run, prisoners still manage without water. When it rains, we just wash and wear our clothes in the rain, and we lived like beggars.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“There is no public bath so we go out to the river to bathe. Women are no exception. They go out at night. It is not possible to take a bath every day like in South Korea. It was good enough to be there once a month.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“There is no bathroom. Running some water over the face in the winter, taking a bath by the brook in the summer is normal. If we could take a bath inside sometimes, boiled water was delivered in a bucket. It’s such an inconvenience. They want to re-educate prisoners by giving prisoners all kinds of pain and inconvenience.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“We washed our face at the stream, and sanitation was non-existent. There were many lice and fleas. There was a common bath house also. In the winter, they heated the water from the stream and we bathed there once a week with our work unit. I think we bathed two or three times a month.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

In Camp No.18, the standard shape of a house is a one-story flat, partitioned into sections, designed for living by many prisoner families. It has been commonly testified that four to 12 families lived in each flat. A flat was allocated to four families in the case of junior party leaders

of prisoners. A better flat was allocated to a discharged family, if they were released with a good performance record or favored by a bribed camp official.

“When new flats had been constructed, prisoners with good backgrounds were given new flats and ordinary prisoners like me moved to an old flat without any choice. I lived in an old flat in Pongchang for sometime and was able to move into a new flat with two rooms after bribing officials in the camp office. I continued to use the common toilet and used the kitchen for cleaning and washing.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

The system of controlling prisoners was also applied to housing allocation. The partition in the flat was so poor and thin that a family could hear all the sounds from next door and one could make a hole in the partition by kicking it. Although the coal supply was sufficient, the room was extremely cold.

“The flat was made of leaves woven and pasted with soil on the left and right. The kind of poor house you can make a hole in by kicking it. The roof was covered with a thin layer of stone. Regardless of the size of your family, for instance, 10 members or 2-3 members, one family lived in a one section. If an adult lay down on the floor, his/her feet can even reach the wall. Because it was made of dried plants and earth, the entire wall was covered with frost in the winter. There were so many lice, the entirety of flats were infested by lice.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“The house was a flat with several sections of two small rooms and a

kitchen, made of earthen brick which were a mixture of stones and quicklime, very loose like that of a temporary roof on a pig pen. The floor and walls were literally raw earth so any movement inside caused dust to stir in the house. The floor wasn't composed of only raw earth; there were some pieces of wood bark on the floor. The ceiling was made up of boards so rotten and ancient that it could have collapsed on us at any moment. What was worse was that there were holes on the boards.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 18, 1977-1987)

It was reported that individual prisoners lived in a re-education apartment called a re-revolutionizing residence or a special residence.

“At Camp No. 18, there were individual prisoners without family. The bunk house where they were staying was called the “revolutionizing residence.” There used to be some 90 prisoners in the bunk house. They were formerly high ranking officials from the Police Ministry and central party ,including a typist of Kim Jong-il. They are all called the students of re-revolutionization because they got arrested under Kim’s direct order.” (0 Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

“There were some prisoners under a fixed-term of imprisonment. Former party dignitaries from Pyongyang lived in a two-story ‘re-revolutionizing residence’. It was a 2-story building with 6 rooms and three windows.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

Table 4-1 Housing by Camps

Location		Type of Housing	Condition of Housing	Heating	Facilities and Conditions of Hygiene	
Camp No.12 (Onsong county, North Hamgyong)		—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straw mats on the floor • Poor floor condition • A 2mX2m sized room and a kitchen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wall is covered with soil • The windows are covered with vinyl and winds are coming from outside 	—	
Camp No.13 (Onsong county, North Hamgyong)		• 5-family house	—	—	—	
Camp No.14 (Kaecheon city, South Pyongan)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-family house • Singles over 12 years old are separated from family and live in a bunkhouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made of cement • Concrete covered on the floor and walls • No floor mats • The wall is painted in lime powder • No fence • The windows are covered in vinyl • No soundproof (sounds can be heard door to door) • No clocks (Alarm bells are ringing every 30 minutes in the village) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using coal • The windows are covered in vinyl 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No piped water supply (using joint well) 	
Camp No.15 (Yodok county, South Hamgyong) (1)	Re-education zone (1)	Ipsok-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 family house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garden • No fence • Using straw bag instead of floor paper • Not allowed to raise livestock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using wood, self-supplied 	—
		Taesuk-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in a bunkhouse, 'E' shaped 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-26 people per room • Vinyl windows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using wood, self-supplied • Many prisoners frozen to death because of no consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many lice • 2-3 times of bathing in a month (water from a stream boiled.)

Location		Type of Housing	Condition of Housing	Heating	Facilities and Conditions of Hygiene	
Camp No.15 (Yodok county, South Hamgyoung) (2)	Re-education zone (2)	Sorimchon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in bunkhouse • 1 small group(male) • 2 small groups (female) • Separated by sex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are many lice • 10-40 people per room depending on the season • Not as small as others • Military style bedroom • Personal lockers under the bed • Barbed-wire fence over the cement wall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using wood, self-supplied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the water buckets (lack of water) • No shower facilities (Using stream water)
		Kuwup-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 family, 1 house : Families are divided into North Koreans and Koreans from Japan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘-’ shape of house: 1-2 rooms sized of (3mX3), 1 kitchen regardless the number of family member. • A mud-walled hut combined with lime • Holes in the ceiling • Facilitated with light bulb 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using wood, self-supplied 	—
	Maximum Security zone	Kuwup-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunkhouse for individual prisoners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 people in a room sized 2m×2.4m • Company commander are using separated rooms • Personal lockers and hangers • Common Toilets • Drinking water • No bathroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using wood, self-supplied 	—
		Yongpyong-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-family house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘-’ shape of harmonica flat 	—	—
Camp No.17 (Toksong county, South Hamgyoung)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housings newly built (4 families in a house) 	—	—	—	

Location		Type of Housing	Condition of Housing	Heating	Facilities and Conditions of Hygiene
Camp No.18 (Pukchang county, South Pyongan)	Tukchang Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-12 families in 1 house • 4 families in 1 house is offered to junior party leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A room sized 6m²~18m², 1 kitchen • No soundproof • Wall made of leave woven and plastered with soil , thin layer rock for roof • Using envelopes instead of floor paper • Lots of lice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using coal • Floor is warm but frost is on the wall because of strong draft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No public bath (Using brook)
	Re-revolutionizing residence	Two story bunkhouse, 6 rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunkhouse. Different size. • Living 5-7 people in a room, 16.5 m² • Sleeping on cement floor, easy to get coal, floor is warm 	—	—
	Pongchang-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing for families : 1~12 families in a house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room, 16.5~33m² • Some shelters have 2 rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using coal • Floor is warm enough, easy to get coal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common toilets • No shower facility
Camp No.19		—	—	—	—
Camp No.22 (Hweryong city, North Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All prisoners in bunkhouse, families separated. • Residence by family authorize for good performance over 10 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual prisoner: 100 people living in a room, personal locks are offered • Houses for household: 1 room, 1 kitchen, the height of chimney is lower than roof, Cases of asphyxiation because of poor ventilation system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using wood, corn leaf or corn root • Only allowed to use for 1 hour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No piped water system

Location	Type of Housing	Condition of Housing	Heating	Facilities and Conditions of Hygiene
Camp No.23 (Toksong county, North Hamgyong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apartment for individual prisoners • 1 house for 1 household 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual prisoners: 20 people living in a cell of bunkhouse • Housing for family: 1 room, 1 kitchen, 1 garage 	—	—
Camp No.25 (Chongjin city, North Hamgyong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in bunkhouse 	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using coal and wood • Poor condition 	—

2) Food Rations

(1) Food Ration and Substitute Food

Since the political prison camps do not allow unauthorized activities, prisoners must survive on distributed food. However, because the distributed food is small and the work is hard, survival is threatened under the chronic situation of undernourishment. Many prisoners have died of diseases resulting from such conditions. Family households receive food rations and meals are provided for individual prisoners at the bunkhouse. Ipssal¹³⁸⁾ or rice, the staple Korean diet, is not supplied. Ground corn or ‘Oksusu Sal’¹³⁹⁾ is rationed, with the standards of rations differing by age and type of work. The foods are distributed in accordance with standard North Korean food rations, with hard labor workers, such as miners, getting more food than children and old persons. The actual rations

138) White rice is called ‘Ipssal’ in North Korea.

139) Oksusu Ssal is ground corn and it is called ‘Gangnaengi Ssal’, ‘Gangnang Ssal’ or ‘Ok Ssal’.

received, however, are smaller than specified, meaning that living only on rationed food results in hunger and famine. In terms of side dishes, only salted cabbages and salts are rationed so that prisoners are eating the same salted cabbages throughout the year. In comparison, soybean paste, soybean sauce and seaweed, etc., are rationed in the re-education camps, and vegetables such as cabbage, and potatoes, along with meat and fish, are also rationed on special days like New Year's Day.

“Per-person daily ration for miners and farmers was 900 grams of corn. The ration had been reduced to 700 grams as of the 1990s. The ration for all primary school children is the same: 300 grams; in middle school, 400 grams are designated for children in the first four grades and 500 grams given to children in the fifth and sixth grades of middle school. There was an additional ration of three bundles of salted cabbage as well as a little salt. The same cabbage each meal all the year around.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“It was so difficult to eat corn in the beginning. I wasn't able to eat corn for the first 10 days there. Eating was such a hardship there, you know. Corn was supplied on a regular basis, 700 grams per person per day. Now, when you remove husks and stripped the corncob, the actual amount of corn kernels you get is very small. The corn ration never stopped. We would get a little of what we cultivated on the farm. They gave us cabbage and potatoes.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Prisoners eat rice only twice a year on the birthdays of the leaders. Other than that, prisoners eat corn all year long. Prisoners live on the leftovers from supply given to the SSA. We did not work on New Year's Day. No meat was provide for prisoners. We would butcher a pig on New Year's Day and the SSA officers would take all the meat and prisoners would eat the

pig cataracts.” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1996-1997)

“Those prisoners who exceeded their work quota per year are given an additional supply of 1 kg. of Korean taffy and one bottle of cooking oil on New Year’s Eve. The cooking oil is used for soup and for Korean cornbread, which is supplied on a holiday.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

In some camps, raising chickens or rabbits was allowed for family households and there were cases where these households were authorized to dispose of them for private use. However, it is obvious that small food rations in the prison camps make prisoners suffer seriously from hunger and undernourishment.

“Daily ration per person is 500 grams. So, prisoners have never felt their stomach full, even with just corn. It is rare to taste meat. You can say they are in bad shape because of malnutrition. You can raise chickens and a dog, the only source of meat. Prisoners somehow find ways to hatch chicks. Not all prisoners feed chickens. They keep chickens in their own room due to fear of theft by other prisoners. Some families raise two or three chickens. Other families do not.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No.12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“Food is rationed and prisoners working in the mine get 100% full ration but dependants or children get 5 days ration a week. You had to find your own ways to gather whatever food is available. Some prisoners raised dogs or rabbits for this purpose. Some prisoners survived on porridges and others weren’t so fortunate and died of starvation.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

Prisoners found various ways to relieve malnutrition. The simplest way was to collect edible plants such as herbs, mushrooms, wild grapes or berries from the mountains. To get protein, they used to catch frogs, rats, snakes or earthworms. If prisoners had enough clothing, they exchanged it for food, a most common means of solving hunger. Prisoners working in the field with livestock stole the remaining parts of meat that SSA officers had not taken.

“Women were engaged in some kind of business. Clothes were exchanged for grain. We begged for burnt corn remaining at the bottom of the kettle in the kitchen. Or receive some food from people who have worked in the threshing floor.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“We took our meals in the dining room by company. We ate a kind of corn mush or porridge mixed with some vegetables. It was not corn powder, it was cracked corn for cooking. Prisoners ate frogs and snakes inside the camp. They secretly trapped them. If you were lucky enough to catch a roe deer or a wild boar, you had to offer them to the SSA officers. cataracts.”(A10,former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No.15, 1996-1997)

“Sometimes, we smell burning corn around midnight. It is the prisoners who sneaked into cornfields nearby and are cooking. Some people exchange their pants for food. All the clothing, which people wear, had holes everywhere. Some people are wearing clothes from dead people. They are trading clothing for food.” (Lee Young-guk, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

It has been reported that food distribution has deteriorated in political prison camps since the mid 1990s. It appears that political prison camps

were also affected by the national food crisis during the corresponding years. There is a testimony from a prisoner who lived in Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15 during the period 1976-1980, when the North Korean economy was relatively good. The testimony has it that, at that time, prisoners were provided with 700 grams of corn,¹⁴⁰⁾ cabbages and potatoes¹⁴¹⁾, as in North Korean society outside the camp. In those times, no prisoners starved to death or ate rats. However, there is a testimony by one prisoner who was in Camp No. 15 during 1994-1997 and stated that the suffering started and the quality of distribution declined in 1996. Although more testimonies are need for further verification, even if the political prison camps were self-sufficient, the increased supply of food from the camps to outside society has aggravated food situations within the camps.

(2) Malnutrition and Starvation

In political prison camps, due to the lack of food, prisoners were malnourished. Although each camp differs in the levels of food supply, witnesses testify to severe cases of undernourishment and starving to death at all camps.

“Prisoners ate corn and salt, nothing else. All prisoners were undernourished and it was like hell. I always despised our miserable conditions there. Life is very hard even for children, and I used to deplore the awful life they had to endure. Now I can relate to you the details of the miserable conditions

140) The word “ration” has a different meaning to the word “distribute or supply”. Usually, prisoners working on farms receive rations worth one year amount at once. The harvest of crops for 1 year is based on 700 grams of rations per day (for adults).

141) “Supplied” is a concept of suppling on a special day.

there, but at the time it was so painful that I felt like a walking dead person.” (A11, former prisoners, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“We ate 160 grams of boiled corn like porridge, with salt soup and salted cabbage as side dishes. Many male prisoners were undernourished. The food was not even enough for women. Just when I first arrived, two women died of undernourishment. (A11, former prisoners, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“There are some cases where the whole family starved to death. Sometimes they died not even knowing how many days they had worked without eating. You can’t imagine the feeling of hunger. You would not know how to survive a day with porridge for 2 meals only.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

There is a testimony below about food situations during the period 1975-2006 in Camp No. 18.

“People collapsed because of undernourishment. All prisoners lost weight from hard work and starvation. 10% of prisoners are on the verge of death. There are an average of one to two prisoners in each work unit who are in the final stage of starvation because they are so severely undernourished that they may die at any moment.” (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

Testimonies are available on the situations of undernourishment of prisoners in other camps.

“70 % percent of prisoners were undernourished. There were many prisoners who died of hunger. When I was there, there were six prisoners

who were carried to the hospital. They were already dead when they arrived in the hospital. All the prisoners who were taken to hospital died.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

“There were too many undernourished prisoners to remember. 70 % of prisoners there were undernourished. (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“At each work unit, some 40-50 prisoners died a year. Usually, the prisoners in the third phase of undernourishment died. Some 40 to 50% of prisoners were in the first phase of undernourishment and some 30% of them died sooner or later” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

The main food was corn, and it was the cause of malnutrition. Hard work with little food caused undernourishment for many prisoners. In particular, pellagra¹⁴²⁾ seems to be the main reason for the death of prisoners.

“It takes long time to cook, has a very coarse taste even after boiling for a long time and is hard to digest. Almost every new prisoner has had the experience of loose bowels after eating “corn rice.” In some cases, the diarrhea continues as long as six months. Prisoners have died as a result.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Camp No.15, 1977-1987)

142) Pellagra is a nutritional disorder caused by a dietary deficiency of niacin which is classified as vitamin B. Pellagra is characterized by skin lesions and by gastrointestinal and neurological disturbances; the so-called classical three Ds of pellagra are dermatitis, diarrhea, and dementia. Skin lesions result from an abnormal sensitization of the skin to sunlight and tend to occur symmetrically on the exposed surfaces of the arms, legs, and neck. Pellagra can be common in people with unbalanced diets, with most food energy from grains and a poor supply of essential amino acid and vitamins. <Searched from Britannica Dictionary>

Table 4-2 Food Distributions by Camp

Location		Quantity	Meat/Fish
Camp No.13 (Onsong county, North Hamgyong)		500g of corn per person per day	None
Camp No.14 (Kaesong city, South Pyongan)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult: 900g of corn per day (actual supply is 700g) • Primary school children (Age of 8~11): 300g • Middle and high school student (Age of 12~15): 400g • High school student (Age of 16~17): 500g 	None
Camp No.15 (Yodok county)	Re-education zone	Ipsok-ni	• 700g of corn per day Special supply on New Year's Day
		Taesuk-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn porridge per day • Newly harvested rice is available twice a year • 160g per meal (80g only since 1996) None (Butchery for SSA officers) • Leftover pig is available for supply on New Year's Day
		Sorimchon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50~160g of corn porridge per meal • Pork soup is supplied on holidays • Some part of meats left from SSA- People working in the livestock field, eating secretly intestines of chickens
		Kuwup-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual prisoners: 600g of coarse grain (100g per meal) • Household: 350g per day, Rice supplied on New Year's Day • Pollack is supplied on New Year's Day
	Maximum security zone	Young pyong-ni	• Self-sufficiency
Camp No.17 (Toksong county, South Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers in mines: 800g • Workers drilling tunnel: 900g 	—

	Vegetable/ Fruit	Condiments and Ingredients	Livestock	Others	Malnutrition/ Starvation
	None	Soybean sauce, bean paste, and salt was in short supply	Raising chicken and dog is authorized)	—	—
	3 salted cabbages per day	Little bit of salt	—	—	—
	Cabbages and Potatoes	1kg of bean paste, 1lit. of soybean sauce, seaweed in limited supply.	Raising dog is authorized	Rarely eating rats	Death by starvation rare
	Salted cabbage Soup, small portion of cabbages	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stealing corn • Exchange with clothing • Snakes or frogs 	80% of prisoners undernourished
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salted radish • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salted Soup is distributed • When the annual plans are accomplished, 1kg of rice candy and 1 bottle of soy oil are supplied • com cake is supplied during festive season 	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange clothing with food • Potatoes, pumpkins • Rats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% or prisoners starved to death • 50% of prisoners undernourished
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • salted cabbages • Dried radish soup 	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising chicken sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kudzu root, mugwort, dried radish, frog, snake, worm, squirrel. Korean wild grapes, berries, valerianaceous plants, mushroom, rats, gray mullet 	• Malnutrition
	—	—	—	—	• Malnutrition and starving to death
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1~2kg of salt and seaweed per month • 50 kg of cabbages in autumn 	• Salt	—	• Frog, rats, eggs of frogs	• Pellagra caused by malnutrition

Location		Quantity	Meat/Fish
Camp No.18 (Pukchang county, South Pyongan)	Tukchang Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Labor: 700g • Workers in mines: 800-900g (workers digging coals: 900g) and supplement are supplied (100-200g of rice) • Student: 500g • Dependant: 300g (actual supplied amount: 240g, 20% are taken away) • Average 40-50% are taken away(corn:rice=7:3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pork 2-3times a year • Late 1970s: 50~ 60kg of frozen pollack was supplied once
	Re-revolutionizing residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150g of corn, 3-4 grains of rice 	—
	Pongchang-ni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers drilling tunnel: rice 900g (500g~720g of actual supplied corn)+200g(supplement) • Workers in mines: 800g(actual supplied amount: 600g) per day • Other labors: 700g • Dependant: 300g • Primary school children (Age of 8-14): 400g • Middle school children (Age of 15-17): 500g 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising dogs or rabbits in home and sell them out
Camp No.19		—	—
Camp No.22 (Hoeryong, North Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 180g of corn per meal (regardless of sex) • Festive season: 180g of rice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soup with a very small quantity of meats • Small quantity of pork fats is supplied during the festive season
Camp No.23 in (Toksong county, North Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Prisoners: Self-sufficiency from own garden • Individual prisoners: 2 potatoes per meal, the dried radish soup and 10 grains of corn 	—
Camp No.25 (Chongjin, North Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100g of rice mixed with corn powder and cabbage per meal • Festive season: 100g of corn, 2 slices of bean curd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 pieces of salted radish per meal

Vegetable/ Fruit	Condiments and Ingredients	Livestock	Others	Malnutrition/ Starvation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetable and bean sprout are supplied 2-3times in a year Cabbage: 20kg-50kg on Kimchi making season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salt: 2-3kg once a year during Kimchi making season Soy sauce and bean paste: 200-300g on April 15, and on February 16 per person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising rabbits and dogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kudzu root, Grass, berries, Korean wild grapes, apples. The branch of prunus mume corn and yeast mixed Exchange household goods and food herbs, rats, fish, cherry, acorn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been people who committed suicide Malnutrition and starving to death
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salted radish, cabbage soup 	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> corn, cabbages or green onions, they eat them raw at harvest time 	—
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seaweed and cabbage can be purchased from the shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 bottle of alcohol, 5g of pork and 1kg of bean sprout are supplied on birthdays of leaders Salt and soy sauce can be purchased from the shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising dogs or rabbits in home and sell them out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting spinach in the garden, 6.5m-10m in front of house to eat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of people lose weight because of hard work and starvation 10% of people cannot work or near-death 1-2 people each work unit are in the terminal level of malnutrition
—	—	—	—	—
None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only rabbits are allowed to eat 	—	—
—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bean paste and soy sauce once a month 	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malnutrition: 70% of individual prisoners, 20% of family household
—	—	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70% of malnutrition, starving to death were seen

3) Supplies of Clothing and Other Daily Necessities

Housing and foods are provided to prisoners in political prison camps; However, blankets, clothing, shoes, socks, hygiene tools and sanitary napkins, household items etc., are not provided at all, or only a limited amount is supplied at a special time. Sometimes blankets are provided but most prisoners use second-hand goods. It has been reported that blankets are supplied only at the time of admission to the camp, and there is no supply after that.

“We received two blankets in the beginning, but no pillows. It is easy to make a pillow with rice bran filling.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“On the day of our arrival at the camp, they gave us all a few blankets and a set of clothes each. The clothes made of chemical (synthetic) fiber had a very rough feel on our skin and did not last long. The clothes soon wore out. With no winter clothes supplied in the camp, those having even rags to put on (in the cold) would be ‘rich’s burial.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoners, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

Clothing was provided to prisoners only once when they arrived at the re-education camps where the imprisonment term is comparatively short. It was reported that, in Camps No. 14 and 22, maximum security camps where prisoners are detained for life, clothing was provided to prisoners once or twice a year on a regular basis. However, former prisoners and officers from Camps No. 13 and 15 (Yongpyong-ni), also maximum security camps, testified that no clothing was ever supplied in the camps. It is also reported that in Camps No. 18 and 23, where control of prisoners

was relatively less strict and prisoners were imprisoned for an extended period of time, work or prison uniforms were supplied on a regular basis, and in the Ipsok area, Camp No. 15, prisoners were allowed to buy clothing once a year.

It appears that, “Jihajok,”¹⁴³⁾ poor quality North Korean sneakers, are supplied two or three times a year at almost all camps.

“Since clothes were not supplied, all prisoners had different clothes from one another. They wore the very same clothes they had on when they first arrived here. There were clothes left over from the prisoners who were released. All prisoners wore used clothes from someone else, regardless of gender. Prisoners must bring their own blankets from home (outside the camp). Otherwise, prisoners have to live without blankets.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“Clothing had not been provided but shoes were provided every year. When prisoners are released from the camp, the prisoners often leave their clothing for other prisoners. If someone brought many clothes, prisoners exchanged clothing with each other.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“Clothes were not supplied. There was a supply of shoes once a year. Prisoners wore old clothes from those prisoners who were released. Some new prisoners might bring an amount of spare clothes from home, so they would barter the clothes for something else.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

143) ‘Jihajok’ is running shoes which come up to the ankle. Soldiers or workers wear them for work at mine, farm or factory. It should be laced up so that powders cannot come in.

“It was hardly an entire piece of cloth and it never looked like one. Clothes amounted to dirty rags all wornout and their shoes looked odd and clumsy, something I’d never heard about or seen before.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“First, we would chop up an elm tree and scorch it slightly, making it flat for the purpose of using a section of wood to make soles for shoes. We used wormwood as an insole. Then we would tie the sole to our feet with string made from arrowroot. This we would call ‘Jihajok’ On other occasions, we would clean the skin of a dead rat with water, then dry it in shade. A rat hide is small, smaller than your palm, but it has fur. So, I thought it would be good to use as a patch over the knee of my pants.. I soon found out that the rat hide is weak and wears out very quickly. Then, we tried using the rat hide for the insole of shoes. (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“In the camp, it is your responsibility to buy or find clothes. I raised rabbits and dogs and sold them to buy clothes. Qualities of North Korean shoes were so inferior that you needed to repair them very frequently. We called the shoes sport shoes, sneakers, casual shoes, work shoes and Jihajok. We used a piece of rubber or cloth when repairing shoes.” (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No.18, 1972-1984)

Soap, toothpaste and other hygiene tools are not supplied, or very rarely supplied on a special occasion. Household items, such as old blankets used by previous occupants of the house, are assigned to newly arriving prisoners. There was no report that household items were newly provided. Many prisoners complained about their hardship due to the lack of these items, especially sanitary napkins.

“Sometimes, we would receive hand soap. During my three years of my detention there, I received a sanitary napkin only once and a toothbrush only twice. No toothpaste. I brought some supply of toothpaste from my home that I often shared with other prisoners.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“We received work clothes every six months and a pair of shoes twice a year, but no socks were supplied. We walked around without socks in winter. Prisoners find some spare cloth to wrap around their legs. We hang clothes on nails on the wall. There is no such thing as a clothes chest. We had to make our own underwear and we often walked around with just pants (without underclothing). We received work clothes from the camp but no gloves or anything like that. There were so many lice and fleas that we would find lice infesting our clothes.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Interviews with former prisoners have shown that in the camp they used their personal items they had brought with them, or used items from the prisoners leaving the camp. It showed that blankets, pillows and other household items were not provided by the camp. The only item that was provided on a regular basis were shoes, probably because work could not be done without them. Therefore, the prisoners were always in agony due to the lack of their daily necessities of life. This created a need to barter or exchange different items. It was also not uncommon to see a high level of theft among prisoners. The prisoners in the camp had nothing on their own other than the clothes on their backs. Prisoners suffered immensely from the lack of clothing, socks, underwear, and sturdy shoes, especially in the winter time.

“The camp was located in the mountains and very cold in winter, often -20 degrees Celsius. Spring and autumn were very short. Snow fully melted only in summer. Prisoners would pick up all kinds of used rags or worn-out clothes to cover their hands and faces in winter. But this doesn't help very much and prisoners remain exposed to cold wind in the winter. This is why most prisoners suffer frostbite. When they remove the rags from their face and hands at home, they find their skin swollen and red with some parts of their body frostbitten. Prisoners are often forced to have frostbitten legs amputated, as they are frozen beyond saving.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

In camps No. 13, 15, and 18, there was a shop in each camp to supply prisoners with basic necessities. The shop sold shoes, soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes. There were reports that prisoners actually purchased these items from these shops. In particular, in the Ipsok area, Camp No. 15, work uniforms and other clothes were available for purchase in the 1970s when North Korea was in better shape economically.

“The shops in the Camp No. 15 have no signs hung outside. It is merely a shop standing by itself. The shop has items, such as (ordinary) clothes, work clothes and shoes. In addition, you find some food items once a month. Ration quotas are strictly set: all you can buy is one kilogram of bean paste, one liter of soybean sauce and some seaweed (laver). There was aspirin in the shop. Shoes were expensive and, because of that, shoes were not much in demand by prisoners. A prisoner could buy a pair of shoes once a year. There is no limit set on what you can buy, but you can't buy any more simply because you don't have enough money. Nothing is free. You have to pay for everything. You can clean your teeth in the morning with salt. There's no toothpaste. They did supply soap.

Toothbrushes were also supplied, but you had to pay for them.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“There is a shop each village. They sell a very limited quantity of soybean sauce, paste and salt. These items are all from the food factory in Chongsong. You have to pay money to buy these items. As in the society outside, prisoners get an annual wage, from which they get little by little every month. They use the money for shopping. You can buy only the approved per person quantity. Other items like soap are in short supply, even in society outside. Of course, there is no such supply in the center.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

It has been reported that, in Camp No. 18, prisoners actually purchased some items from the shop in the camp, although quantities and types of products were limited. Despite the fact that they were able to purchase merchandise with money they earned, there was not enough supply of products for them to purchase. The shop was there in name only.

“The shop was next to the clinic. It was very small. You may call it a shop, but there was hardly anything to buy. We went to the shop when soy sauce, bean paste, and salt were distributed.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“Other daily necessities were purchased with earnings from working in the mine. Wages were about 150 won per month. That was considered to be a good salary, and is what my father earned. But the shop was so small; there was hardly anything to buy.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“We would buy our basic necessities with money that we earned. The most difficult items to purchase were shoes and soap.” (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

Kim Yong believed that there was a shop in Camp No. 18 in order to disguise the camp as a kind of concentration farm or an autonomous mine.¹⁴⁴⁾ There is another testimony that there were open shops in Camp No. 18, Pukchang. As Camp No. 18 in Pukchang was similar to ordinary North Korean society, special caution is in order to treat it as a political prison camp. More research and study would be necessary to determine whether the peculiarity of Camp No. 18 was due to the police administration or a different objective of foundation. The witness, O Myong-o, was imprisoned in the Pongchang area when the Tukchang area was returned to society in 1995. He testified that there was a market at that time.

“The outside influence of market has now reached the camp and now we have a sale block in the camp. The sale block is staffed by the preferentially treated and filter cigarettes are also now available there. Expensive items are needed by prisoners to bribe camp officials. One package of cigarettes is already very expensive and to bribe a camp officer, you need many packages.” (O Myong-o, former prisoners, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

The short supply of hygienic items caused serious problems for women.

144) Yong-sam Kim, “Inside Camp No. 14, North Korea’s Auschwitz, Record in Blood of the Crime of Human Extermination,” *Monthly Chosun*, May Issue (Seoul: Chosun News Press, 2000), p. 335.

It was reported that there were only two occasions that sanitary napkins were supplied. A witness, A06, a former prisoner during the period 2003-2006, in Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, testifies that sanitary napkins were supplied only once in three years. The witness, A22, a SSA officer in Camp No. 22, a maximum security camp, stated that sanitary napkins were provided once every 6 months. However, it was not confirmed that sanitary napkins were actually distributed. Female prisoners used hand-made cotton for sanitary napkins.

“During my three years of my detention there, I received a sanitary napkin only once and a toothbrush only twice.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“Soldiers don’t use their sanitary napkins; they sell them for money. Prisoners wash and re-use their improvised cloth for use as feminine napkins.” (A11, former prisoners, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“I picked up a piece of clothing at a worksite and washed it to use for a sanitary napkin. Sanitary napkins are not supplied so there were stains on the clothing of many women prisoners.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

Table 4-3 Supply of Clothing and Items of Daily Necessity

Location		Clothing	Blanket	Shoes	Hygiene Items	
Camp No.13 (Onsong county, North Hamgyong)		X	—	2 pairs of Jihajok per year (No supply since 1995)	No Soap	
Camp No.14 (Kaecheon, South Pyongan)		Work uniform (Once every 6 months)	2 Blankets	2 pairs of Jihajok per year	None	
Camp No.15 (Yodeok county)	Re-education zone	Ipsok-ni	Work uniform and clothing are available for purchase at the store, existed clothing	—	Shoes can be purchased at the store once a year	Toothpaste: Salt, Soap/Tooth brush are available to buy
		Taesok-ni	Clothing Supply X (Exchange with food)	X	1~3 time of supply per year	Soap is supplied once a month, Tissue X Toothpaste/Toothbrush: X Towel X
		Sorimchon	X	Blanket O	2 pairs of Jihajok per year	• Washing soap per month • 2 toothbrushes for 3 years • Tooth paste per month
		Kuwup-ni	• Individual prisoners: work uniform is supplied • Household: 1 pair of clothing	• Individual prisoners: 2 blankets • Household: few blankets	• Individual prisoners: purchasing at the store • Household: self-produced (using mouse leather or rags)	Toothpaste, toothbrush, soap, towel can be purchased at the store
	Maximum security zone	Yongpyong-ni	None	None	None	None

	Household Items	Underwear/ Sanitary napkin	Working Tool	Other Daily Necessities	Shop	Prohibited Item
	None	X	–	X	Selling soy sauce, bean paste and salt	–
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few plates, spoon, knife, pot, cutting board, iron pot: O Chopsticks, Table: X 	X	–	Needle, Thread	–	–
	None	Sanitary napkins X	Sickle	Aspirin	O	All items except clothing
	Supplied by group	Underwear X, Sanitary napkins X	Pickax O	-	No commented	Shoes, clothing, money, watch, drugs, were allowed if brought to camp from home
	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitary Napkins: once for 3 years Underwear (Panties) 	–	Note, pencil	No commented	–
	Individual prisoners: supplied by group Household: X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual prisoners: underwear can be purchased at the store Household: self sufficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual prisoners: Supplied simple tools, others are self-produced 	X	O	–
	None	None	None	None	–	–

Location		Clothing	Blanket	Shoes	Hygiene Items
Camp No.18 (Pukchang county, South Pyongan)	Tukchang Area	• 1 pair of uniform for 3 years	X	Once a year	• Tooth paste/tooth brush: only once
	Re-revolutionizing residence	• Used police uniform	—	—	—
	Pongchang-ni	1 work uniform per year	X	3 pairs of Jihajok for 1 year	Soap: once a month
Camp No.22 (Hweryong city, North Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer uniform: once a year • Winter uniform: once every 2 years 	Blanket	Shoes O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soap: once on arrival and Using mud afterward • Toothpaste once a months • Tissue X, cloth for the towel
Camp No.23 (Toksong county, South Hamgyong)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household: None • Individual prisoners or householder: Blue uniform is supplied once every 3 years 	Blanket O (once)	Once every 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toothpaste and toothbrush can be purchased at the store • TissueX • Towel X (using used clothing) • Soap: only once
Camp No.25 (Chongjin city, North Hamgyong)		X	1 Blanket	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towel:X • Washing soap: Jointly used • Toothpaste and tooth brush: X • Using newspaper for tissue

	Household Items	Underwear/ Sanitary napkin	Working Tool	Other Daily Necessities	Shop	Prohibited Item
	X	X	• 2 masks for 1 year	X	O	—
	Dirty plates	—	—	—	—	—
	X	X	Mask and glove in paper (Actual supply: X)	X	Outdoor Market: O Store: O	—
	Plates, spoon, chopsticks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitary napkin once a 6 months (assumption) • Underwear: supplied with work uniform(except bras) 	Working tool O		No comments	Nothing can be owned
	Plates, spoon, chopsticks	Underwear O: once a year, Sanitary napkins: X	Working tool O	X	O Exchange with food	Knife, needle, drugs
	Meal is provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underwear: None • Sanitary napkins: using clothes 	X	X	—	Nothing can be owned

2. Family Life

1) Family Life and Life in Bunkhouse

The family life in North Korean political prison camps is different depending on the particular camp. Limited marriage is allowed at the maximum security camps, such as Camp No. 14 in Kaechon, but living with one's spouse is not allowed. When a child is born, living with the mother is only allowed until the child finishes primary school, and then he/she must reside in the bunkhouse. In those cases, women must belong to a work unit on the farm and live in a village within the camp premises, but her husband should live in the bunkhouse for work. When the husband has been commended for good behavior, he receives the special privilege of coming home to sleep with his wife for one day. Moreover, even if living with a family, unmarried adults were separated from the family to live in a bunkhouse.

Individual prisoners, men or women, live in bunkhouses. In the re-education camp, it has been reported that individual prisoners were sometimes allowed to live in the village where families were living. It appeared that most families lived in the village together and the individual prisoners lived together at the bunkhouses.

“Here, all the families lived together and sometimes individual prisoners. The textile factory had a bunkhouse because most of the workers were individual prisoners. Twenty female individual prisoners who worked in food factories slept in the bunkhouse in the factory. Women who worked in the textile factories slept all together in the bunkhouse.” (A08, former

SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“There were families living together mixed with individual prisoners working in mines.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

“There were families and individual prisoners who lived there. All the individual prisoners there were miners. They were passing my house every morning...Individual prisoners were living together.” (A26, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1986)

“If you are without family, you would live in the bunkhouse. There are 100 prisoners living in one room which has 2-deck beds. They are squeezed into the room as the bunkhouse is so crowded. In the case of families, all members are separated to live at different bunkhouses.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

According to a witness of a former officer in Camp No. 22, if a prisoner has a good performance record, the prisoner is allowed to live with his/her family as a reward. Prisoners in Camp No. 22 who were living with family in a house would be considered the most privileged. It appears that prisoners who had been there for a long time usually got the privilege of living together with family.

“When we performed our work very well, we are placed in the housing of mines or farms to live together with family as a reward. In the house, there is no sink but a kitchen and a room. The height of the chimney is the same height of the roof to keep the smoke low. The kitchen walls are made from mud and have a lot of cracks. It sometimes causes death because

of the smoke from burning oak trees. But to live in houses is considered as the best recognition. People were usually there for over 10 years before receiving special commendation. Sometimes the women favored by SSA officers were authorized to live with family after 3 years.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

2) Marriage and Selection of Spouses

It is a fundamental desire as a human being to have a family; However, the political prison camps in North Korea control the marriage of prisoners and their choice of spouse. This is an important means to control prisoners and to maximize productivity. There are significant differences in procedures of intervention and in the approval for a marriage and selection of spouses by prisons.

In the re-education zone, Camp No.15 in Yodok, marriage is not authorized for individual prisoners. Prisoners detained in the camp with families for an extended period of time, however, are sometimes authorized to marry if the spouse is also a prisoner with a family. In Camp No. 18 in Pukchang,¹⁴⁵⁾ but a marriage between a prisoner and a discharged prisoner is not authorized. The released prisoner must return to the status of prisoner to marry a prisoner. The maximum security camp accepts a marriage as an important “recognition” in order to use it as a means to increase loyalty to the camp authorities and to have a new generation

145) Prisoner or “Ijumin” is a person detained in the camp. Released prisoner or “Haejemin” is a person who was released from the camp on expiration of prison term but continue to live in the same place in the camp. ‘Ijumin’ and ‘Haejemin’ is only applied to Camp No. 18. In other camps, prisoners and released prisoners cannot live in the same area.

of free labor force, so they, therefore, allow marriage under their approval. On the other hand, in Camp No. 14, in Kaechon, prisoners lack the right to choose their spouse because marriage and the selection of spouse are determined solely by the prison authorities. Therefore, it appears that prisoners can get married under approval in some camps, while in other camps, they are free to choose their own prisoner spouses.

“Prisoners can be married but they cannot live together. If a girl is married, she is released from where she was working and given a house while the husband has to continue to stay in the same bunk house. I think some 60% of the prisoners at 20s were married there. The camp needs many prisoners and young people are doing a good job and it appears that the camp authorities are encouraging young prisoners to get married. In the village, all women were married. In the camp, all prisoners have strong desires for marriage. In fact, you can hardly call it a marriage as the human rights of prisoners are totally disregarded and the one person, an SSA officer, makes all the decisions in the “marriage” process. As marriage is the strongest desire for all prisoners in the camp, prisoners risk dangers and even volunteer for tough work to receive the marriage authorization. Doing good work is not the only condition for such authorization. A prisoner must obey all the camp regulations and be a good spy on other prisoners to get married.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No.14, 1982-2005)

Each political prison camp has significant differences in regulations of marriage and the selection of spouses. However, marriage in North Korean political prison camps is not considered a human right, but rather is recognized as an important means to maximize productivity and to enhance loyalty to the camp. The most important reason to approve a marriage

in the maximum security camp is to produce a second generation of free labor force.

“Marriage is allowed. There is no restriction of childbirth. Do you know why? They need more prisoners in the future and young prisoners to keep the camp in operation. Someone arrived here under the charge of being a revisionist. She loved a man and had a special relationship with him. Then, they reported their relationship to the director of political department to seek approval. If approved, they can go ahead and be married.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

However, in Camp No. 15, depending on the area, getting married or having relationships inside the camp is not allowed for prisoners in the re-education zone as they are detained there for a relatively short period of time. According to a testimony, even if the prisoners are secretly in love and have deep relationships, it is difficult to progress the relationship. If the relationship is discovered, prisoners will receive the penalty of the punishment chamber and get their prison term extended. Furthermore, there is testimony that if one becomes pregnant, abortion is forced by the camp.

“Having a relationship is prohibited. Of course, marriage is illegal. If a pregnant woman is found, abortion is forced by the camp. And they criticize and interrogate the man who is responsible for the pregnancy. People come to the camp to be re-educated and having a relationship is just morally wrong. The basic penalty is a 1-2 year extension of prison term. If you get in trouble over and over, the penalty is accumulated.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“All family members live together. There is no marriage. If anyone shares

a special intimacy with another prisoner, it can lead to extremely severe consequences.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Officially, marriage is not allowed, but having a relationship is possible. It’s because the prisoners here are still North Korean citizens. Having a relationship is allowed but having a sexual relationship is not allowed. If a woman is pregnant in the re-education zone, she is forced to be aborted.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“Getting married is not possible. They get upset even when they detect a relationship between two prisoners. A woman is not a woman and a man is not a man in the camp. You can look at the skin of a woman through the holes on her clothing. Women are skin and bone only. They only care about eating. No one is really attracted. There is no relationship in the camp.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

Marriage is prohibited between families, but there are some testimonies that marriage took place between two families. However, giving birth is prohibited even in this case.

“There was a case of marriage in the family sector. Kwon XX married Kim XX, an older woman. Although they were allowed to live together, they were not allowed to have a baby. I have never seen any children below the age of 10 in the camp. In the family sector, almost everyone was wife and husband.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

On the other hand, unlike other camps, marriage in Camp No. 18 was allowed and prisoners could thus start a new married life. In Camp No.

18, marriage does not mean just living together, but that the couple can legally register to the Family Registry to live together. This is one of the biggest distinguishing features of Camp No. 18 from other prison camps and may be an indication that Camp No.18 is not considered a political prison camp. In principle, the camp authorities prohibit early marriage and recommend the prisoners that they choose best age for a marriage, However, this regulation is not mandatory so prisoners are free to get married when they want.

“Young workers' union committee teaches young people that early marriage is prohibited. They keep recommending that the age of 28 is good for men to marry. There is no legal regulation or anything like that, but it is just a party recommendation. But still there are many people getting married at the age of 20.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“I was married in the camp and I gave births to a daughter and a son. We could marry and raise children. No conditions were required such as good behavior and etc. Anyone could marry if he was over the age of 30 and she was over the age of 28.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No.18, 1975-2001)

There is a testimony about the process of marriage registration in Camp No. 18.

“Marriage registration takes place in the office of family registration section of the police. Once the marriage is certified by the sub police station, you can register at the district administration office. After that, you can live together, and with other family members as well. If you are

the work unit chief, you can build. If you work well, they can allocate a new house for you. If not, you live with your parents. Giving birth is also allowed.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“A prisoner cannot get married with an individual prisoner at re-revolutionizing residence. But prisoners can marry prisoners in the same camp. They can officially announce and register the marriage at the office of family registration section of the police.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Marriage was relatively free in Camp No. 18. However, marriage between prisoners and discharged prisoners was not authorized. If a discharged prisoner wanted to marry a prisoner, the discharged prisoner must return to his former status of a prisoner. For this reason, such marriage is not normally considered.¹⁴⁶⁾

“But the prisoners who had been released could not marry any current prisoner. Because the current and discharged prisoners never saw each other, marriage was impossible for them.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“When I was discharged, I was in love with a girl who was not released. The system was such that I could not marry her. If a discharged prisoner marries a present prisoner, the status of the release will be revoked to be a prisoner again. I tried desperately but I could not marry her.” (0 Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

146) Jin-i Choi, “Series 1, Special Article on Human Rights – Inside Camp No. 18 Feature”, *Rimjingang Vol. 2*, (Seoul: Rimjingang, 2008), p. 42.

“All the family members were in Pyongyang and a guy came to the camp alone. He had a crush on a woman, but the woman was a lifelong prisoner. But his love was so strong. This guy had a good family background and had a party membership. He eventually surrendered his party membership and good family privileges and married her.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

In the case only a husband or wife is released, the couple must divorce. Otherwise, he or she may have to retain the status of a prisoner in order to continue the marriage.

“A married couple had to be both prisoners. If one is discharged, it gets complicated. Unless the couple gets divorced, both should continue to live as prisoners.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“A married couple had to be both prisoners. If only one family member is released, the discharged prisoner should keep the prisoner status in order to stay together with the family. In fact, living as a discharged prisoner has a totally different level of life from that of a prisoner. That is why the discharged prisoners don't want to marry prisoners. It is extremely rare to see a marriage between a discharged prisoner and present prisoner.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Unlike Camp No. 18, marriage is prohibited in Camps No. 17, 22 and 23.

“Their marriage is not authorized and the parents are not allowed to live

together. I was told that some prisoners are given a special privilege of staying together with spouse for one night every several months for an exemplary performance.” (A02, family of former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1994)

“Marriage does not exist. Men and women as prisoners cannot even talk to each other.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

In the case of Camp No. 22, marriage is prohibited in principle, but prisoners were allowed to get married if they had an excellent performance record.

“Getting married is possible. It only applies to one couple per year. If a prisoner has made a special contribution to the camp or developed technologies like creating a shape of tank, prisoners are given preferential treatment like marriage. For young people, even if they get married, they cannot live together. They have to work different time shifts so that they couldn’t be together. There is no time to make love. If someone gets pregnant, she doesn’t want to give a birth because the work is too hard to raise a baby.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

3) Sexual Life and the Birth of Children

It is revealed that in most camps giving birth to child is commonly allowed for married couples, including couples who were newly married in the camp.

“Marriage is allowed. There is no restriction of childbirth. Doyou know

why? They need more prisoners in the future and young prisoners to keep the camp in operation...In the Camp No. 13, prisoners were married and as a result, the population simply increased.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“I was married in the camp and I gave births to a daughter and a son. We could marry and raise children.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“Prisoners usually prefer having many children, like three, four, five or so, because many minors are killed by accidents in the mine. This is in consideration that some of their children may be killed in accidents in the coal mine.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

In some camps, however, although a couple is allowed for living together, pregnancy and giving birth to child are not allowed. Even if the actual delivery is allowed, there are not many cases of marital cohabitation, and nutritional deficiencies and excessive hard work make pregnancy and child birth very rare.

“Child birth is almost impossible. Even if young prisoners get married and live together, they could not be together because of different working hours in different shifts. So there is no time to make love. Actually getting pregnant is the target of punishment because it means that they didn’t work hard. Husband and wife, both are punished. They are detained in a punishment chamber separately for 15 days. Meals are not provided. They do not give birth to child because they have increased workload due their children” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“Thinking about sex is not my thing. Because of the hardship in the camp, thinking about survival day by day is already too much for me” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

Because the lack of maternity protection and child-care supports, the infant mortality rate is very high. It appears that the infringement of the right to protect infants is serious in the camp.

The hard life in the camps obviously makes it unrealistic to raise and love children. It is reported that when a child is born in an official relationship, maternity leaves were given for a short period of time. (In the case of Camp No. 14 in Kaecheon, it was surveyed that a total of 30 days-maternity leave is given; 15 days before and 15 days after the delivery.)

“In the camp, there is maternity leave, 15 days before the delivery and about a month after the delivery. During the maternity leave, she is not doing her normal work but given work that could be carried out at home, such as making straw rope. In the camp, there are no services that look after the children while the parents are at work. There were many cases of babies dying at home alone while the mother was at work. If a child starts to walk, the mother may take the child to her work site for protection. Sometimes, a child is dangerously left home alone.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

When a male and a female prisoner are found to have a relationship or a pregnancy, it is considered a sexual scandal or “Buhwajo”¹⁴⁷⁾ and they are heavily punished in most camps. Both prisoners are forced to

147) Scandal or “Buhwajo” means having an illegal sexual relationship

be transferred to different areas, detained in the punishment chamber, or given additional work. There are cases of public executions for serious crimes. When an officer of the camp and a prisoner are found to have a relationship, most of the female prisoners simply disappeared.

“In cases of unauthorized pregnancy or sexual relations between prisoners, the prisoners immediately “disappear” and no one ever hears from them again. Such cases are detected by the prisoner spies under instruction from SSA officers. In case of a relationship between a prisoner and an SSA officer, the girl disappears immediately and no one knows what happens to the girl. This happens very frequently.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“The officer Lee maintained consistent relationship with a lady prisoner for a year and she got pregnant. So this Lee kicked her belly to abort and she went to the hospital and confessed everything. Then Officer Lee was discharged.” (A22, former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

In cases of unauthorized pregnancies, the female prisoner involved is forced to abort in most camps, however, there appear to be cases where childbirth is allowed. The human rights of the woman and the baby are seriously violated in such processes.

“Having relationships are not allowed. But such relationships happen occasionally. Marriage is also illegal. If there is a pregnant woman, they force her to abort regardless of her wish. And she is interrogated.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“There was a woman who had been there for 10 years in the camp and

an individual prisoner in my company was in love with her. She was pregnant. They were criticized publicly in front of other prisoners. That's how I got to know about them. Of course, they had their prison terms extended. I don't even know when the woman would be released but the guy had his term extended by 1-2 years for having an unauthorized relationship in a re-education camp. The woman said she would discontinue the relationship with the man but asked SSA officers to allow her to give birth and raise the baby. And I heard something serious happened to her. It must have been something very serious." (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

Table 4-4 Family Life and Marriage By Camps

Location		Family	Bunkhouse	Marriage	Choosing spouse	Child -birth	Sexual Act	Pregnancy		
Camp No 11 (Onsong, North Hamgyong)		-	-	-	-	-	X Strict Control	Punishing pregnant women		
Camp No. 13 (Onsong, North Hamgyong)		O	• Everyone in clothing factory • Female individual prisoners in food factory	O	Authorized upon Mutual Agreement	O Encouraged	Sexual intercourse before marriage punished (forced Labor)	-		
Camp No. 14 (Kaechon, South Pyongan)		O Men live in bunkhouse, and women live with children	Middle school children, individual prisoners	O Authorized for excellent Performance	Designated by SSA	O	Sexual intercourse before marriage punished (missing)	Abortion if premarital pregnancy/ pregnant woman missing		
Camp No.15 (Yodok, South Hamgyong)	Re-Education Camp	Ipsok-ni	O	Individual prisoners (Men and women separated)	X	N/A	O	Sexual intercourse before marriage punished (downgraded or relocated)	Downgraded or relocated for premarital pregnancy (No abortion)	
		Taesuk-ni	O	Family relocated to other districts in 1995	Individual prisoners (Men and women separated)	• Marriage within family prisoners- No marriage among individual prisoners	No Reference	X	Sexual intercourse before marriage punished (downgraded or relocated)	Abortion if premarital pregnancy / pregnant woman punished
		Sorimchon	No family	Individual prisoners (Men and women separated)	X	N/A	X	Sexual intercourse (punishment chamber and prison term extended)	Abortion / Punishment Chamber & Prison Term Extended	
		Kuwup-ni	O	Individual prisoners (Men and women separated)	X	N/A	X	Sexual intercourse (punishment chamber and prison term extended)	Abortion	

Location		Family	Bunkhouse	Marriage	Choosing spouse	Child -birth	Sexual Act	Pregnancy
	Maximum security zone Yongpyong-ni	O	—	—	—	—	—	—
Camp No.17		O	No Reference	X	N/A	X	X	—
Camp No. 18 (Pukchang) South Pyongan)	Tukchang area	O	Individual prisoner for re-revolutionization (Men and women separated)	O	Free love	O	O	Premarital pregnancy should be aborted voluntarily
	Pongchang-ni	O	Individual prisoner for re-revolutionization (men and women separated)	O	Free love	O	O In case of love between the preferentially treated and prisoners, prisoners are punished (short-term prison for 6 months)	Voluntary abortion in case of Premarital pregnancy
Camp No. 22 (Hweryong, North Hamgyong)		O Family life as an award	Almost all prisoners (men and women separated)	O One case of authorized marriage a year on record of good performance. But man and wife separated after marriage	X	X 15-day punishment chamber/no food ration	SSA Discharged in case of an affairs with a prisoner	X Voluntarily killing babies after birth
Toksong Camp No.23 (Toksong, North Hamgyong)		O	Individual prisoners in bunkhouse	O	—	O	No case testified	O
Camp No.25 (Cheongjin, North Hamgyong)		X No family	All prisoners (men and women separated)	X	N/A	No case testified	No case testified	Pregnant prisoner forced to Abort)

3. Health and Medical Care

It is surveyed that medical facilities of political prison camps serve little purpose. They do have hospitals in each area, but they are not properly functioning. They are rarely provided with necessary medicines, so adequate medical treatments are not provided for prisoners, except for very simple medical treatments and prescriptions. However, some hospitals have recuperation rooms for some prisoners and a special ward to separate prisoners with contagious diseases. This is a minimum measure for preventing contagious diseases from infecting the inside and outside of prisons. Also, there are some camps where psychiatric wards are installed separately, and it is presumed that the purpose of these wards is to treat those who become mentally sick due to poor living conditions in the prison.

No medical operations are conducted in the medical facilities in the camps. Simple external wounds can be treated, and basic medicines may be provided. Only limited vaccinations and injections are available. The level of medical staff is very low, and only a few types of medicine are available for ailments, such as diarrhea and indigestion. If bones are fractured, casts can be provided, however, it is impossible to conduct any realistic cure for diseases. Political prison camps, are therefore, a blind spot for human rights, where prisoners die due to the lack of adequate medical treatments.

1) Medical Facilities and Personnel

It is estimated that most of the medical facilities in political prison camps are with no official staffs. SSA officers or prisoner doctors are assigned, and one or two prisoners help the doctor to facilitate simple medical treatments.

“There is a clinic. One person works there. He was a prisoner and was working there. You can get the most basic medication there and that’s all.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Yes, there is a clinic. But there is no doctor most of the time and almost no medicine at all. Perhaps, they may have a medicine for loose bowels.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“There is a hospital. But the hospital is not for curing and treating diseases. They provide the most seriously ill patients or the weak prisoners who were just released from the punishment chamber with temporary protection. There was no medicine. There was an SSA doctor but no treatment of sickness. There was a prisoner assigned there.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“You cannot get a kind treatment for your injury. There was a vaccination once at the primary school and there was an SSA doctor and a prisoner nurse in the clinic.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“There was a clinic and some medicine but the quality of medical service is far from decent.” (A02, family of former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1994)

As testified above, due to lack of professional medical staff and medications, medical facilities can do no more than provide basic treatment or issue a medical certificate for those who are too ill to work. They hardly function as proper medical clinics where the sick can receive adequate treatment.

“There is nothing in hospitals. Sterilizing devices, some cans of alcohol

or povidone iodine, and that is it. No medicine.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No.18, 1977-1984)

“They do operate when we get hurt. There is no anesthetic, so they just do the operation without it. There is no disinfectant, so they use mulberry roots.” (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang and Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

“The doctor and nurse were also a prisoner. Hyewon, the daughter of the family from Germany (the daughter of Oh Kil-nam), was a nurse there...When prisoners catch the cold, they get a primitive form of medicine from the hospital—a plant’s root that has been grounded up. Sometimes, you get an injection if the disease is contagious. But there was no operation. They cleaned and applied some ointment. I don’t remember how they treated prisoners with broken bones.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“There was a small one-room clinic in Ipsok-ni. There was no sign, no operation, and no treatment. Once, I had a stomach disorder and received an acupuncture treatment. If you are sick, they just give you a medicine for the common cold. If you get your leg broken, that essentially means that you are dead.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“There was a medical clinic at every village. Two or three people worked at the clinics. Their main work was to issue medical certificates. If you stop working without a medical certificate, you don’t get your food ration for the day.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No.12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“A prisoner had his legs and arms broken from logging. He died without any treatment. He had to tie his broken arms with bandage to continue the work. Otherwise, he would get no food ration.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

Meanwhile, there is a testimony that there once was a doctor at each worksite in Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15. They were selected from family prisoners, so they may have not been professional doctors. A15 who was detained in Kuwup-ni from 1984 to 1986 witnesses that doctors were assigned to the workplaces so that sick prisoners could continue to work at the workplace without wasting time.

“There was one doctor for each company. They were from family prisoners...We were working and had no time to go to hospitals, so doctors came to each site to care for patients. Cold, diarrhea, etc...If serious, the doctor ordered the patient to come to hospital instead of working so that they could be treated in the hospital. Doctors were coming to each work site in order to save time. It was to prevent healthy people from going to hospital.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No.15, 1984-1986)

However, there were separate medical facilities for SSA officers, their family members and guards in political prison camps. These facilities appeared to be at an acceptable standard in terms of personnel and medical treatment.

“There was a hospital in the camp. The hospital for camp officials was called the army clinic and the hospital for prisoners was called a hospital. The discharged prisoner can be a doctor. In case of Yongdung hospital which is for camp officials, there was a director of hospital, deputy director, departments of internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, hepatitis, out-patients, and pharmacy. They performed actual operations. There were two nurses in the internal medicine department and 2 nurses in the surgery department.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“There are separate wards in the hospital for officers and prisoners. For officers, they have X-rays, dental care, ENT, ophthalmology, etc. There is no such thing for prisoners.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

According to some testimonies, there is a sanitarium for those who are at the serious stages of their disease or about to die. Only those, who used to work efficiently but cannot continue working any more due to their illness, would be accepted at the sanitarium.

“There was a hospital and nursing home which were operated by prisoners and sanitarium. The sanitarium was located at the peak. Prisoners doing extraordinary work or in a state of near death are sent up there temporarily.” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 18, 1996-1997)

“There was a sanitarium in the gorge over the thrashing yard. Mainly old people went there. A few people were selected by the SSA officer to go there and rest. They did not work and were fed well. If we saw how they worked, they cultivated for themselves and ate what they produced. Some prisoners are sent there, perhaps, under influence from outside. Ordinary prisoners like us have no hope of being sent up there.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Sorimchon, Camp No. 18, 2002-2004)

“There is also a nursing home. Prisoners who are seriously ill are sent there.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 18, 1976-1980)

Other than hospitals and sanitarium, according to some testimonies, there were separate facilities that isolate those with contagious diseases such as hepatitis or tuberculosis. They were installed not for curing them but for

simply separating them from healthy prisoners. Thus, the living conditions of these facilities seem to be worse than the regular conditions in the camps.

“Up in the Sugol valley, there were isolation wards for patients of contagious disease and for psychiatric patients. The entrance is guarded by the Sugol investigation unit.” (Ahn Myung Chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

“There were hepatitis and tuberculosis wards in Sang-ri, each of them a small house. People usually stayed at home because there was no medicine or food. However, they were separated from their home if they were diagnosed with highly contagious diseases. Prisoners were sent to the tuberculosis ward while the preferentially treated may stay.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“There was an isolation room in the hospital. You could not come out if you caught pantyphoid until cured.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

Kang Cheol Hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No.15, from 1977 to 1987, testifies in his essay that there was a psychiatric ward called “No. 17” for mentally ill people.¹⁴⁸⁾ However, no other victims who were imprisoned there at the same or other time confirmed the existence of such a ward.

In the case of Camp No. 18, people testified that there were emergency staffs and a small clinic for each section: and that there was even a medical facility as large as a county hospital.

148) Cheol-hwan Kang, *The Aquarium of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongshin, 2004), pp. 83-85.

“There was a clinic and hospital. In the clinic, there was a doctor and a nurse. The doctor was not a prisoner. He was the preferentially treated.” (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1972-1984)

“They carried out even medical operations at the hospital in Popi area. There were the director and deputy director, a surgeon who was famous for operations, three physicians, five to six pediatricians, three lab doctors, etc. The ward was on the second floor.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

2) Primary Diseases and Death from Absence of Treatment

There are many cases in which people in the camps suffer from malnutrition or such diseases as tuberculosis, gastritis, pellagra, etc. The mortality rate from such diseases is very high because proper treatment is not often offered.

“Many prisoners died of undernourishment. When we were released in 1990, we received a ration for only 15 days in one whole month. The general situation was bad in North Korea and because of that, we also suffered. Many prisoners suffered from stomach disorder.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“Many prisoners suffer from undernourishment. Some prisoners die of dropsy due to the liver failure.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No.15, 2002-2005)

“Male prisoners died when they were undernourished but women didn't. There are cases of death of dropsy due to the liver failure. Many prisoners suffer from diarrhea as they ate corn only.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“The common cold would often develop into serious diseases. The most common diseases in the camp are pellagra, tuberculosis, stomach disorder, hemorrhoids, pleurisy, frostbite, and psychiatric disease.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“Many prisoners died of pellagra.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1979-1979)

“My mother died of pellagra, which made every part of her skin wear away. Then the skin gets swollen and returns to normal. After repeating this two times, people die from diarrhea.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984)

“In North Korea, there are so many tuberculosis patients. This is because they don’t get enough food and are constantly starving and undernourished” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Acute pneumonia killed three children when I was detained. They were underfed, so they looked as if they wore skin on their bones. You know those shown on television as examples of North Korean children. They came to the hospital because they were dying, so doctors gave them IVs. I saw three dying in fifteen days.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“There were many dysentery patients. They died of diarrhea. There was no medicine in the camp, so prisoners used what they brought from outside. The medicine was traded for clothes. I was also suffering from dysentery. Then, I drank soy oil, and it worked. It seemed like I suffered from the disease because I had no oil in my stomach.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

The mortality rate from contagious diseases was also high since there were

limited preventive medical treatments for tuberculosis or paratyphoid fever.

“So many people died from paratyphoid fever. It was a little before 1990, and people died continuously. All of the family members in my neighborhood died, and then a man next door died the next day. This many people died in my town.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

It was reported, however, that some camps made their efforts to prevent the contagion of diseases. They isolated infected prisoners, sterilized them from time to time, made them wear masks, and gave out liquid medicines. Nevertheless it is worrisome of toxic effects on human body because they sprayed the sterilizing liquids directly to the infected.

“In the case of paratyphoid fever, they wanted to prevent it very much. They sterilized us very often. They did not have many agents, so they just used catabolic toxicants for toilets and people. It was for the sake of prevention, and they did so once every spring and autumn. They designated a sanitation period: sanitation months were March and April. Some patients were isolated, but there was no special facility to isolate them.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“There was paratyphoid fever, tuberculosis, etc. Many people in town suffered from paratyphoid fever. A sterilizing agent was sprayed when we went to school. We wore masks even when we talked. There was liquid medicine provided once in a while, but it was insufficient. There was no vaccination.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

Even though they do not come down with any specific diseases, the health of prisoners is not guaranteed, due to the poor living conditions that threaten prisoners. They are always exposed to the danger of accidents due to poor working conditions, and many people die because

proper medical treatment is usually not provided. It is reported that even a light fracture during work caused permanent disablement because of lack of proper and timely treatment.

“If you get your leg broken, you are probably dead. We, women work in the farms, so hardly get hurt. But male prisoners either die or become cripples if hurt while logging.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-nim Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Many prisoners died from hard labor combined with undernourishment. Many prisoners also died of accidents. There were many accidents that occurred frequently in mines. Some prisoners died when an underground gallery collapsed while others were run over by a trolley. Some farmers died when they fell from a cliff or hill. Whatever the case, many prisoners died in numerous ways. How can people survive under such inhumane circumstances? It is despicable to live like a slave and it is obvious that many people die under such circumstance.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“Prisoners were beaten when digging the tunnel, had their legs cut or got injured at work. If not in accidents, they got hurt when using explosives or were killed due to the collapse of tunnels: fifteen or thirty at once. I rarely saw people die of disease. They starved to death or were beaten to death.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“We also worked in the tunnels and witnessed large scale accidents. On average, one prisoner died a month from an accident. That was how the tunnels were: no accident for a while, but a massive accident when happening. Five to six people died together when buried alive. Therefore the average of one person a month died.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Table 4-5 Sanitary and Medical Conditions by Camps

Location		Hospital	Medicine	Ward (Sanitarium)	Doctor	
Camp No.13 (Onsong, North Hamgyong)		O	O	—	1 Prisoner	
Camp No.14 (Kaechon, South Pyongan)		O	O Vaccination	—	1 SSA	
Camp No.15 (Yodok)	Re- education zone	Ipsok-ni	O Clinic	O Cold medicine	O Sanitarium	1 Prisoner
		Taesuk-ni	O	O Oriental cold medicine, Diarrhea medicine	O Sanitarium	1 Prisoner
		Sorimchon	O Clinic	O Rare medicine (Have penicillin)	O	1 Professional Doctor
		Kuwup-ni	O Physician, Surgeon, Gynecologist	O Basic medicines for diarrhea, cold, etc. / pellagra injection for serious patients	O	15 former doctors, Visiting doctors O
	Maximum security zone	Yongpyong -ni	—	—	—	—

	Nurse	Primary Function	Operation	Isolated Ward	Primary Disease	Death without Treatment
	1~2 Prisoners	Medical certificate for sick leave, vaccination for contagious disease, prescription	X	X	Malnutrition	Malnutrition
	1 Prisoner	Vaccination, sterilization, prescription	X	—	—	
	1 Prisoner	Medicine	X	—	Pellagra, external damage, Tuberculosis	Death after eating toxic grass
	1 Prisoner	Prescription, cast, sterilization	O Death during operation	—	Diarrhea, external damage	Malnutrition
	1~2 Prisoner	Medicine/ painkiller prescription, sterilization (spray)	—	X	Abdominal dropsy, tumor, malnutrition, external damage, diarrhea, tuberculosis, asthma, bronchus disease, jaundice	Malnutrition, abdominal dropsy
	—	Cast	X	Tuberculosis and psychiatric	Malnutrition, tuberculosis, gastritis, hemorrhoid, pleurisy, frostbite, mental disease, pellagra, hepatitis	Pellagra
	—	—	—	—	Malnutrition, pellagra, external damage	Malnutrition

Location		Hospital	Medicine	Ward (Sanitarium)	Doctor	
Camp No.17		O Mine hospital	—	—	—	
Camp No.18 (Pukchang, South Pyongan)	Tukchang area	O General hospital and clinic	O	O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital : 20 doctors and prisoners • Clinic : 1 Prisoner (emergency room in each tunnel) 	
	Pongchang-ni	Hospital and clinic	O Purchased after 2002	O	30 prisoners	
Camp No.22 (Hweryong, North Hamgyong)		O Clinic, pharmacy	O	O Sanitarium	10 doctors	
Tokchang Camp No.23 (Doksong, North Hamgyong)		O Dentist, physician, surgeon	O Basic medicine	O	3 doctors	
Camp No.25 (Chongjin, North Hamgyong)		X External hospital	X	X	0	

	Nurse	Primary Function	Operation	Isolated Ward	Primary Disease	Death without Treatment
	—	Cure for external wounds	—	—	Pellagra, diarrhea	Pellagra, diarrhea
	50 in hospital / 1 in clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital : general cure, operation • Clinic: emergency measures 	O	Tuberculosis ward	External damage, malnutrition, pneumonia	External damage, malnutrition, pneumonia (infant)
	50	Same as typical hospital	O Without anesthetics	Hepatitis and tuberculosis wards	Gastritis, hepatitis, malnutrition, coniosis	Coniosis
	10 army doctors	External damage cure, operation, medicine prescription	O	Hepatitis, tuberculosis, leprosy, mental disease	External damage, epidemic hemorrhage	External damage, anal blockade
	2 professional nurses	Medicine prescription	O Cannot be conducted internally	Isolated in the hospital	Paratyphoid fever	Gastritis, paratyphoid fever
	0	X	X	O Room 10	Diarrhea, enteritis, malnutrition take 70% of patients	Malnutrition

4. Current Status of Compulsory Labor

1) Purpose of Compulsory Labor

Other than the purpose of isolating political prisoners from society and creating fear for people, political prison camps in North Korea have another purpose of increasing productivity of camps through compulsory labor, and to meet the internal and external demand for goods. In the case of the re-education camp, there is additional purpose of assigning heavy workloads to prisoners to alter their thoughts.

According to the testimony of Ahn Myong-chol, a former guard of a political prison camp, prisoners are mobilized to work for so-called ‘Great Constructions’, such as nuclear facilities, dangerous mine tunnels, secret tunnels, etc. He witnessed that people were taken away with the promise of freedom if they work diligently, but that no one returned. It is estimated that the North Korean government either killed or isolated these people in order to keep their secret. Likewise, North Korea utilizes the labor force of the prisoners for various purposes.

“The Great Construction Work means that political prisoners are mobilized for nuclear development project, dangerous underground tunnel works, secret tunnel work, or experimentation by the 3rd Bureau. They were taken to the secret construction sites. There was a rumor at that time that they would be released contingent upon their obedience and outstanding performance. But no one has returned. Han Jin-dok’s father was also recruited for the great construction work but has not yet returned” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and, 22, 1987-1994)

“In the 1980s, my father went to the sector office of interview in Camp No.17, and I never saw him again. Seven out of ten people in Camp No. 17 were called and did not come back. Many women in their 20s were taken and did not return. I remember two women disappeared in such a way and returned later, and they were severely frostbitten on their hands, feet, and face. One of them was the sister of 000, and she said she constructed roads in Changjin and Bujeon. When I was relocated to Camp No.18, I asked about my father to a security guard who used to work in Camp No. 17. Then he said those people were killed after secret construction. He told me to consider my father to be dead.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

2) Amount, Time, and Intensity of Labor

The intensity of labor inside political prison camps is not comparable to that of civilian society. Three shifts cover a day in mines and two in factories, and on farms, people work more than twelve hours a day. Work hours for each shift cover joint working hours before and after shifts, so on average, people work more than 12 hours a day.

“The camp authorities want to maximize production and give each prisoner an absurd amount of work target for the day...There was no rest all year round. Prisoners are obligated to collect acorn in the fall, collect firewood, and prepare barnyard manure during farm off-season. All prisoners are very efficient workers. The unbearable life in the camp is worse than death itself. It is a living hell where everyone is constantly suffering from hard work and must fight to live for one more day. They have to appear to be obedient outwardly, but have strong wishes for unification of Korea inside their hearts. It is a life of hard work, one after another, without any hope for liberation. Prisoners want to work harder than other prisoners so that

he can be favored and assigned to the easier work.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“In mines, prisoners work 8 hours in 3 shifts. In case of work outdoors, prisoners work for 10 hours. In the farm, they work for 12 hours, 7:00 to 19:00 hrs. In summer, they start work before breakfast. Prisoners have lunch breaks for one hour and bring lunch from home unless the prisoner has time to go home for lunch.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“The work at mines is in 3 shifts. The first shift starts at 8 o’clock in the morning and continues until 4 o’clock in the afternoon, 2nd shift from 4 o’clock until midnight and the third shift from midnight until 8 o’clock in the morning. Thus, the mining continues for 24 hours like a clock without any mishap. But the actual hour of work of prisoners at the mine is more than 8 hours. For example, our shift may be until 4 o’clock in the afternoon, but in reality, we are staying in the pit until 6 o’clock. The shift changes every week and often we sleep less than 4 hours a night to operate the 24 hour mine.” (0 Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

“We continued the work for 12 hours in 2 shifts, from 8:00 to 20:00 hrs and from 20:00 hrs to the 08:00 hrs the next morning. On freezing cold days in the winter, prisoners had to carry big stones with bare hands, without gloves, and worked in the freezing river water. The prisoners were threatened with meals not being given to them for slow work. So, we had to work tirelessly in the cold water, shivering in the cold and pissing in our trousers. When we were carrying the reinforcing iron rod, our fingers got stuck to the rod because of the cold weather.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Moreover, additional work is assigned when the designated work load is not fulfilled.

“I used to work at a dry kiln for 12 hour shifts at Kuwup-ni. I worked through the night when it was my shift to do so. You must run back and forth with all your strength to accomplish the work quota. We needed water for the work and we had to fetch water from stream miles away. Oh boy, the work was indescribably hard. At the end of intense labor, we had to walk home for 4 kilometers every day. If we fail to accomplish the work quota, we are sent to Yongpyong-ni, a maximum security camp.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

The intensity of labor is equally applied to females, and there is no big difference for children or elders. Children have to participate in various types of labor work in the afternoon, after morning classes are over. High-school students also have to participate in work all day long which is as difficult as the work performed by adults.

“Prisoners in the camp usually get up at 4 o’clock in the morning and leave home at 5 o’clock after breakfast. It takes about one hour to arrive at the work site. All prisoners are given daily work quotas regardless of ages, gender or health.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Former political prisoners testify that it is not only forced labor, but also hungers that make the life of prisoners horrible.

“The work there was indeed very hard. Cutting grass is the hardest work.

In July and August, the hot days are longest and prisoners were all starving. Your quota is to cut 700 kgs of grass and bring them to the corn field. Dragging logs are also very exasperating. Prisoners spend one or two hours to climb up to the mountain, cut a tree and bring the log down to the threshing field in an additional 2 to 3 hours. It is also extremely backbreaking work to plant corn in spring. Prisoners must keep their backs bent downward for 13 hours from 7 o'clock in the morning to 8 o'clock in the evening without time to stretch backs.” (A04, former prisoners, Sorimchon, No. 15, 2002-2005)

“The most painful thing in the entire Yodok camp is performing the tough labor work when hungry. Oftentimes, we prisoners embraced each other as we wept numerous times in the mountain. Once, I had a poison rash from the grass cutting work and my eyes were bulging. Nonetheless, they made me continue my work. I was badly wounded while carrying stones for a construction site (for pig-pens and pump station). I was immobile and couldn't move. They still forced me to work, making rice straw ropes. At that time, I was so sad that I closed my eyes and tears began to roll down my cheeks. In the camp, you are forced to work until your very last minute of existence.” (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“If you want a good report about you, you must never be absent from work. And you must accomplish the work quota of the day. It is hard to be a good worker and accomplish your work target. The work quota may be similar with the standard quota of the outside society but prisoners don't get enough to eat and that makes the work that much more difficult. The hunger in the camp is not the same as the hunger in the outside society. There, you can buy food if you are hungry. We cannot buy food here.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“(The amount of work is) different from time to time. There is an average, but some days we have to work when ordered to do so... (If digging the fertilized soil) The shovel must go smoothly into the soil, but it feels as if we are shoveling concrete floor in the winter. But we cannot work efficiently without food. Five to six people try to do the work together, but it is still difficult to dig up the fertilizer and spread it on the fields. If moved to another work place, the same thing happens. People try to work anyway while crying and shouting. (A14, former prisoners, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

Livestock farming is easier than regular farm work. Therefore, stockbreeding is specially assigned to those who have been diligent but cannot work anymore. Also, if prisoners bribe an SSA officer, then they are likely to be assigned to livestock farming.

“Next to the thrashing field there was a place where livestock animals were managed. Selected prisoners managed the place. Five to six people were selected to work in the thrashing field. These people used to work in the agricultural team but became too weak to work. There was a separate dining hall for them. Not all the weak people were selected: if a certain person was good at work but became weak, they would be re-nurtured there. The thrashing field had good food, since animals were raised there.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“At the pig pens, there is a place for butchering pigs. There was one director to supervise 200 prisoners working there and 4-5 work unit chiefs under him. There were some old prisoners there. The work at the pig pens was easiest of all works in the camp and I had the best time in the entire camp life at that time.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Meanwhile, most of prisoners had excessive workload and poor diet. Moreover, there was not safety devices or any rules that protected the workers. It was obvious that people died or often became ill under such circumstances. In particular, those who worked in the mines were victimized more often than prisoners in other places.

“A female prisoner, by the name of Ho Wun-suk, was extremely undernourished. When the wood fell down the hill, she could not avoid it and was hit by the wood. She could not even go to bathroom for the next two and a half months. There was no special medication for her; and she only had painkillers. People definitely got hurt when they cut wood in the winter. There was one injured person, and he walked with an iron crutch when he went out of the camp.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“The facilities at the coal mine in the Camp No. 18 were so bad that many prisoners were killed during the work. Some prisoners got electrified to death when they accidentally touched the poor quality electric wire while others faced death in a most cruel manner when they were squashed by a falling elevator. We handled many dead bodies while working there.” (0 Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

“Many prisoners are injured and killed in the mine by accidents. The possibility of dying is so real in the mines that when we are up on the ground at the end of the work, we are overwhelmed with a feeling of relief—I have survived another day. The forced labor work at the camp was so exhausting. It is indeed backbreaking. Working in the mine also means that prisoners are not fully exposed to sunshine and all prisoners look pale as a result. It is terrifying to work there. There are numerous

sick prisoners and they eventually all end up dead.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni. Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“It was when we pulled down the old guard post at Sawul and built a new one. About 100 prisoners were engaged in the work of knocking down the old building and were trying to remove the roof when they were forced to rush the work by guards and SSA officers. This caused the roof to fall and some 20 prisoners, men and women, were killed. They were taken to the hospital at Naksaeung not for treatment, but for a burial in the hill nearby after informing the families (also prisoners in the camp) of their deaths. They were all collectively buried at a hill in Naksaeung sector at around 6 o’clock in the evening.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

“Once, I was in the construction work site and there were some 5,000 prisoners working with me. They were mainly from valleys No. 4 and 5. We, school children, were here to support the work. The construction work for hydropower plant/dam was a huge project. We needed to block the wide and deep Taedong river water manually. Due to the harsh nature of the work, 7 or 8 prisoners were killed a month.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Each political prison camp had a different work schedule, but it was common that people really suffered from day-long hard work. A testimony by a former prisoner is as follows:

“We had to go to work by six in the morning in the summer. We woke up at five-thirty and worked until eight in the evening. When we woke up in our residence and ate breakfast, they checked if everyone was there and

assigned a daily task. We went wherever they sent us. It was six-fifteen to six-thirty when we reached our work site at different locations. We returned to our residence by noon in order to eat lunch. We had to be at our work by one. We had only five minutes for rest and we continued to work until eight in the evening. We ate dinner after we came back. The ending time of work was not regular: when the leader ordered us to go back and eat dinner around seven, then that was the time to stop work. If not, we worked until eight anyway. In the winter we woke up at six-thirty and went to work by seven. We had to come back to the residence by six in the evening, preparing heat and working on some indoor labors such as making rope or soil levelers until nine. We slept at around nine-thirty in the winter and ten in the summer.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

3) Break Time and Holidays

The workload and intensity of work for prisoners in North Korean prison camps are greater than those of ordinary workers in North Korea, while the food supply and rest for prison workers are much less than those of average workers in North Korea. The total hours of rest are reported to be thirty minutes a day, except for lunch time. However, even this short rest is not guaranteed, and prisoners are forced to work very hard under the supervision of work unit chiefs and SSA officers.

“There was no rest during work hours.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 25, 2005)

“There is only one 10-minute break in the morning and another 10 minute break in the afternoon. You can imagine how painful the work is. Prisoners

are so closely watched by SSA officers that it is impossible to have unauthorized rest.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“000 was an individual prisoner, living in the bunkhouse. He was a carpenter here. He made furniture such as teacher’s rod. According to him, there was a thirty minute break in the morning and in the afternoon for smoking...” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

There is no weekly holiday. The monthly holiday is sometimes one day a month, and at other times there is no such thing. A witness states that there is a partial rest on Sundays. Rarely are there annual holidays, except for Lunar New Year’s Day and the birthdays of Kim Il-sung and his son.

“There is one day of holiday a month. It is usually the first day of each month: February 1st, March 1st, and so on. The birthdays of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il are also holidays, along with Lunar New Year. We didn’t know who they were or when Lunar New Year was, but we knew it was a holiday because the SSA officers said so. But even during the holidays we had to work: arranging work places, cutting firewood, etc. In other words, we worked on holidays but had less work.”¹⁴⁹⁾ (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“Sunday was a holiday. We rested on Kim Il-sung’s birthday. On that day, rice was provided. Everyone made rice cake out of it although food was still insufficient.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

149) Dong-hyuk Shin, *North Korean Maximum Security Camp out to the World*, (Seoul: NKDB, 2007), p. 45.

“We did not rest on Sundays. We rested once every ten days, three times a month. We also rested on national holidays, but not always. We could not rest when we were busy doing farmwork. On May 1st, the International Day of Labor, we played basketball, soccer, or table tennis. In the evening we had to practiced for the performance to praise North Korean leaders. On September 9th, National Day, we wrote patriotic poems. On October 10th, the Establishment Day of Labor Party, we also wrote poems on mothers that represent the mother-nation.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“There was no rest on Saturdays or Sundays. We rested on major national holidays such as the Establishment Day of Labor Party or the birthdays of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il. The rule said we could rest once every ten days, three times a month. But the rule was applied only when the work goes fine without trouble. In the spring we could not rest because we were too busy.” (A15, former prisoner, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“In principle, we rested on February 16th, and that was the only holiday. We had the concept of a week, but we could not rest on weekends. One day of rest in a year was a luxury for us. Mine work was based on shifts, and water came into tunnels if we rested for a day. Thus we could not rest, which hindered a daily amount of coal to be produced.” (A20, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“There was no holiday within a month. Only Lunar New Year was a holiday for prisoners. They could not rest on the birthdays of Kim Il-sung or Kim Jong-il because they had to work in shifts.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“There was no holiday. When raining, we had to stay indoors and sit on

the floor motionless. This was harder than work. We had to start work once the rain stopped. We did not rest on October 10th.” (A27, former prisoner, Prison No. 27, 2005)

4) Minimum Age for Labor and Labor of the Old and the Weak

Children in the camps were not exempt from the rules for adults, or from forced work. Primary school children around the age of ten also had to go to work to assist grown-up prisoners.

“It was drought season from late April to May, so we had to water corn or vegetables with buckets. Seven or eight year old children also had to go to the Daedong River to carry water. We had to move the buckets many times a day. Some children collapsed due to the hot sun, and the water spilled. Then the children had to go back to the river, and the supervisors beat us to work harder.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Children are fully committed to work when they reach the age of 16 or 17, after finishing middle school in the camps. However, those in the camps usually live in worse conditions compared to those of regular society, and they are in bad shape. They have to participate in compulsory labor under such circumstances, and they thus suffer more.

“I worked since I was sixteen. Before then I was working as well: digging, collecting ginseng, cutting grass for feeding rabbits, constructing walls, cleaning toilets, and cutting wood for mines. I only could cut small wood and had to make a pile of them. In the winter I worked inside. I studied four to five hours and worked for six hours. I was only 145 centimeters

tall at the end of the middle school term. I was working in mine tunnels when I was sixteen, and I suffered very much.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

In his essay “The Aquarium of Pyongyang,” Kang Cheol-hwan describes what type of labor he was doing while he was in Camp No. 15, Yodok. Through his essay, we can figure out how children and youngsters are suffering from compulsory labor.

“The first was the work of collecting grass for rabbits. This work begins from the late fall and continue in winter. You must search for dry arrowroots and vegetables in the farm fields and up in the mountains. We had to bundle the arrowroots and vegetables for the length of one meter. You must collect 20 kilograms of them per day and children are all out to the field and mountains to accomplish the target. Children had to dig frosty ground for arrowroots using their bare hands and fingernails were so worn out that some children’s fingers looked as though there were no fingernails.

The second was the work of collecting firewood. Children were told to collect firewood throughout winter days from valleys of steep mountains or from the mountains behind the school and this work were so hard for children that we preferred death to doing this work. We children were divided into several teams for cutting down trees with axes, cutting the wood into pieces with saws, bringing the short pieces of wood down to the foot of the mountain and carrying the pieces of wood on shoulders to school, the distance of about 3 kilometers. The strongest 5th year graders of the middle school were charged with cutting trees and bringing pieces of wood down the foot of the mountain and all the younger children were charged with bringing the fire wood to school on their backs. The pieces

of wood to be carried by primary school children weighed about 20 to 30 kilograms and the small children had to carry the weight for a distance of almost 4 kilometers.

The third was the work of expanding rabbit hutches. We were raising rabbits as part of the national campaign of 7-year plan for earning foreign currency by small children. SSA officers took the rabbit meat. Rabbit furs were sent to the central party. This was a good opportunity for SSA school principal and teachers to be recognized by the central party, not by being a good teacher, but by exceeding the targets. This is why there were no classes in school and all children were driven into the work of expanding rabbit hutches. We dug holes in the mountains behind school and plastered the holes with clay. Twelve children dug the clay with shovels and rest of children had to carry the clay in buckets or straw bags to the rabbit hutches. The burrow pit was about 4-5 meters high cliff and digging clay was not that hard as the clay was not so sticky. As children were digging bottom of the cliff, the cliff looked as though it may collapse any time. The digging work had continued for 2 days and made a tunnel of 2-3 meters deep into the cliff when it fell all of sudden and 6 children were buried. To rescue them, we found 3 children about halfmeter below and the last 3 children about a meter deep. Their faces were covered with dirt and blood all over. Teachers covered the children with straw bags and kept us from approaching them and abandoned them to die there.

The fourth was the work of the farm-support combat. The combat is divided into the work of creating corn farms of nutrition pots, the combat to transplant the corn and rice planting. North Korea developed what they call Juche farming technology, the leaders were so proud of, to make nutrition pots by kneading the mixture of soil and leaf mold into a shape of a cylindrical shape pot. One corn seedling is planted in the center of the pots under the special control. When corn grows to sprout 3 leaf buds, each corn pot is transplanted in the field one by one. This is called corn

transplanting combat. The entire fields must be thoroughly tilled first and 10 centimeter deep holes are dug precisely at an interval of 22 centimeters. We put fertilizer at the bottom of holes and put corn pots into the hole, collect soil around it and pour water. For this combat, the entire prisoners in the camp are mobilized, men and women and young and old. The work quota for a day was transplanting corn for an area of 50 pyong (165 square meters) for a child and 140 pyeong (462 square meters) for an adult. You are entitled to full ration only when you have accomplished the target. The fifth was the loyal work of alluvial gold collection. Kim Il-sung's birthday is 15 April. We must offer him birthday gift. We start to prepare for the gift from two months before the birth day. In the upstream of the river in the Yodok County, there is an old and abandoned gold mine. Maybe because of this, we find gold in the sand of the river. The idea of the work was to collect alluvial gold from the river to pledge loyalty to the leader by offering him the gold. School children were organized into teams of 6 children each team and their daily quota for the team is collecting 0.5 gram of gold per day.

The sixth was digging up a particular herb, called sesin, for export. Sessin is a plant that grows in the mountains over 1,500 meters high. The root is aromatic and used for perfumery. The roots are mostly exported to Japan and I heard that the aromatic roots are very expensive. Daily per capita quota is 5 kilograms. All children were divided into 3 teams, 30 children each team. Children worked hard to dig up the herb up in the high mountains for 15 days, eating and sleeping in the mountains. At the end of the 15th day, children had to descend from the mountain with the herb on their backs.

The seventh is picking weeds out of the farm. Per capita per day assignment was 40 pyong (132 square meters) for primary school children. When I became a middle school boy, the area of assignment increased to 60 pyong (198 square meters). You must accomplish your work assignment at any

costs and 40 pyeong was already so difficult and to finish the work for 60 pyeong, simply you cannot do anything else. If you don't finish the work, you cannot go home and children slept at the school for punishment and to start work at dawn the next day.

The eighth is feeding strawberry farm with feces. Strawberry farm is located somewhere at the foot of the mountain and children had to visit all the toilets, pick up feces into a bucket, carry the full bucket all the way up to the foot of the mountain, pour a little feces onto the field at a specified space. If any child frowns at the smell or delay the work, they made the child clean the toilets by wiping out the dirty toilet floor with bare hand. Children who are out of favor of the teachers for anything are forced to use their bare hands to pick up and feed strawberry plants with feces. If a child uses hands to do the job, the hands get swollen and deep blue from the poison of feces. If any child drops feces on the leaves of the plant, the child is so mercilessly beaten with club or leather whips.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

If some of the prisoners in the political prison camps turned sixty, their compulsory labor was over. They could stay at home as dependent family members or participate in easy labor. According to a prisoner who once lived in Camp No. 18, old people did not generally have a specific work assignment and could cultivate a small field of their own.

“Old people in the camp are all entitled to the social security program, man at the age of 61 and women at the age of 56. They work until their birthday then don't have to work starting from the day after. They all get the benefit from the social security program.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“Old prisoners were never exempt from work. Old people were given the

security work at work sites or companies.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“We could not explain this clearly, but we had a social security plan for those who were over sixty.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“Sixty was the age of retirement by the labor law. If you are under 60 and had to be under the social security plan in order to retire. But it was not easy to benefit from the plan unless a prisoner was disabled. The average age was sixty anyway, but people could not generally live until that age.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No.18, 1989-2006)

However, it was revealed that even the old prisoners were not exempt from hard work and were forced to work until the moment of death in the maximum security camps. Moreover, in most of the political prison camps, physically disabled or seriously sick patients are forced to work. It has been testified that prisoners may be excused from work with a medical certificate in the re-education camp, but there seems to be no such policy in the maximum security camp.

“It is an everyday practice that old people and young children are beaten to do the work faster. After graduation, the children are assigned to a mine where they are forced to do the hard work like other prisoners and young girls are often severely beaten for being slow.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“Once you get ill, there is a light work unit. It is light work such as working

at pig pens or weaving rice straw bags, etc. There are epileptics and old people. Everyone has to work and only dead prisoners are exempted from work. The camp makes you work hard even though you may be 70 years old or 80 years old. The prisoners working at the light work unit also have a work quota to accomplish, weaving so many baskets and bags. They just sit there and do their work.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“In the prison camp, you work until you die.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

5) Supervision of Labor

The system of work in the camps assigns daily work quotas to all prisoners by platoon or work unit to supervise prisoners and make prisoners work hard. In the case of the failure of an individual to accomplish the work quota, all the prisoners in the same work unit are punished collectively as a means to force all prisoners to work hard. In other words, because the system is based on collective responsibility, the entire work unit will have to stay up late until everyone finishes the assigned work. This is how prisoners are supervised at work and forced to work hard.

“The work quota must be accomplished and if a prisoner fails, all the prisoners accuse him. The camp authorities want to maximize production and give each prisoner an absurd amount of work target for the day. The field is always so clean and neat without any weeds and stones. We use a lot of barn yard manure to have a good harvest. We all work in an organized way and make very good progress. The oxcart we built there,

for example, works much better than the same in the outside of the camp. If the work target is not achieved, prisoners in the entire unit are collectively punished and work hours are prolonged. Consequently, prisoners push other prisoners to work harder.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“I had my meals reduced a number of times for not doing a satisfactory job. I mean I was not always a bad worker. I did a pretty good job most of the time. You have your quota and that makes prisoners to compete with other prisoners and there is a collective pressure from the entire platoon members. So, there is no way you can do your work slowly in a cut throat competitive work environment.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“All work is assigned individually. Prisoners work in a work unit or platoon. work quotas are assigned to individuals in the work unit or platoon, such as 10 rows and 500 meters, etc when working in the field.”(Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“Prisoners cannot get lazy since the amount of work is assigned collectively, and assigned individually to fulfil the quota. Prisoners are put into teams when collecting sand, and are assigned with a certain amount - for example, 4 prisoners in a team are assigned to dig 5 meters of sand. Therefore, if one person gets lazy, the rest of the team members are responsible for the amount of work assigned to him. Often, a prisoner is beaten by other prisoners for failure of accomplishing his or her work quota.” (Kang Myong-do, former prisoner, Camp No. 18, 1990-1992)

If a work unit should fail to accomplish the work quota, the working hours are extended until the work quota is accomplished and prisoners

get smaller amounts of meals as punishment. The work unit chief will beat the prisoners in his unit in order to avoid beating by camp officials. Prisoners are also often beaten by camp official, But, prisoners are mostly beaten by work unit chief or fellow prisoners.

“Prisoners get half meals when they fail to fulfill their work quota. Therefore, if you don’t work hard, you don’t get enough food and you will be undernourished. The other half of the food goes to other prisoners who worked well. For such reason, prisoners are under enormous psychological pressure, worrying about work and nothing else. The prison camp is a site for the fight for food. There is small amount of food given, and too much work assigned. If you work hard, you eat more. It is not a place where they deal with humans; they treat us like animals. You must not do that even to animals.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“They are brutally beaten by the chief of work unit for inefficient and slow work. As a result, they are forced to work with utmost strength and desperation to avoid beating. If the entire work unit is slow, the work unit chief is so badly beaten by SSA officer that he is forced to beat other prisoners to do work much faster.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“By no means is digging coal considered to be easy work. If a prisoner fails to fill up the 2-ton trolley with coal during the 8 hours, he has to collect more coal after his shift has ended, from the roadbed that were spilled over from other full trolleys. Normally, the roadbed is clean as other prisoners already collected coals. Countless prisoners were beaten up daily for failing to fill his trolley full with coal.” (0 Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

“If you do not get your work done, they do not let you go and you have to continue to work until you meet their demand. That is why most of the prisoners find themselves under enormous pressure to finish the assigned work. However, due to the poor environment of the work site such as blackout, prisoners might not be able to finish the work on time. In this case, prisoners have to conduct what is called social work. They build pits or houses outside the mine for 2 hours or they collect coals by picking them up from the roadbed and filling up a bucket. To meet the quota, prisoners work an extra 3 to 4 hours.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Managers do use assault when prisoners do not follow orders, but many times prisoners fight with each other. Work itself is frustrating, and the aggressive tendency of North Koreans often lead to fights. Fights by prisoners happen daily. It is usually not extreme, but sometimes, prisoners are hospitalized as a result. Generally, company commanders settle the disputes.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

As observed above, prisoners are constantly supervised and watched to achieve assignment in the camp. Because the work unit chiefs are responsible for the failure of accomplishing the work quota, and can be dismissed based on the performance, they make prisoners work very hard by all means. Women, old prisoners and children are not excepted and beaten as brutally as men in case of failure to accomplish the work quota.

6) Reward for Labor

There is no special reward for work in the political prison camps despite

the fact that there is an excessive amount of work assigned to prisoners as hard work is a mere instrument to re-educate prisoners. They provide the ration as nominal wages for work, but prisoners are always starved for the amount of rationed food is far from sufficient compared to their workload.

“It is just like a society. It is just that you are imprisoned, so you have no freedom, you don’t have enough goods, and there is rarely a distribution of goods. Work is tough, and Many prisoners died of undernourishment. When the prison camp was dismantled in 1990, prisoners received a ration for only 15 days in one whole month. The situation was so bad in North Korea that they suffered a lot. Many prisoners died from hard labor and undernourishment. Many prisoners suffered from stomach diseases.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

In the case of the re-education zone of Camp No. 15 and the police-controlled Camp No. 18, there was a testimony that prisoners were paid a small amount of money for their work. Prisoners, who were in Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15 during the period of 1984 to 1986, testified that they were paid 5 won monthly, and because the goods sold in the camp were relatively cheaper, the pay was a good amount. However, a person, who worked in Camp No. 18 between 1989 to 2006, testified that the pay was unreasonably low, and that the price of goods sold in the camp were more expensive than outside the camp.

“When I was in the camp, they paid me 5 won a month. With that money, I could get toothpaste, toothbrushes, and a pair of shoes. A toothbrush was 65 cents. Toothpaste was around 60 cents... and a pair of shoes were 2

won 50 cents. We bought goods with that money. The amount of money was good enough at that time.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“Salary differs according to the type of work and production. The prisoners digging in the shaft got 4,000 to 5,000 Won, obviously somewhat smaller than society outside the camp. There was a coal mine called Chiktong across our camp. I was told that miners there got 70,000 to 100,000 Won for digging coal in the shaft. The highest pay in our camp, I was told, was 20,000 won. In other words, there is a difference from society. The goods sold in the camp were more expensive as they were brought in from outside at an added price.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-1006)

7) Accidents

Prisoners are often exposed to a lot of accidents due to poor working environments in the camps. It has been reported that, due to lack of protection gears and other safety measures, many prisoners get injured or even die in accidents, particularly frequent in mines where the workload is most backbreaking.

“Many prisoners also died of accidents. There were many accidents that occurred frequently in mines. Some prisoners died when an underground gallery collapsed while others were run over by a trolley. Some farmers died when they fell from a cliff or hill. Whatever the case, many prisoners died in numerous ways. How can people survive under such inhumane circumstances? It is despicable to live like a slave and it is obvious that

many people die under such circumstance.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“A Choi, a 17 year-old boy, was killed by a dynamite blasting shortly after he was assigned to a coal mine in 1982 with another guy . There was an accident in the compressor plant. As the compressor exploded, the fire burned down everything and the gas spread to the blind end in a mine gallery dorm that killed 120 prisoners.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

There were many accidents that killed human lives. Many prisoners were also killed by camp officials’ violence at work.

“There was an old prisoner at his 60s, a Kim, who was a South Korean POW and a blaster. He was beaten to death because he could not locate the unexploded dynamite.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

Table 4-6 Comparison of the Situations of Forced Labor By Camps

Location		Purpose of Work	Daily Working Hours	Holidays in a Month	Holidays in a Year	
Camp No.11		—	Over 12 hrs	—	—	
Camp No.13 (Onsong, North Hamgyong)		Production increase	— Mine: 8hrs/3shifts — Farm: 12hrs	—	—	
Camp No.14 (Kaechon, South Pyongan)		Production increase	— Summer: 12hrs — Winter: 10hrs	Once a month	New Year's day, and birthday of Kim Il-sung and his son	
Camp No.15, Yodok, South Hamgyong)	Re-education zone	Ip-suk-li	Production for self-consumption, education by work	Finish at 8, or when it gets dark	Once a week (Sunday)	Kim Il-sung's birthday
		Taesuk-ni	Production for self-consumption, education by labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring: 5 ~sunset • weeding period: 05:30~19:00 • Winter: 06:30~17:00 	Intermittently in the beginning of the month/ Once in 10 days	New Year's day, and birthday of Kim Il-sung and his son, Oct.10, Nov. 9, May. 1
		Seorimchun	Education by labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer: 12hrs(late work until 2 am) • Winter: 10hrs 	Irregular during off-season, Once in 15 days	New Year's day, and birthday of Kim Il-sung and his son
		Kuwup-ni	Production for self-consumption, education by work	12 hrs	Once in 10days	Nov. 9, birthday of Kim Il-sung and his son, National Holidays
	Maximum security zone	Yongpyong-ni	Production for self-consumption	Sunrise ~ Sunset	—	—

	Youngest Age of Work	Work Discharge Age	Work for the Old	Supervision	Violence	Weak Prisoners	Pay
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	• 12yrs old • Children	No discharge	Light work unit for prisoners over 65yrs	Supervision by prisoners	-	Forced work even when sick	
	Children	Work given to the old	Work given to the old	Assignment, collective responsibility	X	Rest	Distributions sometimes given 200~1,000 won
	Children	Over 65yrs old, assigned to light work	No group for the old	Supervision by prisoners, collective responsibility, reduction of food	SSA, prisoner in charge of work unit	Rest	X
	N/A	No discharge	No group for the old	reduction of food, violence by prisoner in charge, supervision by prisoners	Prisoner in charge of work unit	Light Work Unit	—
	Children	No discharge	Light work	Supervision by prisoners, collective responsibility, reduction of food, added work, violence, assignment	Violence	Light work	5 won
	—	—	—	Assignment	—	—	-

Location		Purpose of Work	Daily Working Hours	Holidays in a Month	Holidays in a Year	
Camp No.17		—	08:00 ~ 22:00	—	—	
Camp No.18 (Pukchang, South Pyongan)	Tukchang Area	Production increase, self-consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mine: 8hrs/ 3shifts • Summer: 07:00~19:00 • Winter: 07:00~18:00 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mine: once a month • Factories: Twice a month 	Nov., 9, Oct., 10, Apr., 15, Aug., 15, Jan., 1	
	Re-revolutionizing residence	—	—	—	—	
	Pongchang-ni	—	12hrs ~ 14hrs	Once a month	New Year's day, Kim Il-sung's birthday	
Camp No.22 (Hoeryong, North Hamgyong)		Production increase	10hrs	X	New Year's day	
Camp No.23 (Toksong, South Hamgyong)		—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual prisoners: 11hrs • Families: X 	Individual prisoners: Sunday afternoon	—	
Camp No.25 (Chongjin, North Hamgyong)		—	8hrs	X Sitting still in rain	X	

	Youngest Age of Work	Work Discharge Age	Work for the Old	Supervision	Violence	Weak Prisoners	Pay
	—	—	—	Extended working hrs	—	—	—
	• 10yrs old • 16yrs old, committed to work	Over 60yrs old	— —	Supervision by prisoners, collective responsibility,	Camp officials and prisoners	—	Up to 150Won
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	• 7yrs old • 10yrs old committed to work	male over 61/female over 56	—	Assignment, added work, supervision by prisoners, violence	Camp officials and prisoners	Social security for near death prisoners	Up to 20,000 Won annually
	—6yrs old	No discharge	Work until death	Supervision by prisoners and university students	Severe Violence	—	—
	children	—	—	Assignment	No violence toward the family members of the offenders	—	—
	No children in the camp	—	—	Supervision by officials and prisoners	Prison guards	-	-

5. School System

1) Objective and Current State of Schools

There are schools in the political prison camps in North Korea to provide children with school education at a minimum level. However, schools are operated for the same purpose as prison camps and quite different from schools in North Korean society. There are differences in the systems and the contents of curriculum by camps, and by areas in the same camp. The schools in the camps are operated directly by the state security agency and the police.

It has been found that the purpose of the schools in the camps is to provide children with basic skills and to train children to be good at work. Children are often mobilized from classrooms for work, and school classes are very often skipped for this reason. When children graduate from school, they become workers and have no chance of getting higher education. In the case of the re-education zones in Yodok, Camps No. 15 and No. 18 in Pukchang, the school curriculum is almost the same as the curriculum of the national education system despite the poor quality. On the other hand, in the case of Camp No. 14 which is a maximum security camp, children are only trained to be skilled workers because they have no chance to be released to the society.

“I entered middle school in September. Entering a middle school in the camp did not mean that I got a higher level of education, but rather that I had to do much harder labor.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“There was a school at Ipsok-ni when I was there but it was not a place for formal education. Family members of SSA officers were teachers and the children were raising rabbits instead of learning. Some children were punished and did not come home for failing to fulfill the work quota” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“Once a child enters the camp, there is no further education given above the level of kindergarten. When a child becomes six years old, the child must start to work. A prisoner born and working in the camp cannot read and write. Tools have many different sizes for different ages. Prisoners are there for work and are destined to be killed. Education for them is thus not necessary. So they don’t even bother to start teaching children in the first place.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“There is a school far away. You could go there until fourth grade. High school children are for work, rather than for study. There is no education provided above the fourth grade.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

The size of schools differs by the number of children in the camp. The operation of schools, such as curriculum, textbook and school supplies varies by camps. All camps operate or close down schools based on the number of children in the camp.

“There was a school in 1994. There was a teacher. There were about 7 children. They were in one class room and there were no divisions by grade. In 1995 when the family sector was closed, the school was also

closed. They leveled the school site and made it into a farm field.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“Children can attend schools, four years in the primary school and six years in the middle school...There were 200 to 300 children in the school in Pungchon, the largest of all schools. I think there were 100 to 200 children at other schools. There were 10 children in the smallest class and 30 to 40 children in the largest class.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“Yes there were schools, one each at the villages of Tongpo, Pungchon and Punggye-ri. Because of the distance, they did not have a separate middle school. Middle schools were in the same location with the primary schools. Their idea was that children must learn to be a diligent and obedient worker.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

“There was one primary school and one middle school in the Camp No. 14. In the primary school, there were three or four classes per each grade, 30 or 40 children each class. There were a total of five grades, about 100 children in each grade, and the total number of children was 500 to 600. The total number of children of primary and middle schools was over 1,000 children.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“Prisoners in the camp call school “senior middle school” and there was no other official name for the school. There were five year grades in the primary school and six year grades in the middle school for a total of 11 school years. Children graduate from school at the age of 17 with the same classmates from first grade because they do not change the students in the

class from day one. The total number of children was about 600-700 in the primary school and 700 children in the senior middle school.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“No textbooks were ever supplied. We received a note book and about 10 pencils each semester. However, we never received erasers. The note book and pencils were produced in the camp and the quality was so inferior that the pencil broke after writing each letter and as a result, we needed many pencils for the school day. As children were beaten by teachers if they did not have a pencil, children used to burn a piece of wood to use the charcoal as a substitute when they ran out of pencils.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

There were some interesting testimonies about the children’s career system in Camp No. 18. The camp is divided into two groups of prisoners: prisoners and children of re-revolutionizing families. According to a testimony, even though it is few, they were able to go to universities outside the camp, or able to join the army. According to the testimony, they are not the discharged prisoners but the re-revolutionizing families. It is inadequate, however, to rule out the possibility of them being the discharged prisoners and this needs further verification.

This is another case at issue, making it difficult to determine whether or not Camp No. 18 is a political prison camp.

“Children of prisoners in this camp can join the army, and the children of re-revolutionizing families can also join the army. They can also go to universities – there are no universities in the camp, meaning they can go back into society. There are people who passed the test and joined the army: Kim 00, 000, and Lee 00, those three. There was one person who

went to university. He went to Kim Il-sung University.” (A18, former prisoner, 1977-1984, Tukchang, Camp No.18, 1977-1984)

2) Curriculum and Teachers

The curriculum provided in the re-education or maximum security camps are fundamentally different. This difference shows the different purpose of each camp. There are not many differences in the education of Camp No.15 (Yo-duk) and Camp No.18 (Pukchang) compared to the schools outside the camps since the prisoners are able to return to society on expiration of their prison term. The curriculum may be similar, but because the children are called for work in the afternoons, children are not getting enough education. Furthermore, as most of the teachers are state security agent, they have a greater interest in making children work harder, not in their education.

“The curriculum in the prison camps was similar to the standard curriculum of other schools outside the camp. The subjects in the school included mathematics, English, moral education, revolution history, world history, geography, physics, fine arts, music, and physical education. Our school had tests as well. Children are graduated in order of their school record. The school is closed at 3 o’clock and, after that, the children work until 5 o’clock. Working in the afternoon was exhausting to say the least. We walked all day up in the mountains to collect fire wood in the icy winter days. On Saturday afternoons after school, there was a disciplinary session. It was part of Boy Scout activities.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Subjects included Young Days of the Great Generalissimo Kim Il-sung, Young Days of General Kim Jong-il, Korean, mathematics, geometry, physics, drawing, Korean literature, Chinese characters, communism (nowadays it is called socialism), cooking/sewing for girls, physical education, music and etc. Children moved onto the higher levels on the basis of academic records so they had to pass tests. There were teachers for all the subjects.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“The school starts at 8:30 in the morning. In the primary school, the class teacher taught us all subjects with the exception of the history of revolution. The history of revolution was taught by a professional teacher following the Pyongyang’s curriculum because the subject is of Kim Il-sung’s heroic anti-Japanese guerrilla fighting and thus of uncompromising importance.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“The curriculum was the same. It is just that we did not have a freedom. People outside the camp were free. That was the only difference between us and them. The primary school provides Korean, math, music, PE, and comrade-leaders’ childhoods. In middle school, we learn Korean, Math, English, Chinese, Geography, PE, History of Korea and a class called ideology once a week with the children’s discipline session. The ideology was connected to Korean language; it was actually taught during the Korean class.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“Perfunctory as it may be, there was an entrance ceremony. The principal of the primary school is also the principal of the middle school. They made a study hall of Kim Jong-il where children were forced to memorize

speeches of Kim Jong-il. Sometimes, the slogan read: Let's Keep Up with Young Days of Our Dear Leader Kim Jong-il. Classes were held to study Kim Jong-il's excellent strategy, quick and smart actions, and the spirit of revolution in his early days. At other times, a stage was organized under the title of "singing meeting of loyalty" for the singing and reading of the poems that praised the history of revolution, moral character, and excellent leadership of Kim Jong-il." On 23 July, 1983, I completed the school education in the camp. All I learn in the school was the history of revolution of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, hard labor work, and how to read the mind of SSA officers." (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

"Most important subject in the primary school was the history of revolution. In the primary school, there was a subject titled Early Days of Respectable Father, the Great Generalissimo. In the middle school, there was a subject titled the History of Revolution." (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1972-1984)

School focused on the education of revolutionary history and ideology; however the focus was not same for schools in maximum security camps such as Camps No. 13 and 14, where no prisoners were expected to be released. The maximum security camps provided basic knowledge for those subjects and did not teach ideologies. This indicates that prisoners in maximum security camps remain there forever without any civil rights, and were forced to work there until their death.

"Teachers are all SSA officers. It is different from the mainstream North Korean society. Teachers are in plain clothes and do not carry guns but have guns in their tables. They had different textbooks. Their textbooks were

from the Political Department. The Subjects were Korean, mathematics, history of Korea, geography, and everything else. But there is no subject for the history of revolution because the children would never be integrated with the outside society. But they teach them how to read and compute simple mathematics to make them useful workers.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1965-1992)

In fact, Shin Dong-hyuk, who escaped from Camp No. 14, a maximum security camp, testified that he did not know the names of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il and the history of the revolution even though he graduated from both the primary and middle schools in the camp. He said that he learned Korean, math, and physical education needed for work in Camp No. 14.

“The subjects they were teaching in the primary school were Korean, mathematics, physical education, and nothing else. The school hours in the camp were longer than the school hours in the main society but they did not teach children in the camp about anything related to the leaders, history of the party, geography and history of North Korea, science, music, and fine arts. We had a school uniform in the primary school, but only working clothes in the senior middle school.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Teachers of prison camps were SSA officers and their families. They were present in uniforms and carried guns most of the time. The system of education was simply copying from the blackboard and memorizing the materials; neither questions nor debates were allowed. Teachers do not have a real desire for education, but are mainly concerned with how

to make children work harder.

“Teachers in camps do not treat children with sincerity. Many of them think ‘even if you grow older and graduate you will be digging holes like moles.’ They tell children, ‘you need to train yourselves so that you can do better at your work later on.’ I used to go to school and listen to them saying such things.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“There was a teacher for each class in the primary school and only one teacher per entire year grade in the senior middle school. This means that there were only six teachers in the entire middle school. There were no actual academia classes in the senior middle school and the sole responsibility of the teacher was to make sure that all students go to work. The teachers were SSA officers and they were in uniform and were carrying a pistol in the classrooms. All the teachers were men and they did not tell children their names.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“SSA officers were teachers. In addition, those who had a college degree or certificate were brought here to teach people with special talents or skills sometime worked as teachers. Prisoners do not teach. Teachers do not wear prison or military uniform.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

3) Mobilized Labor for Children

Educational facilities existed in the political prison camps but children were frequently forced to work in the fields. There were morning and afternoon class sessions, however, the middle school education was

nominal in the maximum security camps; there was no study sessions but all work .

“Children can attend schools six years in the middle school. Upon graduation, they must work without exception. Even in schools, they have to work. They are never allowed to have some personal time. They collect firewood and cut grass for rabbits, etc.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“Children did not do any farm work. They carried out light work such as cutting grass for rabbits for the SSA sub-station. They had class work in the morning and cut grass and brought the grass to the sub-station in the afternoon.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“We never heard of school vacations and we were part of the school organization. Freedom for children was unthinkable at the time. All we did was to perform labor work. There were classes in the morning. In the afternoon, we were subject to all kinds of hard work such as collecting fire wood from the mountains. The school is closed at 3 o'clock and, after that, the children work until 5 o'clock. Working in the afternoon was exhausting to say the least. We walked all day up in the mountains to collect fire wood in the icy winter days.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Prisoners have worked since we were six years old. In summer, they picked vegetables from the mountains with a basket on their back, and during the winter, they were given tasks such as peeling corn or drying rice. The camp gave them little food, 180g per day. On average, many

children die before they reach 10 years of age.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No.22, 1987-1990)

Children are not allowed for any personal activities in school, and they must move in groups. Most of the time is spent on work, so it is very rare to spend time with friends or parents.

“Children attend and leave from schools in units. They normally arrive home at 5 to 6 o’clock in the afternoon. There was a roll call in the morning and another roll call in the beginning of afternoon class. As absence from school is not tolerated under any circumstance, many children help other sick children to come to school and children are so terrified of the teachers that they are rarely late for school.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Aside from being subject to work during regular school days, children are also frequently sent to construction sites or farms for work on a long-term basis.

“When we go on a farm-support combat, we normally wake up at 5am to start work before breakfast, and then work again after breakfast until 12:30pm. We have an hour of lunch until 1:30pm and we begin our work at 1:30pm through to 5:30 or 6pm.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“Children were also forced to work, labor mobilization. Some children collected coal and repaired and cleaned roads, while others were sent to construction work sites, and still others planted trees in the spring and helped with harvest work in the fall.” (A20, former camp officer,

Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“We did some work for farming during the farming seasons, and we just worked for a whole week without studying. We are not provided with food or shelter and come back home after work. We pack our own food and are sent outside to plant rice. We are sent to plant rice only after the fourth year of middle school, but not in primary school. In the primary school, we are mobilized only when we sow corn. Sowing corn is normally done in April and the work itself is extremely hard. For every meter, there is a designated amount of corn seeds to be planted, and if it was not done properly, we had to do it again. We cannot go home until the work quota has been fulfilled. So, all of us are in a hurry to do the work. We roll up our pants to our knees, and put away our shoes for work. Even when it is dark, everyone has to fulfill the work quota. Some dig holes, while others plant corn and still others bury them. Young children are naïve, so they are very busy with their work as instructed.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“All the middle school children in their fifth or sixth year had to go to two power plants for work, and they were given food and shelter...Seven or eight people died every month because we had to block the deep and wide Daedong River by human work only. We usually worked 12 hours a day, rotating in two shifts from 6am-6pm and 6pm-6am on the following day.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

The physical punishment in school is very severe, and because children are not equipped with protective gears, many of them lose their lives in the field.

“In March of 1999, three workers, three 15 year old girls, and two boys were working on top of a concrete water dam...As they were carrying rocks, I saw the concrete wall above them suddenly fall over them...The eight children including the workers fell down from around a 30m height. The result was obvious. They were all crushed and unrecognizable due to the tons of concrete that fell over them.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“All the sticks broke because the teachers used them to beat children so much. So they beat us with some sticks made of bamboo which was in the classroom. If children didn’t obey, they would start beating. They would hit our thighs, ears, arms, and head until the end. And then, they took us to the teacher’s lounge where we were beaten again until our whole body was full of bruises.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“Teaching was conducted in such a stressful and negative environment that children find it difficult even to swallow their own saliva. During the fourth class hour, instructions and work quota were given to children by work units so that the work quota could be carried out in the afternoon. For example, the work unit No. 1 was instructed to cut grass for rabbits, work unit No. 2 to distribute feces to the peppermint field, and Unit No. 3 to collect stones and pile them up in the hill behind the school.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

Parents also work hard every day and are tired and busy, so they are not in a position to be concerned about their children’s learning or school life. Education and learning are not useful for the future of children in the maximum security camps, so parents do not have a

interest in school. Schools in North Korean political prison camps therefore do not fulfill the objectives of education as in normal schools in North Korea, but only serve the purpose of forcing children to work for increased production.

Table 4-7 Education of Children by Camps

Location		Operation	Number of children	Uniforms	Staffs/Uniform	
Camp No.13 (Onsong, North Hamgyong)		3 schools each area	Punchon: 200 Punggye: 150 Tongpo: 150	No uniform	Casual, no guns(guns on the table)	
Camp No.14 (Kaecheon, South Pyongan)		1 primary (5grades), 1 middle (6 grades)	Primary (600–700) Middle (700)	Only in Primary (distributed twice in 5grade), High-middle: working clothes distributed every 6 months	Uniform, gun-carried	
Camp No.15 (Yodok, South Hamgyong)	Re-education zone	Ipsok-li	Primary, middle	Primary (160)	–	–
		Taesuk-ni	1 Primary/ middle in same school	1994: 7, 1995: 0	No uniform	–
		Sorimchon	No children	N/A	N/A	N/A
		Kuwup-nii	1 primary (4 grades), 1 middle (5 grades)	Around 900	No uniform	Gun-carried
	Maximum security zone	Yong-pyong-ni	Middle (3 grades), heresay	Unknown	–	–
Camp No.17 (Tuksong, South Hamgyong)		–	–	–	–	
Camp No.18 (Pukchang, South Pyongan)	Tukchang Area	Primary (4 grades) Middle (5 grades) 1 school per district, small districts have own small school	Suk-san school : 200 Sim-san school : 1,000 Yong-pyung school: 1,400	Distributed twice in primary school./ twice in middle	The preferentially treated	

	Subjects	Primary School Working Hours	Type of Work	Middle School Working Hours	Type of Work	Disciplinary Session	Punishment/ Beating
	Korean, math, geography, Korean history, no revolutionary history	—	—	—	Wood, picking grass for rabbits	—	—
	Korean, math, PE, work unit chief teaches how to work.	15:00~sunset	Wherever required	No class, just work. Teacher assigns work		Middle school	O
	Same as the society	15:00~17:00, Whole day during winter	Wood	—	—	Saturday afternoon	—
	Unknown	—	Picking grass	—	—	—	—
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Revolutionary history, songs of loyalty	Since 4th session	Picking grass, carrying feces, rocks, wood, farming, collecting alluvial gold	Work from 4 th session	Increase in size of the farm they are assigned	—	O
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Similar to society, Kim Il-sung revolution history, Learning from the commander	Sundays Work until work quota met	Basic work in the afternoon, Since 3 rd grade-farming (from 07:30 until the end of work)	Work until work quota met	Building fences, farming	—	Severe beating

Location		Operation	Number of children	Uniforms	Staffs/Uniform	
Camp No.18 (Pukchang, South Phyongan)	Pongchang-li	4 schools including kindergarten, primary, middle	Yong-seung middle: 600 Pong-chang middle: 600-900 Su-an middle : 400-600 Sang-ni middle : 100-300	—	The preferentially treated	
Camp No.22 (Hweryong, North Hamgyong. Maximum Security Camp)		Over 10, 1 kindergarten every region	—	—	Casual, no guns	
Camp No.23 (Toksong District North Hamgyong)		Sangdol-li: 1 primary/middle in 1 school Kuwuntaek/ Shintae-li: small primary schools per section and 1 middle school	Sangdol-li: 200 Kuwun-taek/ Shin-tae-li : over 100	—	—	
Camp No.25 (Chongjin, North Hamgyong)		No children	N/A	N/A	N/A	

	Subjects	Primary School Working Hours	Type of Work	Middle School Working Hours	Type of Work	Disciplinary Session	Punishment/ Beating
	Kim Il-sung revolution history, Learning from the commander, Korean, math, physics, drafting, music	Afternoons	Wood, mine, farming, building fences	Afternoons	Wood, mine, farming, building fences, construction	–	–
	Basic calculation	Since 7, work just as much as the adults	Same as adults	Since 7, work just as much as the adults	Same as adults	–	–
	Similar to society, Kim Il-sung revolution history, Learning from the commander etc.	Work until work quota met	Corn farming	Work until work quota met	Rice farming	–	0
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Human Rights Abuses in Political Prison Camps

1. Routine Violations of Basic Human Rights

The dire living conditions at political prison camps (PPCs) in North Korea clearly demonstrate that human rights in North Korea are routinely and continuously violated. Prisoners' human rights in PPCs are seriously violated not only through ruthless physical violence but also through forced labor in the face of starvation and uninhabitable living conditions.

Could anyone maintain certain level of human decency under these dehumanizing circumstances that prisoners endure for years, decades or in some instances, a lifetime? Even though prisoners may not be physically punished every day, they are mentally broken down and have their human nature destroyed in constant fear of cruel physical violence and punishment. Once detained in these horrible camps, therefore, people in the PPCs, deserve to be called the victims of human rights violations.

Most people in North Korea are incarcerated in PPCs without any formal investigations or trials. More seriously, they end up there not because of their own wrongdoings but because of North Korea's unjust

guilt-by-association system. Since no trials are allowed for political prisoners, the prisoners do not know which crime they are guilty of, much less the term of their imprisonment. As a result, they have no idea of when they will be released from prison. Only a few prisoners at Yodok re-education camp (No.15) and Pukchang prison camp (No. 18) are allowed to return to society after serving prison terms for a certain period of time. The vast majority of these prisoners spend their lives forever in maximum security camps. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that people in the PPCs live like animals with no hopes or dreams.

Those, who are imprisoned in PPCs after being investigated for their alleged involvement in political matters, can usually learn about their charges against them during the process of investigation. But they are haunted by guilty feeling about putting their family members behind bars because of their wrongdoings. Prisoners' lives are in constant danger because they are subject to severe suppression, control, and forced labor, as well as psychological and emotional agony. Moreover, a meager amount of food threatens their survival. The prisoners are not even guaranteed the lowest level of human rights in terms of food, clothing, shelter, health, medicine, education and a suitable working environment. Their situations are similar to those of slaves in an ancient society.

According to a close analysis of PPC monitoring systems, the living conditions of prisoners and their imprisonment process leaves them vulnerable to constant infringement of their human rights. These rights include the right to; life, dignity, freedom, health, education, migration, residence, marriage, family, reproduction, political work, and the rights

of foreigners. As such, all types of human rights violations are common in North Korean PPCs, which can be referred to a ‘department store of human rights abuses.’¹⁵⁰⁾

150) For information about specific types, examples and scale of human rights abuses, refer to *2010 White Paper on North Korean Human Rights*, published by the North Korean Human Rights Archives. (Seoul: NKDB, 2010)

2. Public and Secret Executions

Many countries in the world have a capital punishment system. One of the problems of the capital punishment system in North Korea is the lack of fair trial procedures due to inadequate judiciary proceedings. Another problem is that executions are often carried out in public for the purpose of preventing crimes by instilling real fear into people's minds. These public executions undermine the human dignity of executed prisoners. Moreover, people who witnessed the shocking execution scenes are consciously or unconsciously haunted by the grim afterimages for the rest of their lives.

Public executions are very common even in political prison camps of North Korea that are known to the outside world. The frequency of executions and the number of people who are forcibly gathered to watch the scenes vary depending on particular prison camps and the particular year, but the cruel nature of public executions are all the same. Most prisoners who have testified about public executions could not hide their feelings of bitterness and shocking when they first witnessed a public execution. As these incidents occurred over and over again, they became part of prisoners' lives. These executions became so routine that prisoners had no hard feelings about executions and they found themselves simply thinking, 'there's another public execution today.' Children as well as adults were forced to watch the execution scenes. Even kids were gathered to watch such scenes. This practice goes against a modern and universal trend in which even movies are grouped into different categories on the basis of ratings for the purpose of protecting children.

Secret executions are another method of death penalty practiced inside

PPCs. Secret executions imply that officials in the camps simply murder prisoners without taking relevant legal procedures. Executing someone in secret places implies that there is something suspicious about his or her execution. Moreover, secret executions are not known to the public. Relevant legal procedures could have easily been altered or skipped entirely. In the case of secret executions, therefore, it is doubtful that criminals are executed in accordance with standard legal procedures. This speculation is supported by the testimonies of former SSA officers, who claim that trivial legal procedures are followed occasionally but that in most cases, security officials carry out secret executions based on their own personal judgments and decisions.

Some former officers testified that some camps have recently reduced the number of public executions in response to the growing, negative attitudes of an international community toward the North Korean regime. However, this situation may have caused the regime to increase the number of secret executions for the purpose of maintaining the number of executions. In regards to this matter, additional testimonies are necessary.

1) Public Executions

(1) Charges and Frequency

Execution by firing squad inside the PPCs is usually applied to those who have attempted to escape from the prison camps. According to testimonies, people were also executed in public on charges of such crimes as destroying a machine, damaging production, condemning the North Korean leader or in some cases, stealing. The frequency of public

executions varies depending on the particular camp or year. Also, there are some contradictory testimonies about the frequency of executions during the same period of time.

According to A08, who served as an SSA officer at Camp No. 13 for about 28 years said that public executions were seldom performed in the camp since they might have a negative influence on the prisoners.

“If a prisoner is caught for escape, he will be shot to death or sent to Susong Prison after public trial. Executions by shooting are not that common. Camp authorities are concerned that frequent public executions would have a negative influence on other prisoners. While I was there, I think I saw 10 public executions by shooting. Mostly, they were the prisoners who had attempted to escape but had been caught. I remember a case where a prisoner was publicly executed after open trial for the intentional vandalism of a machine. This was in 1969 and the victim was from the steel plant in Chongjin.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

Conversely, according to A22, who worked at Camp No. 22 for approximately three years from 1987 to 1990, testified that public executions were held quite often, usually once a week, and different people were forced to gather to watch the scene depending on the nature of the executions.

“Public executions took place once a week. When a family was executed, all the prisoners were forced to gather and watch the execution. When an individual was executed, platoon leader and higher-level prisoners were convened to watch.” (A22, former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

The testimonies show that each concentration camp has its own policy in terms of public executions. However, three former prisoners who were at political camp No.15 at Taesuk-ni in the similar period of time gave different testimonies about public executions there—ranging from 0.7 to 5 times a year. Their testimonies need to be verified later.

While these testimonies showed a discrepancy in the frequency of public executions, they shared something in common — both inhumane public executions and their negative influence on fellow prisoners. Shin Dong-hyuk, who was born in Camp No. 14 and lived there until he escaped in 2005, was forced to watch his mother hanged and brother shot to death.¹⁵¹⁾

“My mother and brother were publicly executed in front of me and my father for attempting to escape.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

Many people testified that public executions by firing squad took place 0.5 to 2 times a year inside the re-education zone of Camp No. 15.

“A public execution was held once while I was there. It was the early spring of 1984 and the executee was 23 years old. He was caught attempting to escape. Once a person was found to have escaped, all prisoners stopped work and searched for the escapee. He managed to get out of the camp but was caught outside. When he was sent back to the camp, he was already half-dead. The gag was released from his mouth

151) Dong-hyuk Shin, *North Korean Maximum Security Camp out to the World*, (Seoul: NKDB, 2007), pp. 88-191.

accidentally before he was shot. The convict began to shout, 'It's a lie. You promised to save my life if I confessed. Why are you going to kill me?' He escaped from the orientation class for new prisoners as soon as he was imprisoned. Usually, prisoners don't even think about escaping after three months of imprisonment. I felt the same way. Oh, I was badly depressed, realizing I would end up living like that forever." (A36, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1983-1985)

"Stealing is a crime. There were many thieves among the individual prisoners. The thieves are punished, of course. I don't know how they are punished. They didn't simply disappear. They were not sent to punishment jail. They were often openly punished...I saw two executions of this nature. The first case was involved with a thief and the second case was very similar." (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

"If a prisoner is missing, the entire work unit is alarmed and mobilized. All prisoners stop working and a manhunt begins for the missing prisoner. This is why all prisoners are brought together to work unit No. 7 to watch a public execution. If a prisoner says something wrong, he is sent to a punishment chamber in the camp. And if he admits that he had said something wrong, he is publicly executed because this serves as a warning to other prisoners that this will happen to you if you make the same mistakes. All prisoners were very cautious when saying anything. There was no such thing as secret executions. Because we are prisoners, they wanted to show us all the executions for warning and intimidate other prisoners as much as possible." (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

"I have not witnessed any secret executions but have witnessed public executions a number of times. At around 11 o'clock in the morning, many

prisoners assembled at the river side execution site near work unit No. 2, Ipsok-ni. The chief administrator in uniform held up a paper and loudly read something. There stood three poles behind him, about the same height as the prisoners. When the chief administrator finished reading, three men were dragged to the poles by SSA officers. Each convict was held by two SSA guards, one grabbing each arm. None of the three convicts were able to walk by themselves. They all looked as though they were already dead and were helplessly dragged along. It looked as though they were so badly treated that they were already half dead. The three convicts were tied up with rope against the poles at the bottom of the river embankment. The convicts looked as though they already fainted, helpless, and showed no resistance. Soon, there was big shout from an officer, "Present!" At the execution order, there were three gun shots and the convicts fell to the straw mats at the bottom like logs. There was a loud announcement, "traitors are executed in the name of people." On completion of the announcement, SSA officers and guards quickly rolled up and loaded the dead bodies onto a truck and disappeared to an unknown location." (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

"In the camp, there is an average of 15 cases of attempting to escape each year. Escape attempts are usually made by new and young individual prisoners out of youthful follies. The execution site near Sondol rock is in the village of work unit No. 5, a distance of four or five hours walk from the work unit No. 10. Lee Chun-won was shot three times. One of the SSA officers hit the head of the dead man unnecessarily hard to confirm his death. SSA officers roughly rolled up the dead body and loaded it onto an empty truck and disappeared to an unknown location." (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

The following two testimonies are compatible with each other. Both

Kang Cheol-hwan¹⁵²⁾ and A15 from Camp No. 15 in Kuwup-ni testified about two discharged soldiers who were put to death by hanging. The period and the situations described by the two witnesses are almost identical. After the public execution, prisoners were forced to participate in the punishment by throwing stones at the already dead prisoners. This case is a clear example of brutal violence, because people were just forced to watch the scene in other public executions.

“While I was in Camp no. 15, there were three cases of escaping. The escapees were brought to trial during a regular meeting at the camp. The chief administrator of the camp served as the judge. There was sort of a court in charge of putting runaways on trial and punishing them. Two discharged soldiers escaped in 1985 after three months of forced labor center. These two young men came from Pyongsong in the South Pyongan Province. They were caught in a week. I heard that they were dragged 1.5 kilometers from the main gate to the punishment chamber. In a month, officials made an announcement about a public execution of the two young soldiers. The purpose was, of course, to show prisoners that escapees will be caught and will face death penalty eventually. The gallows were set up on a riverbank. All of the prisoners were forced to go there and throw stones at the dead bodies hanging from the gallows. Officials closely watched to check who did not throw stones and jotted down their names. But, some people refused to throw stones till the very end. What’s the use of throwing stones at the dead bodies? The law stipulates that those escaping from the re-education camp will be shot to death without exception. I imagine that these two young men underwent preliminary

152) Cheol-hwan Kang, *The Aquarium of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongshin, 2004), pp. 315-324.

investigations during their stay at the punishment chamber. Their dead bodies swung from the gallows for a week so that prisoners could see them while passing. This situation seems like the officials were saying, 'Run if you want.' and 'Escape if you can.' It was dreadful, indeed." (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

"In August of 1985, two soldiers from a special commando unit were brought to the camp for singing South Korean songs and talking about the good life in South Korea. They were very strong as they received very special training in the army and were very proficient in fighting. They prepared an elaborate plan to escape from the camp and North Korea. Eventually, they failed and were caught. They were to be executed by hanging under the provisions of North Korean criminal code a few days before 15 August, the anniversary of independence from Japan. They were to be hanged to save bullets and magnify the visual impact. All prisoners were forced to pass the gallows and throw stones at the dead bodies on their way back to home." (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

"All prisoners were assembled for public executions. Two to three cars arrived from the direction of the sub-station. The chief administrator, his deputy, a chief at the sub-station, and director of political department arrived in the first car. Three to six guards arrived in the second car. At the first execution I watched in the camp, there were three guards while there were six guards at the second time, including a signal flag holder. All prisoners were told to sit down by work units. Many guards, about the size of a company, blocked the road behind the prisoners. They did so to make sure that nothing went wrong. All SSA officers were in uniform with a pistol holstered on the waist. The whole atmosphere was so suspenseful and dreadful. There was a platform and a desk in the front. The chief

administrator, his deputy, director of political department, and section chief took the seat in the front. Section chief initiated the process. Then, the chief administrator announced the criminal history and background of the convict and declared the death sentence under the provisions of law. Then, they bound the convict to the pole. At the order of "shoot Hahn xx, the anti-revolutionary element," the fire squad of three snipers shot, each sniper shooting three bullets, for a total of nine shots per convict. A sniper examines the dead body and loudly declared the anti-revolution element so and so to be dead. Then, they disappeared with the dead body in a car. After that, there were speeches by the chief administrator and the director of political department." (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

"The 2nd public execution I watched in the camp was on 28 April 1997. When the death sentence was declared, a prisoner by the name of Hyon suddenly stood up, proceeded to the front platform and pleaded to reform him and make him like one of us. Guards rushed to him, gagged him immediately, beat him and kicked him into a completely submissive state and then carried him to the car. He has since been missing. This was a surprise for all of us. Most likely, he was killed. I don't know what happened to him after my release. No doubt he was killed as he defied the sentence of the central court." (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

"Two 26 year olds were caught and publicly executed in front of all prisoners for attempting to escape. The public execution took place at the plaza between work unit 3 and work unit 4 of the engineering battalion. Planning for escape is a serious crime. Prisoners were taken away for inefficiently growing rice, failing to fulfill the work quota of cutting grass, for not installing wind breaking walls properly, and poorly pulling weeds.

(Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

“I watched public executions 19-20 times. In most cases, victims were shot to death, but I also saw four or five executions by hanging. The victims might be killed outside the camp. But if that had happened, re-education would have been impossible such that they had to stay in the camp until they were executed. Most of them were trouble makers who refused to follow the instructions of the workplace, attempted to escape or talked about escaping. I once watched an execution five meters from the execution site. At that time, I saw everything very clearly, but now, I can’t remember much. When someone was about to be shot, Kim 00 grabbed a microphone and shouted ‘guards, you are not entitled to killing prisoner like this.’ He was arrested, of course. When he was shot, he cried, ‘Not me.’ He kept saying that until he was shot repeatedly and killed. His body was untied and wrapped up in a straw bag and loaded into a vehicle. The vehicle left quickly and that was it.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“I thought this man was insane. He kept calling out, ‘Mom, mom,’ and tried to go outside. Although he never actually tried to escape, the SSA officers took him for attempting to escape and shot him. He seemed to be wandering aimlessly, with no real intention of escaping. When he came to the camp, he looked like a madman. He was shot on the hill within the camp. Only individual prisoners were gathered there and shot. When someone dies in a political prison camp, a stigma is attached to his or her family members. None of them can succeed in society, because being executed in the camp is extremely dishonorable in the North Korean society. Most of the victims who were dragged to the execution site were almost dead already. Each of three shooters fired three shots —a total of nine

shots. The victim was tied to a stake, with their face covered with cloth and their mouth covered with a gag. Victims looked like scarecrows tied up on the stake. Their bodies were riddled with bullets. There was no trial. An announcement was made, instead. That's all.” (A15, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“In April 2003, people were caught attempting to escape. In fact, they ate seed potatoes in last winter, making them feel tipsy as if they were drunk. They were afraid that they might be sent to the punishment chamber. Thus they attempted to escape in the first place. I assume that's why they were shot. Two people ran away at that time, one in March and the other in April. They were killed immediately after some paperwork....That happened shortly after I was sent there. The public execution was held in front of all prisoners at the re-education zone in Kwanpyong-ni, Yodok political prison camp.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“Prisoners used to pick up strawberries that would be sent somewhere outside the camp. One of prisoners was so hungry that he ate some strawberries before sleeping. He thought he might be killed because of eating, so he decided to escape. Electricity was running through the barbed wire fence, but not all of the time. When he was found to have escaped, all prisoners were told to stop working and search for him. He managed to cut his way through the barbed-wire but was caught a little later. Eventually, he was sent back to the camp and shot to death. The security guards tied him to a cross, stuffed something in his mouth, and then fired three shots to his head and his head fell on the ground. We, prisoners, couldn't eat after watching the scene. While tied to the cross, the victim kept saying that he was sorry, yet the guards proceeded to shot him . The gunshots were loud, but we all screamed much louder so, we could hardly hear the gunshots. It was too shocking to watch the terrible scene with our own eyes. Many prisoners, including me couldn't watch it directly. I

feel like I had a nightmare.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

There are some testimonies about public executions by firing squad at Camp No. 17 as well.

“I witnessed an execution by a firing squad twice at the Camp No. 17. The victims were escapees. One of them was Kim 00’s father, who was accused of mismanaging the ‘people’s unit.’ All of the unit members were forced to stand in the front row and watch the execution. He shouted ‘Hurrah for China!’ when he was shot. All his family members were missing that year after that execution. They just disappeared and nobody knew what happened to them afterwards. We assumed that their disappearance was due to the fact that the victim cheered for China.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

Public executions took place at Camp No. 18 for diverse reasons, compared to other camps. The victims were mostly those who had attempted to escape from the camp, but others were also executed for intentionally destroying a machine, doing espionage and superstitious activities and expressing their political views. A20, who worked as a manager at Camp No. 18, pointed out that the timing and political circumstances were also important in determining public executions. A crime that usually receives a minor punishment, could receive a severe punishment such as a public execution during the politically sensitive times. It has been said that public executions took place twice or three times a year at Camp No. 18. These testimonies vividly illustrate the reasons and the process of public executions.

“I saw an execution by hanging also. This was when I was still a child in the school and a lot of people watched it. The convict was almost dead and motionless when he was brought to the execution site.” (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1972-1984)

“Two or three prisoners of the Camp No. 18 were so hungry that they crossed the river Taedong to the Camp No. 14. They found a lot of corn and the corn powder there and returned to the Camp No. 18 with some corn and ate it. Eventually, they were caught for their stealing and publicly executed. A mother of my colleague was arrested in February or March of 1996 for practicing superstition and was interrogated by the policemen for about six months. Then, she was publicly executed. Another execution case involved an auto-mechanic who wrecked a car while trying to repair it and was executed by a firing squad for the charge of obstructing the work progress of the SSA. I can’t remember all the executions, but there used to be two or three cases of public executions each year.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“Public executions didn’t occur very often — usually once or twice a year. Three or five people were shot to death each time. In one unfortunate case, a person was executed for simply stealing a pig. Also, a man named Pi Hyong-gap, a former spy for the state security agency in charge of the European region, was taken to the political prison camp after being falsely involved in the so-called Choi Mun-dok incident. He was also shot in public. I think he was executed for political reasons.” (A20, former Camp officer, 1989-2006, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18)

The witness, A19, describes a public execution in detail.

“Approximately ten policemen were positioned on the execution grounds

in advance. A stake was already set up there—three stakes if three people were to be executed. When people gathered together, one of the officials spoke over a loudspeaker, 'We now begin a public trial.' Other officials dragged a criminal from a vehicle. The criminal was shriveled up and looked like a chunk of meat fell from the vehicle. Officials needed to hold him from both sides as they tied his chest, waist and knees to the stake with a rope. They also put something in his mouth to prevent him from speaking. A policeman read loudly the crime he committed and then declared, 'He will be executed under Article 00, Clause 0 of the Socialist Criminal Law of Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Three shooters were positioned when the shooting commander said, 'ready!' Upon the command of 'fire,' the first shot was fired at the criminal's forehead. Blood splattered over his head. With another command, 'fire!' the second shot was fired at his chest. With the last command 'fire!' the third shot was fired at his knee. As he wriggled, the commander approached him and shot him in the head one more time with a pistol. When the criminal was dead, the officials rolled up his body in a straw bag, threw it into a vehicle and took off.'" (A19, former prisoner, Tukchang and Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2006)

At Camp No. 22, public executions took place quite often, approximately once a week. It is said that different people were forced to come and watch the execution scene depending on whether the criminal was a family member or an individual.

"Public executions were held approximately once a week. When a family was executed, all the prisoners were forced to gather and watch the execution. When a individual prisoner was executed, platoon commanders and higher-level prisoners were brought to watch. There was a small

stream behind a food factory, and a five-meter tall, three-meter wide stone altar was set up along the stream. Blood would flow into the stream through the stone. That was the execution site. Shots were fired 50 meters away from there, on the opposite site of the stream.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

Camp No. 23 is considered to be a highly-regimented society where labor is particularly hard. The major target of public executions is runaways, but there are criminal offenses that are common in a society, such as rapes and murders. Those who commit such crimes are said to be shot in public as well.

“They caught escapees and hanged them. During my stay in the camp, I saw shooting deaths approximately five times and hangings twice. Attempted escaping would occur several times a year, followed by shooting deaths of the escapees. I had a weak heart, so I witnessed executions only five times. Without the exception, escapees were shot. Once they were caught, they had to go through a preliminary investigation for approximately a month. We walked four kilometers toward people's unit 3 to get to the execution site. We were told not to work and instead we were to watch the execution. Approximately 4,000 people gathered, while pregnant women and heart patients were not allowed to watch the execution scene. Two or three people were shot at a time. One of the victims was a woman. When the crimes were considered serious, the criminals were hanged. So people could watch the execution and learn a lesson. The executions of the escapees had a significant influence on the prisoners inside the camp.. For example, the camp director wanted to release some well-behaved prisoners and had submitted relevant documents to the police, but the police postponed the decision because there were escapees in the camp. The chief

administrator of the camp was a good man, but I heard he was relegated to the vice director of the Kaechon prison later because he had let too many prisoners escape.” (A31, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1982-1988)

“In 1994, 000 was shot at the political prison camp on the charge of raping his daughter. Actually, the daughter was raped by her class teacher and got pregnant, but her father took the blame for that wrongdoing. We watched the execution at a distance of just three meters. The teacher was absent, probably because he might cause a disturbance. While we were seated, an SSA officer announced, ‘now, such and such people will be shot under Article 00, Clause 0 of the Constitution.’ Then, three officers wearing white gloves approached the victim, holding guns. When 000 was dragged out, he was half-dead already. I couldn’t imagine what they had done to him, but most of his bones seemed broken. He was dragged and tied to a tree. ‘What’s the use of beating a person who was about to die anyway?’ The victim tried to say something. A gag was then put in his mouth. Oh, he looked so miserable. Three snipers fired one shot each. One shooter shot him in the head, and another shooter shot him in the joints. They were very accurate snipers. The first shot broke the rope around his head, and the second shot, the rope around his chest. With the third shot, the victim’s body was rolled up and became perfectly round. When the execution was over, officials from a hospital checked whether the victim was dead. After making sure he was dead, they rolled up his body in a straw bag. People watched the whole process. I saw only one public execution during my ten years at the camp.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“In the early 1980s when I was at the political prison camp in Shintae-ri, Toksong, a man named Kim Kwi-nam was hanged on the charge of killing a woman.” (A26, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1976-1986)

(2) Forced Attendance

Beyond their vicious brutality, public executions are barbarian practices that all prisoners are forced to watch regardless of their age and gender. By showing all prisoners the frightful execution scenes and forcing them to follow the camp regulations, public executions seek to generate a sense of fear, thereby preventing additional crimes. In some cases, even students and family members of condemned criminals had to watch the executions.

“In the late summer of 1983, a public execution took place at the river side execution site near Sondol rock. All prisoners over the age of 16 were instructed to assemble without exception.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“All prisoners were assembled for public executions.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

“We were notified to come down in an hour, and we gathered at a meeting hall to hear a few words from an official. We then went to the execution ground and were seated in line according to companies and platoons.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

“In a meeting hall, we were informed that an escapee had been caught and that he would be put on trial soon. On the execution site, a brief announcement was made and the execution took place immediately afterwards. The gallows had been set up beforehand, and all the preparations for the execution were made in advance. Camp officers told us to gather on a certain date, saying ‘all of you should watch it no matter

what happens and carry sick people on your back if you can.’ A 100 % of prisoners participated, including children. Before executing the victim, representatives of prisoners held a debate, arguing that the ungrateful bastard deserves a death. After he was hanged, people were ordered to pass the dead body in a line, starting from those seated in the front row. They were told to throw stones at the body. Some did as they were told, while others simply pretended to comply. Officials stood nearby, watching and checking whether the prisoners were actually throwing stones.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1986-1986)

“At Camp No.17, I watched executions by firing squad. Kim Hyun-ok’s father was killed as well for poor management of people’s unit. The unit members were told to stand in the front line and watch the execution.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

At Camp No.18, children were not forced to watch the executions. But testimonies differ as to whether or not family members of the executed were forced to watch. Further information is needed for the verification.

“Prisoners were instructed to come down to the execution site by groups. They weren’t told of the public execution until the day before. As soon as they arrived at their work site, they were told, ‘A public trial will be held today. Gather on the Simsan ground by a certain hour.’ They had to come to the execution ground in line so officials checked the list of the prisoners to watching the execution.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“The father of Yim 00 was executed by a firing squad. This was when I

was about 13 years old. His father was a mechanic and he was killed in connection with his work. The families were not allowed to watch the execution.” (A01, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1972-1984)

“Children were not usually gathered for public executions. But they were sometimes notified, ‘A public execution is scheduled at a certain time. Come and see them.’ Family members of those executed were supposed to watch the execution.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

At Camp No. 23 where prisoners were placed under loose control, compared to other prison camps, it was compulsory to watch public executions but weak people were excused from watching the scenes in some cases. A31, who had a heart problem, said that she did not watch public executions very often due to her health problems.

“I had a weak heart, so I saw public executions only five times. Whenever escapees were caught, they were shot. Prisoners were told not to work and to watch the execution instead. There were approximately 4,000 people, excluding pregnant women and heart patients.” (A31, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1981-1988)

“Children were also told to stand and watch the execution. We watched it from outside the wall, only three meters away.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“I was 15 years old at that time. I never heard that people were shot to death. It was rare that prisoners commit serious crimes. There was never an escape by a family. However, there were several escapes by individual

prisoners. Two of them were caught and probably sent to some unknown place. Some people were fortunate enough not to get caught. It was almost impossible to escape there because the place was surrounded by mountains and valleys, and guards were constantly on patrol.” (A24, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

2) Secret Executions

It may come as no surprise but there were only a small number of people, including SSA officers or guards, who testified that they had witnessed secret executions. In a few rare cases, some prisoners witnessed secret executions by accident. Witnesses without such experiences said that there were no secret executions.

According to testimonies, the list of people who were usually killed in secret executions as follows: first, those who were accused of expressing political views; second, women who got pregnant through sexual relations with SSA officers or guards; third, those who attempted to escape frequently; and finally, those who were subject to political purges. It was reported that some prisoners, even though they did not violate regulations, were used for a human experimentation. They were taken away to an unknown location under the excuse of recuperation but became victims of the human experimentation.

The witness, A08, testified that executions were held in secret if the executions had the possibility of influencing prisoners negatively. That is, if executions were held too often, if the victims' crimes were something that could evoke sympathy, if the victims were high ranking officials, or if they were involved in influential incidents. The victims were

executed in secret because it could become problematic for executions to be known to the outside world and public executions could trigger a riot by prisoners.

It seems that the frequency of secret executions varied depending on each particular political prison camp. It is assumed that secret executions took place more often in maximum security camps than in re-education camps or in camps run by the police. As mentioned earlier, Camp No. 13 executed criminals in secret more often than in public, keeping the potential upheaval of prisoners in mind. Ahn Myong-chol, a former guard at Camp No.13, said that the mountain known as ‘Onsok highland’ was used as a venue for secret executions¹⁵³⁾, while introducing the bizarre story of making cosmetics products from fat of political prisoners who are boiled in a cauldron in Jukgi-gol.¹⁵⁴⁾ A22, a former SSA officer at Camp No. 22, testified that innocent prisoners were murdered in laboratories for human experimentation in Hangyong. Ahn Myong-chol, who worked at that same camp, also testifies that Sugol Valley in the Namsok region had a nickname, ‘valley of corpses’ since secret executions were held there. In his book, “Maximum Security Camp”, Ahn introduces a conversation with a chief SSA officer who carried out a secret execution. This part holds up a true mirror to the attitude of SSA officers who treated political prisoners like animals or worse. The chief SSA officer called the prisoners killed in secret executions ‘factionalist bastards’ and used the expression ‘very fun’ when recalling the

153) Myong-chol Ahn, *Maximum Security Camp*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongsin, 2007), pp.166-171.

154) Myong-chol Ahn, *They Are Crying*, (Seoul: Chonji Media, 1995), pp. 96-103.

executions. Those who participated in the secret executions were so inconsiderate of human dignity that they joked gaily about killing victims.¹⁵⁵⁾

On the other hand, prisoners at the re-education zone of Camp No. 15 neither heard nor saw secret executions. Some of them confirmed that there had been no secret executions at all. Most of the witnesses from Camp No.18 did not know about secret executions. A number of people testified about a secret execution, involving the so-called Shimhwajo political incident. A20, who worked as a camp officer there from 1989 to 2006 testified that there was one case of the secret execution that had to do something with the Shimhwajo incident.

Testimonies illustrate secret executions in detail.

“Pregnant prisoners either had compulsory abortions or were executed in secret. I heard that some SSA officers shot prisoners just for fun. I thought that prisoners were enemies who rebelled against the Republic and thus deserve a death penalty.” (Choi Dong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 1985-1986)

“Secret executions are more common than public ones. A prisoner is secretly taken away and no one ever hears from him again. Nobody knows any further details. Victims of secret execution include those prisoners with records of escape attempt or expression of political views to fellow

155) Myong-chol Ahn, *Maximum Security Camp*, (Seoul: Shidae Jongsin, 2007), pp. 171-184.

prisoners, in which case a public trial might cause unrest among prisoners. The victims are arrested and pushed into the deep trap just outside the fence of barbed wire, with sharp spear-like poles pointed upright from the bottom that had been set up for the prevention of escape.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“No prisoners were executed in secret inside the camp. SSA officers were clever. Some prisoners who were sent to the re-education camp were high-ranking government officials in the past. They could even kill the SSA officers in retaliation when they completed the re-education term and returned to society. There was a SSA officer who disliked a former high-ranking official; SSA officers can kill them indirectly through the hands of other prisoners. Even when they were sick, they were carried on a stretcher and taken to the field. They couldn’t work, but they were left alone there. Some fell flat on their faces and died there.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“There was no such thing as secret executions. Because we are prisoners, they wanted to show us all the executions for warning and intimidate other prisoners as much as possible.” (A11, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“There were no secret executions at Camp No. 15, I witnessed only public executions.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

It is said that those involved in political incidents became a major target of secret executions at Camp No.18 but such executions are hard to verify and did not occur very often. O Myong-o testified that executions were not open to the general public because of the policy of North Korean

leader ‘Kim Jong-il.’ He added that a special case was a secret execution of those involved in the Shimhwajo incident.¹⁵⁶⁾ In regards to this, A09, A20 and A32 provided the same testimonies.

“A firing squad arrived in the Camp No. 18 in an SSA truck enclosed in tent. They entered the short-term prison with tall walls, located at the Ibang valley, a most isolated place in the camp. They set a boundary for the execution and placed a few desks and chairs for a summary trial. Normally, executions took place in an open area for all prisoners to watch. However, in case of special events, they conducted the execution at a closed area inside the prison at the Ibang valley to prevent the public from watching. Without a judge, ring-leader and his supporters of the case of making an appeal to the leader were sentenced to death. There were 11 convicts, including the manager of Korea Hotel, general director of Ponghwa, the director of the 19th police department, and a young and righteous sergeant of a guard unit who carried the appeal in a cassette to Pyongyang. They were executed by a firing squad for about 30 minutes.” (0 Myong-o, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1994-2000)

“In 1997, seven prisoners had been brought to the camp because they were involved with the case of Shimhwajo. All seven of them were secretly executed at the valley of work unit No. 2, Pongchang-ni. They were the police chief of Camp No. 23, executive secretary of the provincial party in Kangwondo, executive secretary of the provincial party in South Pyongan, the first secretary of Kaesong city, an SSA officer, executive secretary of the party of the Chungsan county by the name of Pi Kap-son, and the chief administrator of the Camp No. 21. We happened to be there

156) Ryu Kyong-won, “Series 2, Special Article on Human Rights – Inside Camp No. 18 Feature”, *Rimjingang*, Vol. 3, (Seoul: Rimjingang, 2008), p.60.

to collect sand and watched this secret execution.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“A secret execution was rare. The police seldom held secret executions, while SSA did it from time to time. Those, who were executed in secret, had probably been accused of ‘causing high levels of anxiety for Kim Jong-il. How on earth could we know the name of their crime? They were arrested swiftly, and that was all. In South Korea, people know little about what the National Intelligence Service is doing. Similarly, even though someone was arrested by SSA in North Korea, we had absolutely no idea of why everything was kept in secret.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“A public execution took place only once during my 15-year stay in the camp. Twelve people were executed—six one night and six the next night. At that time, a prisoner at a cattle ranch accidentally saw the execution while looking for his lost cow. That was how the incident was made public. It is said that the victims were killed by officials with car headlights on who fired one shot to the head of the prisoners. Well, that execution was kind of a political product. What did they do wrong? My guess is that they got on Kim Jong-il’s nerves. The victims had various backgrounds—a police chief and a military aircraft pilot. In North Korea, Kim Jong-il’s instructions or an order of the Party had the ability to kill anyone regardless of his or her status.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Many people were executed in secret. Approximately 13-14 people were killed. I heard about the secret execution a few days later. While it was secret, a rumor quickly spread because the shooters were young, lower-level soldiers. The rumor was that people were taken somewhere and

were killed quietly around 1-2 a.m. Prisoners came to learn about the executions one by one. We didn't know about many executions in detail, but a high-ranking official was accused as a spy and got some sort of punishment. Out of grudge, he later killed many communists who should not be killed. Due to this illegal revenge on innocent people, many officials at Camp No.18 were discharged, and a vice chief of the police was killed in a public execution at the camp for taking joint responsibility for the incident. Some other officials were forced to resign." (A32, former Camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1987-2006)

"When I was assigned to the Camp No. 22, there was a secret execution site like the one in the Camp No. 13. In March, 1992, I discovered a young girl's dead body, with a shovel stuck in her body. I was told that she was found pregnant and in a sexual relationship with an SSA Officer by the name of Choi Chol-su and was therefore executed. In 1989, I was on duty at the Sobaekryong guard post. About 500 meters away to the east of the post, there was an upland called Onsok highland with a lot of flat stones. This was originally a site for secret executions and even the guards found it haunting. We knew that this was a secret execution site and did not want to approach it. Once, I was on duty at the main gate of the post and heard gun shots from the direction of the Onsok highland. In the early 1990s, we were reconstructing the guard post. It was such agonizing work to pick up stones and digging out dead bodies under the rocks in the blistering cold winter." (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 22, 1987-1994)

"The real purpose of secret execution was to human experimentations. If a prisoner hears from an SSA officer "we will take you away for good rest," prisoner is supposed to be killed for a human experimentation. (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1987)

3. Tortures and Violence

It has been discovered that most of the prisoners have experienced extreme torture and violence when they were in political prison camps. This fact reveals that tortures and violence have become daily routine inside the camps.

“Tortures are so rampant that they became one of the characteristics of North Korea. In principle, beating people is prohibited by law. In reality, however, that is not the case. It is all up to preliminary investigators to decide on whether to beat and starve people. The investigators are required to charge people with crimes, so they can do whatever they want.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“Camp officials are never blamed for beating prisoners. When it comes to beating, they can do whatever they want. Beating was quite common in camps. You want me to provide some detailed examples? It’s too heartbreaking to put them into words.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“No prisoners could protest. Prisoners were simply beaten and terrorized constantly. If a prisoner should protest, he would be taken away and be beaten to death.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

While tortures and acts of violence are conducted by SSA officers and guards, it is reported that such violence also occurred often between prisoners under the connivance or assistance of SSA officers. Among prisoners, platoon and work unit chief were found to have used violence

to achieve the goal of their work and to control the prisoners in the unit they were in charge of. If a unit failed to fulfill a given goal, or if any of the prisoners caused a problem, SSA officers charged its leader with the responsibility and would often times beat or even dismiss him from the post of commanders. Naturally, the work unit leaders would be extremely violent towards their fellow prisoners.

“SSA officers scolded but did not beat prisoners at work. Scolding by an SSA officer served as a message to the company commander to beat the prisoner(s) concerned. The company commander was forced to use violence on the prisoners to accomplish the work quota. (A06, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2006)

“Sometimes, SSA officers and camp officials assault the prisoners, but not very severe. They usually delivered two blows to each prisoner and then scold a company commander. ‘What were you doing? You don’t deserve this position.’ If a company commander receives these warnings two or more times, the company commander is replaced by someone with more brutality. SSA officers and camp officials can simply replace the commander after a short meeting. They can do that quite often, sometimes 20 times a day. The decision is entirely up to SSA officers. SSA officers usually put pressure on company commanders to use violence against prisoners rather than directly assaulting prisoners because when pressured, the company commander will take the prisoner(s) somewhere and beat them half to death. I don’t know whether SSA officers were banned from beating prisoners. It’s impossible to know the regulations for SSA officers because they are kept in secret. But beating is quite rampant in prison camps. Law? Well, that exists for officials only. Our law is useless. If they order us to die, we should pretend to die at least. We should do whatever they tell

us.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“Hard work always continues without any breaks. If any prisoner should stop work to rest, he is shouted at, “You son of a bitch!” while being stomped on.” (Kim Yong-sun from Ipsok-ni & Yongpyong, Camp No. 15)

“Once I was told to stop my work in the farm and was beaten with a stick. Prisoners are severely beaten by SSA officers when they receive tips from the company commander about poor job performances by prisoners. Prisoners were badly beaten with square bars if caught cooking in the general work unit. SSA officers beat prisoners 2-3 times a month, making prisoners be on their toes at all times. I was often beaten and kicked for being too liberal. Wherever we were in the camp, we were always demeaned and despised.” (A12, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1994-1997)

The lives of the prisoners were strictly controlled. Company commanders and platoon leaders were also beaten when a problem arose in the daily lives of prisoners. They had to take collective responsibility when managing the prisoners’ everyday life. During work hours, they gained extremely tight control over the prisoners to the extent in which they were not allowed to make even the smallest mistake.

“The SSA officers normally did not beat prisoners. But prisoners were beaten sometimes in the office of interview. The company commanders were often beaten by SSA officers for any problems in his company such as fighting between prisoners. In return, the company commanders beat and gave the prisoners a hard time. In essence, the SSA officers are beating prisoners indirectly through platoon leaders or company commanders.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

Women, children and the elderly often fall victim to tortures and violence in political prison camps.

“Older people were ordered to come down to sandpits and dig up sand. How can those in their 80s and 90s do such a hard work? The old men hunched with age couldn’t even walk. Once they entered a deep sandpit, they could hardly come out on their own. It was a scene too miserable to look at. There were many scenes like this. Officials let the older people out of the hole later but it was still very hard to watch that.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Just as adult prisoners were beaten frequently while working, so were children. They were exposed to violence in their schools or in workplaces. Children were often severely punished or beaten by their school teachers for a small mistake. But such violence was considered normal.

“It was common that students are beaten in schools. Teachers were supposed to hit students when they didn’t behave well. The teachers would slap the students with their hand or hit them in the head with a stick three or four times if they didn’t do their homework. The teachers rarely hit girl students, but the boy students were often whipped on the legs.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“Six children left the work site to eat wild berries up in the mountains behind the school building. For punishment, they were ordered to hold up their arms and open their hands, showing that their hands were stained with the dark color from the berries. Park Tae-su, the teacher, ordered them to be on their hands and left leg while keeping the other leg in the air and then told them to move backward. They were ordered to move

around the playground until the black berry color disappeared from their hands. Their hands began to be peeled and the blood started to trickle slowly. He kicked the children in the face and crushed their hands by stomping on them if the children stopped.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“Some children failed to bring a pair of socks to the revolution study class. Cho Song-kun, the teacher from Yongpyong, kicked the children in their stomach region with boots like he was kicking a soccer ball. The children were told to stand up in the sun for the entire morning. After hours, the children began to faint one by one. The teacher then ordered them to pile up chopped firewood for additional punishment. At the end of the punishment work, he began to kick at the pit of stomach of Pae Chongchol and beat him mercilessly with a stick for failing to accomplish the work target. The children were then taken to the classroom where they were told, “You are dogs and crawl like a dog and follow me.” He spat at and fiercely beat Pae Yong-su who hesitated. His entire body, from head to feet, was soon full of wounds and his face was smothered in dried up blood.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“In severe cases, children were beaten with a 10-centimeter-thick stick that was usually used as a work tool. When the students fail to complete a task, company commanders would beat them with mine timber. Some got a bloody nose because of beating.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

Tortures and violations are common almost everywhere but seem to be more serious in detention and investigation facilities inside the camps. When prisoners are sent to punishment chamber for causing problems, they

are subject to atrocious acts of violence. These tortures are severe enough to threaten the lives of the prisoners. There are reported cases of prisoners who died after unbearable tortures in the punishment chambers.

“When I was a school boy, I was completely stripped and hung from the ceiling by my legs and hands. The interrogators started a charcoal fire and placed it just under my back. I instinctively jerked hard to avoid the flames. The torturers moved the fire so that I could not avoid the heat. As I kept writhing in excruciating pain, they pierced me with a steel hook near my groin to stop my writhing. After the torture, I was in solitary confinement for about 20 days.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“If a prisoner is jailed, they would first cut off his hair then ruthlessly beat him without asking him any questions. Then, the prisoner is forced to sit on his knees with a square bar lodged between the knees for 24 hours. The prisoner would be badly beaten for any slight movements he makes during the 24 hours. Each evening I was on duty, it was so boisterous with the guards’ shoutings combined with the shrieks of the prisoners being beaten. Sometimes, prisoners are killed in the process. I know a case of a Japanese wife in her 50s who was killed here. Per capita daily food ration is only 100 grams of cereals and a salt soup with a little cabbage divided into 3 meals. Even this small meal is skipped for any movement during the day or any act of disobedience. So, prisoners make every possible effort not to move. As a result, prisoners become disabled in 3 months and have to be carried out in a stretcher. Mostly, they die after 5 months or so.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

“Han Jin-dog, a young girl, was so relentlessly beaten by the jail guards

that she lost her womanhood. Then, she unbuttoned her shirt to show me her breasts—swollen with inflammation and pus. Such an intoxicating odor and so gruesome to watch! She said her breasts were burnt with an iron skewer by guards. She had a sexual relation with Yang Ki-chol, a guard. Her life was spared because she was not pregnant and might be useful for something in future. In October, 1993, I drove my truck to the 43rd work unit, Kulsan sector to pick up potatoes and I ran into her. She was completely crippled and had lost her legs. She had her legs run over by a coal trolley while working at the coal mine. In the mine, prisoners were killed by accidents everyday.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

According to a former prisoner at Camp No.18 in the Tukchang area, an SSA officer in charge of prisoners was punished for excessive violence. But there are only a few testimonies that camp officials were punished for assaulting prisoners.

“Even an SSA officer was punished for causing a big trouble by beating prisoners. An SSA officer known as O Myong-il was imprisoned for ten years. He made prisoners tremble with fear just hearing his name. He used to hang people from the ceiling with their hands tied or hang people upside down. He was severely criticized for putting the accused on sizzling hot stove. A prisoner died during the process of preliminary investigation. Because of this incident, the SSA officer was sent to a prison and stayed there for ten years. Punishment of such people did occur in North Korea. That happened in 1998 or 1999.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

4. Sexual Violence against Female Prisoners

Isolated from the outside world, political prison camps are controlled by the State Security Agency (SSA). As a result, security officials there are free to rape female prisoners and used them as a sexual slave, immune from any critical eyes or inspections from both inside and outside the camp. A report¹⁵⁷⁾ shows that pretty female prisoners died after they served as a sexual slave for SSA officers or policemen. Many testimonies demonstrated that good-looking women prisoners in maximum security camps fell victim to the greed of SSA officers.

“The several tens of thousands women prisoners at the maximum security camp of No. 14 are subject to be sexual slavers of SSA officers. It is simply the reality and part of girls’ normal life. SSA officers play with pretty looking girls at their will. But nobody can punish them. It is a common knowledge in the camp that if girls are assigned to clean the offices of SSA officers, they are all sexual slavers for SSA officers. SSA officers come to work in the morning and go home at the end of working hours and they enjoy their sexual pleasure during the day time. Each SSA officer in the factory has an office room and the girl cleaning the room is with him in the same office all day long. Girls, if found pregnant, be it the outcome of relation with SSA officers or other prisoners, are all arrested. Girls have clothes on but their breasts are simply exposed to the rapacity of SSA officers.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

“The SSA officer sat on the chair and used a fishing rod baited with pork

157) Yong-sam Kim, “Inside Camp No. 14, North Korea’s Auschwitz, Record in Blood of the Crime of Human Extermination,” *Monthly Chosun*, May Issue (Seoul: Chosun News Press, 2000), p. 340.

fat to entice the naked woman prisoner crawling like a dog and this made her jump like a frog to catch the meat. The SSA officer enjoyed it by holding the meat higher to keep the prisoner from catching the meat and lowering it again to give her another chance.” (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

It was found that sexual violence was more likely to occur in an environment where the number of families was relatively small, when compared to a high percentage of female individual prisoners. It was also revealed that sexual abuses occurred more frequently in detention facilities such as punishment chamber and places where a number of women prisoners worked, such as factories for garments and food, also on the farms.

“I heard that at the punishment chamber, the policemen bring the women prisoners out of the jail to rape them. I did not actually witness this. There were many cases of abortion in the camp.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2001)

“Raping a woman was very common in prison camps. All of the pretty women were, in one way or another, offered for sexual pleasure of SSA officers. Only those who went through a thorough screening process can be SSA officers of prison camps. Pretty women among other female prisoners are working in the garment factory. The SSA officers can get all the women there if they want. If a woman refuses to accept the demands of SSA officers, the officers make an excuse and easily kill her.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

Female prisoners cannot resist the demands of SSA officers because

of their power and authority. If female prisoners get pregnant and their pregnancy is revealed, most of them disappear or are executed in secret. By contrast, it does not seem that the punishment against the SSA officers - the perpetrator - is severe.

In some prison camps, SSA officers and guards were reportedly punished and transferred to other camps when their sexual relations with female prisoners were disclosed. Yet, there are no institutions or systems that were established to prevent sexual violence against female prisoners.

“There were some cases in a re-education camps where SSA officers or camp officials had sexual relationships with prisoners and they then became a prisoner themselves at the same camp because of their wrongdoing. The woman remained safe, though. It doesn’t seem that camp authorities blamed their sexual relationships on her. Rather, the SSA officer was to blame for having affairs with a female prisoner. The female victim usually stayed in the camp, although it was uncertain whether her term was extended or not. It wasn’t clear either how long the SSA officer in question had to serve his term in the camp. I imagine there were certain regulations regarding SSA officers. Under the regulations, he was ordered to receive re-education in the same place where he had directed. This punishment was like a death penalty for him.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“In some cases, the preferentially treated were fired for raping female prisoners. Some of them were dismissed from their posts and transferred somewhere else, while others were relegated to the status of a prisoner. The vice chief of a coal mine ended up being a prisoner on a rape charge. The preferentially treated continued to flirt with female prisoners, and they were replaced constantly. It does not seem that many rape-related incidents

occurred among prisoners.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

It is reported that the percentage of rape cases in political prison camps was quite high, because female prisoners were exposed to the risk of rape by SSA officers and fellow male prisoners. There is a tendency to punish female prisoners more severely than their male counterparts who are subject to relatively minor punishments. Women are punished when they had sexual intercourse with male prisoners on mutual agreement as well.

“I sensed that food was offered for such relationships somewhere. If caught having a secret sexual relation, the prisoners are sent to jail. Kim XX was sent to the jail for having a sexual relation with Choi XX, an prisoner in charge of new entrants. She was working at the farm and Choi approached her with gifts and she accepted. This was in 2004. The woman was jailed, but the man was not punished.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

“Women were changing shifts at midnight and were ambushed on the road and raped by male prisoners. The men were eventually caught and sent to jail. KimXX was a discharged prisoner, but was arrested again and sent to Kaechon prison for raping women prisoners.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2000)

“A number of men, including male prisoners used to rape female prisoners. I’d say that happened quite often. Even though the rapes were disclosed, there were no harsh punishments. Party officers and camp officials usually committed rape, and they were later criticized at party meetings. Prisoners involved in rapes are subject to legal punishments. But few female victims

would appeal. Rapes did occur, but they seldom led to legal disputes.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Rape victims, when pregnant, were not allowed to give birth to a child. Folk remedies were often used for abortion, causing the women to suffer from serious injury or side effects.

“There was a female student OOO in my school. She was very smart and outspoken. Many students remained silent on controversial issues in fear of their teachers, but she was bold enough to say ‘I can’t follow your instruction’, when teachers instructed her to do something. One day, she was called up before a teacher. We didn’t know what happened. She returned and cried loudly. She was in the fourth year of middle school. She said that her teacher raped her. It turned out she got pregnant. Her mother rushed to the school to protest, crying and screaming. But as expected, the victim, not the teacher, was to blame. Nothing happened to the teacher. But the girl had to get an abortion. She was three months pregnant at that time.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“I tried so hard to have an abortion because I would be killed if my pregnancy was disclosed. I ate dirt in a ditch. I pricked my belly with a wooden stick. I begged a person to kick my belly. But the baby continued growing in my womb. I found myself wanting to keep the baby. One day, my mother told me to eat the boiled peony flower roots. I was nearly dead. My belly was upset and I passed out because of poison. I was affected with liver cirrhosis. I couldn’t digest well, the vomiting and diarrhea never stopped. I lost the baby. Many girls even died after eating peony flower roots to get rid of a baby.”¹⁵⁸⁾ (Ahn Myong-chol, former guard, Camp No. 11, 13 and 22, 1987-1994)

“Sex has become a means of survival for female prisoners, and the biggest problem occurred when they got pregnant. There are few, if any, contraceptives in North Korea. A condom is called ‘shakoo’ in North Korea. Condoms are very hard to obtain even in Pyongyang, not to mention in prison camps. As the last resort, the prisoners came up with a idea of ‘rubber tube curettage.’ It is a tool for a surgical operation to cause abortion. It would be a problem for female prisoners to continue to get pregnant, but pregnant women can’t just give a birth to a baby...The tool is a very thin rubber tube, approximately 50 cm in length and 5mm in diameter. It looks like a tube dangling from an IV bag used to give patients an injection of Ringer’s solution...The person who performs this operation instructs the pregnant woman to lie down. He then spreads her legs and inserts the rubber tube rolled up in his pocket into her vagina slowly. At this moment, the woman groans in pain with her eyes shut. It feels like something is piercing deep inside her belly. 90 percent of this surgery depends on senses and feelings of fingers. How far, in what direction and how hard the rubber tube should be put in the vagina is determined solely by feeling of a person who performs this operation.”¹⁵⁹⁾ (Kang Myong-do, former prisoner, Camp No. 18, 1990-1992)

Unlike cases of other human rights abuses, those involved in sexual violence against female prisoners are seldom made public unless the victims themselves disclose what they suffered. It is believed that rapes and other types of sexual abuses occur in political prison camps more frequently than reported.

158) Myong-chol Ahn, *They Are Crying*, (Seoul: Chonji Media, 1995), p.324.

159) Myong-do Kang, *Pyongyang Is Dreaming Asylum*, (Seoul: Chungang Ilbo Sa, 1995), pp. 229-230.

“Incidents of rape are usually kept secret. But women unintentionally spat them out while quarreling. I’m not sure whether her name is Park Young-bom or Park Young-ok, but she said that she had been taken by a man to a radish field and was told, ‘You bitch! Take off your clothes!’. She hesitated and the man kept yelling at her. As she undressed herself, she was raped. When some female prisoners make some mistakes, they are left alone in the radish field. Soon after, they are raped. I’ve never seen such a scene myself, but female prisoners talked about stories like this. Sexual abuses in prison camps are much worse than those in South Korea. If the prisoners refuse to take off their clothes, they are beaten by a club. Male prisoners usually don’t rape other female prisoners. All the prisoners can think about is how to survive. It’s hard to have a sexual desire for women inside the camps, much less to have a relationship with them.” (Lee Young-guk, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1999)

It is said that some female prisoners voluntarily offer sexual favors to prison officers as bribes in order to justify their crimes or avoid forced labor. Through sexual relations with SSA officers or senior male prisoners, female prisoners are given food or assigned to a workplace with more freedom. They are guaranteed a relatively comfortable prison life. Thus, the choice is clear for female prisoners who struggle to survive in a dismal prison environment. They have no choice but to offer sex for their survival. In this respect, voluntary sex offering is considered another form of human rights abuse.

“I guess that there are more voluntary sex offerings than sexual assaults. Of course, female prisoners may refuse to do that at first. But they can receive many benefits by surrendering their body to men. Their lives could be a lot more comfortable. By sleeping with senior officials, for examples,

female prisoners working in mine are allowed to switch their job to a more comfortable one outside the pit. Because of these benefits, some female prisoners are eager to sleep with the prison officers. But some women were caught and punished.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

“There were few sexual assaults against female prisoners. For example, if I were a chief of a work unit at a mine, I wouldn’t necessarily rape female prisoners working there. They have to please me anyway because they want to get an easy job, so many of them were willing to go to bed with me. There were a few cases of forced rapes. All women prisoners are just like my wife. That’s how the prison camp works in North Korea.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“If a policeman in charge is attracted to a girl, he quietly calls her up to his office for sex. Then, he assigns a better job to her. An official even discharged the family members of the woman he had slept with. That was common, and no one care about that.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984 and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

“A liquor factory was built on a site where SSA Minister Kim Byung-ha’s villa had been located before. The region was famous for clean water. The manager of the liquor factory named Kim Jun-sam loved women. He was rich, so a lots of women hung around him in order to get something from him. He was 60, but the old man was always flirting with 18 or 19-year-old girls. Individuals like Mr. Kim often enjoyed relations with women. But there weren’t any systematic sexual abuses of women and murder.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“There were some 10,000 female prisoners at the camp. Sex is a means

of their survival. They were so eager to give themselves to policemen and senior officers at the camp for a favor. Working at a mine was hard, causing back pains or backbreaking, so women tried to offer sex to a policeman in exchange for less-demanding jobs such as working at a canteen or driving a tram. Kim Jang-mi was the camp director's mistress. I was a sanitation officer at that time. She didn't like me very much, and she asked the director to fire me and put me into hard labor." (Kang Myong-do, former prisoner, Camp No. 18, 1990-1992)

5. Abuse of the Aged and Children

The bad living conditions and severe human right violations at political prison camps threaten the survival of prisoners constantly. The elderly and children are no exception.

1) Abuse of the Aged

At political prison camps in North Korea, those who are old and sick are also forced to carry out hard work. The practice of protecting older people as a vulnerable group in a society does not exist in the camps. Rather, the prison camps are operated by a principle that even the elderly have to ‘earn their salt’ in order to survive. But the treatment of older people varies depending on particular camps and times.

In some camps, prisoners are exempted from hard labor when they get to 61 to 65 years old and then allowed to enjoy senior benefits. Even in this case, however, some camps provide old prisoners with food rations, while others do not. In Camp No.15 Yodok and Camp No. 18 Pukchang, old prisoners do not have to work. They are allowed to stay home instead, doing household chores for their family or searching for something to eat in mountains and hills. In an environment like this, older people can be of help to the family. But those who do not receive food rations, even if they are exempted from work, place a burden on their family and are thus unwelcome by the family.

“Prisoners are supposed to work until 60. After that, they just stay home. They don’t do anything at all.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“Old people in the camp are all entitled to the social security program, man at the age of 61 and women at the age of 56. They work until their birthday then don’t have to work starting from the day after. They all get the benefit from the social security program.” (A09, former prisoner, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1975-2000)

“Old prisoners who cannot work don’t get food ration. As a result, they are mistreated by their children unless they do something productive for the family. But, in reality, there is very little what they can do for the family in the camp.” (A08, former SSA officer, Camp No. 12 and 13, 1967-1992)

“I was the only person who worked in my family, so my whole family had to subsist on my rations. I thought we were all going to starve to death. My parents were old, so they didn’t work.” (Kim Yong-sun, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni and Yongpyong-ni, Camp No. 15, 1970-1979)

It was found that the situation was even worse at maximum security camps, where the elderly were not allowed even a bit of freedom to engage in activities. In Camp No. 14, Kaechon, in particular, old prisoners belonged to the work group solely for the elderly and had to do labor until their deaths.

“It is the rule of camp No. 14 to keep working even when a prisoner is seriously ill. Construction work units accept sick prisoners to carry out light work such as paving and cleaning the road. In the camp, old prisoners over the age of 65 are not entitled to an senior benefits. Instead, they are assigned to an old folk work unit to continue work until their death. So, there is no such thing as retirement or exemption from work in the camp.” (Shin Dong-hyuk, former prisoner, Camp No. 14, 1982-2005)

It was reported that some political prison camps, in addition to maximum security camps, also formed work units exclusively for older prisoners and forced them to work. They were physically weak, compared to young prisoners, so they were engaged in light labor at least on the surface. In reality, however, their workload was so heavy that it was almost the same as that for the young. No matter how old the prisoners might be, they were never allowed to rest.

“There was one company composed of six platoons. The sixth platoon consisted of older people. They were in their 60s and 70s, who had been caught attempting to come down to South Korea where their relatives live. Officials never went easy on them just because they were old. Prisoners all had to do the same amount of work. If I had to fulfill 5 kg of workload, so did they, even though they needed more time to finish the job. Officials showed no mercy to them.” (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2004)

“There was no special treatment for the old and weak prisoners. If they are sick or something, they are assigned to an easier work site to do the light work such as repairing A-frame or weaving straw ropes. But, they have to work longer than the other prisoners in exchange for the easier job.” (Kang Cheol-hwan, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1977-1987)

“There was a dependants’ group in the company consisting of approximately 15 people, including an epileptic. Some of them were so old that they couldn’t work. They were called ‘cadaver.’ Whether they were in their 70 or 80, they had to work, at least light labor. They had their own tasks such as making round baskets with dried bush clover or making

straw baskets. They usually made tools, sitting down somewhere in a unit.” (A15, former prisoner, Kuwup-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

“Old prisoners also had to work there, all kinds of work and not necessarily easy work.” (A05, former prisoner, Ipsok-ni, Camp No. 15, 1976-1980)

“Old prisoners were never exempt from work. Old people were given the security work at work sites or companies.” (A12, former prisoner, from Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15 1994-1997)

“Labor law sets the age of retirement at 60. If those younger than 60 want to retire, they should be recognized as recipients of social security benefits. This recognition isn’t easy. Even if they are sick, they still have to work. People are seldom entitled to social security benefits unless they become seriously ill. Prisoners can be downgraded to dependants only when they are very sick, like having a continuous cough due to the final phase of atelectasis. But those sick people will not live long even if they are eligible for social security program. It is said that prisoners’ average life span is 60 years. But many prisoners live shorter lives, while others live longer. Those who worked hard in mines may die before 60, while those who had relatively lighter workload tend to live longer.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

As people get older, they are more likely to suffer from a variety of diseases. Nevertheless, old prisoners are not provided with appropriate medical and health services, and they fell victim to high death rates from diseases related to age. Some prison camps have built sanitarium to accommodate patients afflicted with the diseases of old age. But not all

such patients can be admitted to rest homes. Only those who are good at their works and favored by their bosses are selected to enter there.

“We saw a nursing home at the top of the hill. Prisoners were sent up there if they were dying or had a good work record.” (A10, former prisoner, Taesuk-ni, Camp No. 15, 1995-1998)

“There was a nursing home for old prisoners. Old people were sent up there. If a prisoner is extremely weak, SSA officers sent them up there as well. But it was a very rare occasion when a prisoner is sent up there. Some prisoners were sent up there because their families outside bribed someone. In fact, it is extremely rare that a prisoner is sent up there.” (A04, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2002-2005)

2) Child Abuse

It is highly desirable that children are taken care of and protected by their parents and society while growing up. But the lives of children in prison camps are extremely miserable. They suffer from not only physical problems resulting from malnutrition and diseases, but from serious emotional and psychological troubles because they are neglected in an environment that is far from adequate for raising child. Various forms of child abuse are reported in political prison camps in North Korea.

One of the most serious problems in prison camps is that many children are exposed to diseases due to malnutrition. The rate of malnutrition-related deaths among children is thus high.

“Children tend to start working at the age of six. They picked wild greens

up (in summer), using a small A-frame carrier. They husked corn (in winter) and dried rice (in winter) as well. Children are given food rations less than 180 grams. Many children die around ten years of age.” (A22, former SSA officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

“I imagine that many children die of malnutrition. Many kids in our camp were malnourished, but I’ve seldom heard of children actually dying. Kids are definitely under-fed, though, and they are thus short. Most prisoners are short. Children of the preferentially treated are 162-165 cm tall when they become old enough to enter the military, while boys of that age in prison camps are just 155-156 cm tall because of malnutrition.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

Children are usually sent to live in an orphanage or similar facilities when their parents die. Children in prison camps, on the other hand, are just left alone when their parents die. No special actions are taken.

“In my class, there was a kid who lived with his sister after their parents died. His mother was starved to death and his father was taken away to an unknown location. So he was an orphan along with his younger sister. No one took care of them. Who would?” (A18, former prison, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

Brutal violence against children who attend schools in prison camps is one of the most serious child abuses. There is no way for parents to protect their children from the brutality of teachers.

“A teacher beat children so hard that their parents complained to the school principal. It was useless, of course. It is useless to report such a

case to somewhere outside the camp, much less in the prison camps. Even if parents report the beating by a teacher to the principal, the teacher never gets blamed.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

“The teacher said, ‘Come on, you guys. Kill him.’ 56 children in my class rushed to a child and beat him unconscious. He kept to his bed for a whole week.” (A18, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1977-1984)

6. Disappearance

When people are taken to political prison camps, their whereabouts are not known to those around them. Therefore, people around them do not know whether they are dead or alive. It is revealed that even after being imprisoned in the camps, some disappear on the grounds that they made mistakes or violated a rule somehow. It is said that in most cases, even their family members or fellow prisoners do not know where they are.

“A man disappeared. One day, we got up in the morning and found that he was missing. We kept asking, ‘Where is he?’ But nobody knew where he was. Some were simply guessing, ‘He must have said something wrong.’ He was a little over 30 years old. That morning we found that all the doors of his house had been broken.” (A23, former prisoner, Camp No. 23, 1977-1987)

“It was in the 1980s. My father was called up by a police officer in Camp No. 17. I haven’t seen him since. In the camp, seven out of ten people were summoned by the police like this and we never heard of them again. Many young women in their 20s were also taken somewhere, and never returned...I was later transferred to Camp No. 18. There, I met a policeman whom I was acquainted with at Camp No. 17. I asked him about my father. He said people like my father were mobilized for some kind of secret construction projects and then eliminated. He told me to forget about my father and consider him dead.” (A16, former prisoner, Camp No. 17, 1974-1984, and Camp No. 18, 1984-1992)

“In October 1989, there were a few cases of disappearances. Before 1982 when Kim Byung-ha was the SSA Minister, the SSA arrested many people

on the charge of expressing their political views. It was the SSA that dealt with such a crime. Those who went missing at that time were mostly sent to Camp No.14, 15 and 16. After Kim Byung-ha was dismissed, there were few, if any, cases of disappearances. One such case was discovered in Camp No.18. In 2004, a wife of a discharged soldier said something wrong and her whole family was sent to No. 15, Yodok Camp. Not many prisoners have disappeared since 1982.” (A20, former camp officer, Pongchang-ni, Camp No. 18, 1989-2006)

“As soon as Lee 00’s father was imprisoned in the camp, he faced his chronic health problems. Maybe it was too hard for him to do hard work in the cave. Suffering from pains, he said, ‘I shouldn’t have come to North Korea. I miss my mom and my siblings in China and my home.’ Another prisoner in the same group heard him saying this and reported it to the SSA. When he arrived at work in the morning, SSA officers, who had been waiting in a car, arrested him right away.” (A18, former prisoner, 1977-1984, Tukchang area, Camp No.18)

Of prisoners missing in political prison camps, those in the re-education camp were reportedly transferred to a maximum security camp.

“I saw people transferred to different prison camps. Kim 00’s niece and her husband were in the re-education camp where I was. They had a son and two daughters together. One day, an SSA officer called him in and said, ‘you were divorced. You got it?’ A few days later, the officer ordered Kim’s niece to pack her blanket and toiletries and he then took her somewhere by car. Her husband left the camp right away. Kim’s niece was sent across the valley to a life imprisonment camp. There were five valleys in Camp No.15. One of the valleys was the re-education camp where I

stayed. Political prisoners were supposed to live in one of other four valleys for the rest of their lives. There, prisoners worked in a mulberry field and grew silkworms. Most of them lived there without family. They actually did have families, but their family members were all detained elsewhere. There are the SSA prisons, which were different from political prison camps. As I know, the Susong Prison in Chongjin was one of them. Political prisoners and economic criminals were imprisoned separately in the Susong Prison. Offenders were sent to such prisons with Kim Jong-il's a simple word 'send him for re-ducation.' A man would be immediately expelled from his post and sent to SSA prison and his entire family would be sent to a political prison camp." (A15, former prisoner, Kuwump-ni, Camp No. 15, 1984-1986)

"The twin brothers were sent to a maximum security camp. Before that, they were in a re-education zone of Camp No. 15 to serve a one-year term, but they were sent to a maximum security camp when their parents were found to have gone to South Korea. Actually, somebody informed the SSA about their parents. While working in the field one afternoon, the boys were forced to get in a jeep and taken somewhere with their hands hand-cuffed behind their back. It is said that the fate of the prisoners is determined by the way they are hand-cuffed. Political prisoners and economic criminals are hand-cuffed in different ways. There are three ways to hand-cuff criminals. If their hands are cuffed in front, they are scheduled for questioning. If their hands are cuffed behind the back, they are supposed to be sent to a maximum security camp. Some have their hands cuffed behind their heads. I don't know what that means." (A14, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

"Two brothers were in a re-education camp. But they were sent to a maximum security camp because of the fact that their mother was in South

Korea. Actually, the boys were also with their mom in South Korea and they were even registered as South Korean residents. They went to China during a vacation and unfortunately, they were caught there. Their crime was revealed later when three prisoners—a company commander, OOO and a platoon leader—informed the SSA officers of the boys' complaints. So the boys were sent to the maximum security camp.” (A13, former prisoner, Sorimchon, Camp No. 15, 2003-2005)

“Many prisoners steal and escape when they are in prison camps. If they attempt to escape and are caught, their term is extended to life in prison. They remain in Camp No. 18 but they have to serve a life sentence. But they aren't necessarily sent to a maximum security camp. One day, all of a sudden, a vehicle arrived and some people were ordered to get in. No one knew where they're going. Those prisoners ended up in a maximum security camp. My father witnessed so many similar cases and told us about those cases. Soldiers stand in line and order some particular prisoner to come forward. The soldiers got the prisoners in a truck and then disappear. We never saw them again.” (A17, former prisoner, Tukchang, Camp No. 18, 1973(4)-1982)

There were some testimonies that those who went missing in prison camps fell victim to human experimentations. Further information is required for a verification.

“Human experimentation is carried out in Haengyong area of Camp No. 22. No one, except those belonging to Class A, were allowed in there. Even some SSA members were not allowed. There is a factory for human experimentation there. Even SSA officers were reluctant to work there. I once entered there and saw what was happening. New chemical poison was

developed in the experiments. The victims died in approximately 10 to 12 minutes. Toxic gas was in its liquid form. Someone is responsible for an approval for human experimentation. Type and size of stamps for the approval are different by purpose of experimentation and kept confidential. Most of people in the camp do not know about the type and size of stamps to be used. A political prisoner is selected for human experimentation on the basis of age, weight, height and health. A victim is selected out of some 50 candidates. The camp officers want candidates in good health and without any physical shortcomings. So, they were well fed and treated to be in good physical condition for experimentation.” (A22, former camp officer, Camp No. 22, 1987-1990)

Recommendations for the Dismantlement of Political Prison Camps and Promotion of Human Rights in North Korea

1. Test for Human Rights in the 21st Century

It is a fact that political prison camps have been in operation for decades in North Korea without any clear legal basis in either North Korea's own criminal law or North Korea's own judicial procedures for criminal actions. While North Korean criminal law provides a definition of anti-state and anti-people crimes there are no known legal grounds for the operation of detention facilities for the punishment of such crimes.

As such, the prison camps are operated independent of the law and judicial systems related to criminal actions of North Korea. Rather, the camps have been operated in accordance with the internal rules and procedures of SSA and, as a consequence, the most serious violations of human rights are occurring in these camps.

Prisoners in the camps, mostly maximum security camps, are totally deprived of their citizenship rights and forced to do hard labor as slaves. In particular, those prisoners born inside the camps are kept unaware of

the existence of the outside world, whether it be the international community or ordinary North Korean society. Their sole understanding of the world is that it is divided into two groups, prisoners in the camp, like themselves, and camp officials. They are denied both the chance to experience basic human emotions and even the right to life. Under these circumstances, they are forced into a life of hard labor in the camp, void of such positive human feelings as love and hope. It is hard to believe that such islands of inhumanity continue to exist in the 21st Century, a time when human rights are meant to be held supreme and even the mistreatment of animals is frowned upon. However, a growing body of evidence, much of it contained within this book, has confirmed the presence of such camps in North Korea today and shown that they without a doubt amount to a crime against humanity by any definition, and a disgrace to all of humankind.

We have already experienced the international crimes of the 20th Century; the Holocaust and Killing Fields, to name but two. We are not free of blame for the failure to stop these crimes against humanity. Now, the failure to stop political prison camps in North Korea threatens to leave another dark stain on humankind in the annals of international justice. It is imperative that the international community, South Korea and civil society of the 21st Century make every possible effort to develop strategies and tactics to bring to an end the political prison camps of North Korea.

It must be recognized that there is a role in this for North Korea and another for the outside world. North Korea is the entity operating the camps and the perpetrator of the crimes which go on there, but despite

this, it is undeniable that North Korea must also be a major party to the ending of the camps and promotion of human rights in their place. Given this context, we suggest that the roles to be played by the parties concerned are as follows:

2. Role of the Outside World

It is unrealistic to expect substantive improvement in North Korea without significant changes to the North Korean political system, because the political prison camps are an important tool of terror for maintaining the present government of North Korea. The existence of the political prisons is commonly assumed to last as long as the life of the present political system in North Korea. Nevertheless, no effort must be spared by South Korea and the international community in attempting to achieve the dismantlement of the political prison camps as well as promote human rights in North Korea, even under the present political system. Given the dual nature of North Korea as the body operating the political prison camps and, at the same time, the one inevitably responsible for dismantling them, it is highly unrealistic to expect the North Korean authorities to close the system of camps on their own initiative as it stands. Accordingly, the importance of the role of the outside world, including the United Nations, international human rights organizations, the governments of South Korea, the US, Japan and the EU and international and South Korean NGOs, must be noted and underlined to expedite the closure of the camps.

1) International Organizations and the International Human Rights Regime

There has been a variety of comments made about the international role in the improvement of human rights in North Korea. Nevertheless, the roles and responsibilities of international organizations and the international human rights regime have not been sufficiently discussed in

terms of the dismantlement of political prison camps and improvement of human rights in camps. To this end, we suggest:

First, the existing pressure placed on North Korea by international and human rights organizations such as the UN General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council must be increased, and the North Korean authorities must be strongly urged to dismantle the political prison camps. To date, the existence of the political prison camps has been referred to in resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly, UN Human Rights Committee and UN Human Rights Council and reports by the UN Rapporteur. However, it must be recognized that the North Korean political prison camps represent the worst form of human rights violations in existence today, a universal issue for all humankind, and they must be given top priority by the UN and its human rights bodies.

Second, an effort must be made to bring the case before the ICC. One South Korean NGO has already reported Kim Jong-il to the ICC. As examined in the chapter in this book on human rights in the political camps in North Korea, the routine practice of torture, forced disappearances, forced labor and serious violations of physical freedoms in these camps constitute crimes against humanity as stipulated in Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court¹⁶⁰). Even though the ICC has officially initiated a Commission of Enquiry and is in the process of collecting information on political prison camps in North Korea,

160) Article 7, "Crimes against Humanity," Rome Statute, applies to enslavement, arrest against basic principle of international laws, serious deprivation of physical freedom, torture, rape, sexual slavery, enforced disappearance, and other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

the real impact of the court action will be limited by China and Russia, veto-wielding permanent members of the UN Security Council. Nevertheless, the court action will still have the effect of raising awareness of the grave situation in North Korean political prison camps within the international community and, at the same time, applying political and psychological pressure.

Third, North Korea must be strongly urged to implement the human rights conventions it has already acceded to. North Korea is a member of the UN and has an obligation to protect basic human rights and freedoms as specified under the UN Charter as a party to the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

According to reports by international organizations and the survey report

Table 6-1 UN Human Rights Laws Acceded to and Ratified by North Korea¹⁶¹⁾

International Instruments	Signed/Accessed/Ratified
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, (A, ICESCR)	Accession on 14 September, 1981
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (B, ICCPR)	Accession on 14 September, 1981
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Accession on 27, February 2001
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Signed on 23, August, 1990 and Ratified on 21 September, 1990

161) <http://treaties.un.org/Pages/Treaties.aspx?id=4&subid=A&lang=en> Accessed on 3 April, 2011.

on political prison camps in North Korea¹⁶²), forced labor, torture and other inhumanities are practised in the treatment of prisoners in North Korean political prison camps. This means that the international covenants covering human rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed by North Korea, are not being observed in the camps. In particular, analysis of the information on political prison camps in North Korea reveals that the inherent right to life (Article 6), freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 7), freedom from slavery and forced labor (Article 8), the right to physical freedom and safety (Article 9), the liberty to be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person (Article 10), the right to a fair trial (Article 14), the right to recognition as a person before the law (Article 16), the right of men and women to marry (Article 23), the rights of the child (Article 24), political rights (Article 25) and the right to be equal before the law (Article 26) of the ICCPR which North Korea has signed up to are all being systematically denied to persons in political prison camps.

It is also clear that the right to work (Article 6), the right to be provided with special measures of protection and assistance on behalf of all mothers and children (Article 10), the right to an adequate standard of living for self and family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions (Article 11), the right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental

162) Hung-sun Park and et al., *Survey Report of Political Prisoners' Camps in North Korea*, (Seoul: National Human Rights Commission, 2009), p. 243.

health (Article 12) and the right to middle and high school education and free and compulsory primary education (Article 13) specified under the ICESCR are also being violated.

With regards to the rights of children, it has been confirmed that articles 27, 37, 39 and item 1, 40 of the Convention on the Rights of Child have been violated and the main principle of the convention, that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration, has not been observed.

North Korea must fulfil its commitments to the international community as a member of the UN and a party to international human rights covenants and in doing so fully implement the recommendations of resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council and all other bodies. The UN and international organizations must strongly urge North Korea to end the political prison camps on the basis of international human rights treaties that North Korea has officially recognized by acceding to.

Fourth, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Special Rapporteur, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must raise their voices to urge North Korea to end the camps. In North Korea's UPR in 2009, 167 recommendations were made including some with reference to the issue of political prison camps. However, North Korea has rejected most of the recommendations and continues to refuse to recognize and cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur. The United Nations human rights bodies must get fully involved to pressure North Korea to change its attitude. Actions must be taken urgently so that the UN Rapporteur could access to political prison camps and report his findings in those camps.

Fifth, actions must be taken immediately to improve human rights in the political prison camps through human rights dialogue with North Korea. Externally, North Korea is strongly opposed to the involvement of the outside world in issues of human rights violations within the country. Internally, however, North Korea is preparing for visits to the sites of human rights violations by the outside world and the inevitable human rights dialogue. In particular, the importance ascribed to the human rights dialogue by EU states gives rise to the expectation of gradual progress. Accordingly, human rights dialogue can make progress in the fields of training of the North Korean judiciary and experts on human rights (including invitations to receive such training by third countries), support for human rights education for North Korean people, visits by international special human rights officers to North Korea for training purposes, the compiling and distribution of human rights laws as well as assisting with the modernization of imprisonment facilities for political prisoners. At the same time, the building of an international network is necessary for the selection of North Korea counterparts with whom to interact and the sharing of human rights information surrounding the human rights dialogue through bilateral and multilateral arrangements between South Korea, the USA, EU and UN bodies.

Sixth, the issue of ending political prison camps and improving human rights must be raised as a priority and a first step in all meetings including humanitarian aid and economic cooperation of UN organizations with North Korea. It is necessary for UN organizations to keep urging North Korea, overtly and covertly, to end its political prison camps at every opportunity.

2) USA, Japan, EU and Other Related Nations

Those states try to ameliorate the condition of political prison camps include the US, Japan and EU states. These states have raised the issue both individually and jointly via the UN General Assembly, human rights meetings in the Human Rights Council and via resolutions. These states, however, have not yet specifically demanded that North Korea dismantle the political prison camps.

To this end, we suggest:

First, these states must play the central role in UN actions and those of the international community as a whole for the improvement of human rights in North Korea. Important discussions on the issue have taken place in the UN and international community, but it has been mainly the EU, US and Japan that have raised the issue of North Korean political prison camps within the framework of international human rights. These states plus Canada, Australia etc. must sustain their ongoing efforts to get the political prison camps in North Korea dismantled.

Second, states with diplomatic relations with North Korea and those intending to enter into diplomatic relations with North Korea must demand strongly that political prison camps be stopped and human rights promoted in North Korea through human rights dialogue. As explained above, this human rights dialogue may include the training of North Korean judicial officials and experts on human rights (including invitations to such training in or by third countries), support for human rights education, international special human rights expert visits to North Korea for training purposes, the compilation and distribution of human rights laws and assistance in

the modernization of imprisonment facilities for all prisoners, assistance in the founding and operation of human rights organizations, conducting surveys of imprisonment facilities, assisting with the writing of reports for submission to UN human rights organizations and supplies of related and needed equipment. Of the items in the proposed agenda above, the EU may wish to concentrate on the training of North Korean judicial officials and dispatching of human rights experts to North Korea for training purposes based on its experience with North Korea to date.

Meanwhile, the US, Australia, Canada and Japan may choose to participate in the compilation and distribution of human rights laws, conducting survey reports and supplying necessary equipment. UN and international organizations may offer services for the founding and operation of human rights organizations and assisting with report writing. The EU and the USA may wish to invite North Korean officials to participate in training programs on human rights and law and invite North Korean students to attend special programs or obtain full academic degrees. These arrangements can be expected to gradually bring about the end of the political prison camps and promotion of human rights in North Korea.

Third, these nations must demand the dismantlement of political prison camps in all dialogue and discussions covering diplomatic relations and assistance at all levels.

Gradual improvement may be achieved. However it must be clearly recognized at all times that all the political prison camps must be totally closed eventually. In case of the US and Japan, whose normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea is still in the future, urging the

dismantlement of the camps as a precondition for diplomatic normalization is likely to be effective.

3) South Korean Government

The government of South Korea must take the initiative as the main party in the dismantling of the political prison camps, a core issue of human rights in North Korea in general. South Korea must be concerned with the promotion of human rights in North Korea and the realization of universal values, humanitarianism and love for its own compatriots. South Korea must uphold the cause of dismantling political prison camps in North Korea, a vital issue in human rights generally.

To this end, we suggest that the South Korean government must:

First, the government of South Korea must directly demand the dismantlement of political prison camps in North Korea in the UN and through dialogue between the two Koreas, and must continue with its efforts to realize the dismantlement of political camps and promotion of human rights in North Korea. Over the years, the government of South Korea has supported North Korean human rights resolutions in the UN and insisted on human rights improvement in North Korea through statements by the president and principal leaders. Nevertheless, the government has never officially asked the North Korean authorities to dismantle such camps. The government must ask North Korea officially and with a focus on specific issues in detail, no longer in the form of general statements. Furthermore, the National Assembly in Seoul must make its position clear on the issue and adopt a legal instrument promoting

the dismantlement of political prison camps and promotion of human rights in North Korea.

Second, the government of South Korea must initiate direct support for and cooperation with North Korea for the promotion of human rights and improvement of internment facilities in North Korea. Programs to improve operational systems and prison facilities must be supported. Assistance to improve internment facilities in accordance with international standards must include the supply of materials, equipment and expertise needed for the modernization and construction of buildings and facilities.

The internment facilities in general and political prison camps in particular are far below the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners in terms of facilities, operational systems, staff training and human rights. Assisting North Korea as discussed above through dialogue, including the training of staff, would no doubt be effective in improving the human rights situation in North Korea.

Third, it is necessary to put in place a system to continue surveying and monitoring the camps, because of the importance of gathering the basic information required for any policy of dismantlement and promotion of human rights. To this end, ideally, visits to camps must be facilitated. If the right to visit is not granted, surveys must be conducted on the basis of testimonies of camp officers and former prisoners. At present, surveys and monitoring of North Korean political prison camps are done by North Korean Human Rights Archives¹⁶³); government support must be increased.

163) North Korean Human Rights Archives was founded in 2007 under the umbrella of Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (www.nkdb.org) and has since been in operation. As of July, 2011, the Archives has collected information on 32,410 cases of human rights violations and 18,871 persons.

Fourth, legal and institutional expertise must be built within the South Korean government for the promotion of human rights in North Korea. It is likely that the dismantlement of the political camps and human rights promotion will be carried out within the general context of the North Korean human rights. General improvement of the human rights situation in North Korea requires systematic and ongoing policy intervention by the South Korean government and, to this end, legal support must be provided and a special expert team set up. For this purpose, the North Korean Human Rights Act must be passed by the National Assembly, as in the case of the US.

Fifth, North Korean Human Rights Archives must be operated systematically and their political independence assured. At present, the North Korean Human Rights Archives is operated by Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, an NGO. Disputes have developed with the Ministry of Unification, National Human Rights Commission of Korea, Ministry of Justice and NGOs over the issue of responsibility for their administration. Taking into consideration the nature of the operation, the principal selection criteria must be one based on expertise, continuity and political independence to be free from changes of government. It is noted that views have thus far tended to be expressed by government branches representing the interests of the branch concerned with little regard for the objectives of their founding and operation, and consensus has not yet been achieved.

North Korean Human Rights Archives is modelled after the Central Registry of State Judicial Administrations (Zentrale Erfassungsstelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen) in Salzgitter, Germany with the objective of

preventing human rights violations in North Korea by alerting the North Korean officials concerned that the collection of information, evidence and testimony on cases of human rights violations by the North Korean government and preserving that data to compensate the victims or families of victims will lead to them being appropriately punished the perpetrators in future.

Sixth, systems for cooperation with human rights NGOs domestically and abroad must be enhanced. Determined North Korean resistance to intervention by the outside world is predicted to be at its strongest in this area, as the issue of North Korean human rights in general and political prison camps, in particular, represent the anti-human rights character of the North Korean system. For this purpose, therefore, a joint strategy must be developed on the initiative of the South Korean government through cooperation with governments, international human rights organizations and NGOs at home and abroad and through the co-sharing of roles.

Seventh, human and civil rights education must be provided to North Korean residents. Voices demanding the dismantlement of political prison camps and promotion of human rights must come from inside North Korea, not only from outside. Opportunities must be provided to the North Korean judiciary to attend overseas human rights-related training programs, and efforts must be stepped up to reach the North Korean population through the media.¹⁶⁴⁾

164) The present radio programs for North Korean populations include human rights and democracy education. Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) is currently conducting a radio program for human rights education for North Koreans with help from Free North Korea Radio, Open North Korea Radio, Free Chosun Radio and Far East Radio Service for 5-10 minutes 2-3times a week.

Eighth, dialogue must be sustained between legal experts from both Koreas and assistance provided on legal matters. The political prison camps in North Korea are not part of official criminal action processes and violate not only the criminal law of North Korea but also international human rights norms in terms of arrest, investigation and imprisonment. This extra-judicial practice is partly attributable to the habits and customs of law enforcement officials, but principally to defects in North Korean legal and judicial systems per se. Accordingly, effort must be made through contact with North Korean law enforcement officials at conferences of lawyers and judicial officials to improve those laws and judicial systems. In particular, institution of the principle of *nulla poena*, notions of arrest warrants, court proceedings featuring legal representation and elimination of the system of guilt-by-association are necessary steps toward ending prison camps and promoting human rights.

Ninth, an effort must be made to seek the freedom of prisoners (*Freikauf*) through secret negotiations with the North Korean authorities. Large numbers of the prisoners are former South Korean residents including those kidnapped by North Korea, separated families or South Korean prisoners of war. In particular, the South Korean government must make every possible effort to obtain the freedom of these kidnap victims and South Korean prisoner of war. As in the case of *Freikauf*¹⁶⁵⁾ in the former West Germany, special efforts must also be aimed at obtaining the release of particular prisoners or specific

165) In the past, the government of West Germany was in secret negotiations with the government of East Germany and paid for freedom of some political prisoners to be released from the East Germany on condition of prohibition of their political activity in the West Germany and elsewhere.

former prisoners through negotiation with the North Korean authorities.

Tenth, the dismantlement of political prison camps should be demanded in exchange for large scale economic assistance and measures for the reduction of threats to the security of the North Korean state. The North Korean authorities consider most of the prisoners in the prison camps to be a threat to the stability of the North Korean system. Therefore, it may be necessary to eliminate elements threatening the political stability of North Korea. South Korea is in a position to demand the end of the political prison camps in exchange for large scale economic assistance and reduction of elements threatening North Korea. To move toward these objectives, dialogue between the two Koreas may proceed in secrecy. The means by which to dismantle the political prison camps in a short period of time is in short supply; nevertheless, hopes for a grand solution remain.

Finally, the South Korean government must be firm in its commitment to end the political prison camps in North Korea in coordination with Korean and international NGOs and international organizations via a system of co-sharing roles and, at the same time, make every possible effort to persuade, put pressure on and induce North Korean leaders to follow the right path.

4) Domestic and International NGOs.

We suggest that South Korean and international NGOs must:

First, they must perform the role of collection and distribution of the necessary information and data. The international community and South Korean civil society are in a position to more actively implement a variety

of operations aimed at stopping the political prison camps in North Korea. South Korean NK human rights NGOs must continue researching and surveying the reality in North Korea on the basis of testimony from North Koreans and keeping the international community up to date. This will provide the foundation stone for activities by NGOs and international organizations to solve the problem of political prison camps in North Korea. At present, NGOs in South Korea advocating North Korean human rights include Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (with North Korean Human Rights Archives under its umbrella), Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights and NKnet, while NGOs organized by North Korean defectors include Committee for the Democratization of North Korea and Free the NK Gulag.

Their activities, however, are limited by financial constraints, lack of expertise and failure to coordinate. Nevertheless, they will be in position to play a pivotal role in ending political prison camps in North Korea once a system is in place for the coordination of their activities. In particular, those North Koreans with experience in the camps can play a vital role if an ICC indictment comes to pass.

Second, cooperation between international organizations, governments and NGOs must be strengthened. Such cooperation will enable them to bring and sustain effective pressure on the North Korean authorities and raise international awareness of the issue.

NGOs must make the issue of political prison camps in North Korea a special agenda item within the UN human rights regime based on surveys and academic reports on the camps. It is encouraging to note that the activities of the UN Rapporteur have been largely based on activities by

NGOs, an indication of the effectiveness and possibility of such efforts. Governments are often constrained in handling human rights issues because of national interests that they must pursue. However, NGOs are in the position of being able to make a firm and continuing effort for the dismantlement of North Korean political prison camps. In particular, the present efforts being made by South Korean NGOs to bring the issue to the attention of the ICC and campaign for the release of particular kidnap victims and their families¹⁶⁶⁾ are likely to have a positive impact in raising international public opinion. Holding seminars, symposiums, exhibitions, press conferences and publishing information will all help to achieve this goal.

Third, North Korean human rights NGOs must implement systematic programs for human rights victims and provide assistance for their support in South Korea. The North Korean authorities have refused to make public the existence and operation of political prison camps, but the number of former prisoners arriving in South Korea is increasing all the time. Among North Korean refugees, these people suffered the most from and are the greatest victims of human rights violations. Most of them complain of post traumatic stress disorder and physical pains resulting from torture and other human rights abuses during their imprisonment; therefore, relief and assistance for the self-support of former prisoners are a first step towards ending the camps and promoting human rights. Assistance for

166) The recent campaign in South Korea for the release of Oh Kil-nam's family from the Camp No. 15 at Yodok, North Korea, is picking up support in South Korea and internationally. He was a former South Korean student in the West Germany, went to North Korea years ago but escaped from North Korea leaving his wife (Shin Suk-cha) and two daughters.

their relief and social adaptation must be provided through coordination between psychology, psychiatry and social welfare experts. This assistance should be facilitated with the support and assistance of professional civil organizations.

3. Tasks and Responsibilities of North Korea

The North Korean authorities are solely responsible for the operation of the political prison camps and human rights violations taking place within them. The system of political prison camps was instituted to maintain the totalitarian system and the hereditary system of political power from Kim Il-sung to his son Kim Jong-il, and has been in operation ever since. It appears most unlikely that North Korea would agree to the immediate summary closure of the political prison camps, one of the most important means by which to protect its political system, without which there is no guarantee of systemic security.

Nevertheless, North Korea must:

First, North Korea must dismantle the system of political prison camps to ensure human rights and democracy for North Koreans, and implement reforms and open its doors. North Korea must gradually transform into a democracy recognizing human rights, a first step in protecting the right of North Koreans to life. The basis of political prison camps has been secret operation and has never been included in any law pertaining to judiciary processes for criminal actions. This is an admission by the North Korean authorities of their lack of legitimacy, a situation unacceptable by any judicial system in a civilized society. Therefore, the North Korean authorities must end the system, release all prisoners who have been detained without trial, re-examine the cases of prisoners who are serving a prison term under a court sentence and transfer prisoners to official prisons where necessary.

Second, the North Korean authorities must improve legal and judicial

systems to prevent a recurrence of political prison camps. North Korea has all the necessary laws, judicial systems and legal processes to deal with criminal actions. There are no legal grounds for the operation of political prison camps and imprisonment of prisoners in those camps. Recently, criminal code and constitution of North Korea have been amended to include provisions for the protection of human rights. Nevertheless, no reference has been made to political prison camps. Most prisoners in the camps are imprisoned under guilt-by-association without due process. Furthermore, it is noted that there is no information on who makes the decision and what the procedures and legal basis are when prisoners are arrested and imprisoned. In cases of birth within a camp, the prisoner must spend his/her entire life in the camp as a prisoner through no fault of his own. This is due to legal inertia in the judicial and criminal action process. Therefore, the principle of *nulla poena* and systems of court process with legal representation must be instituted and political interference and arbitrary punishment eliminated. The operation of political prison camps and arrest of prisoners, in particular, are not judicial decisions, rather a political decision by the state security agency and Korean Workers' Party for the protection of the political system and hereditary system of political power. Therefore, a major change is required for the institution and application of universally accepted judicial norms.

Third, the North Korean authorities must observe their own laws. In spite of a variety of shortcomings in the legal system, it is clear that the most serious violations of human rights, including arrest and imprisonment in political prison camps, would be considerably ameliorated

if North Korea were simply to strictly observe its own laws. In fact, the principle of *nulla poena*, right to a fair trial and assistance of a lawyer, arrest warrants, stipulations as to the length of preliminary investigations and other necessary human rights protection provisions are all provided for in North Korean law but not observed in practice.

Fourth, North Korea must observe international covenants on human rights it has signed and ratified. North Korea has acceded to A and B of the International Covenant for Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Convention on the Rights of Child. North Korea is obliged to observe these international human rights instruments, which are binding in North Korean courts. It goes without saying that North Korean observance of international human rights covenants it has acceded to would make it impossible for political prison camps to exist in North Korea.

Fifth, North Korea must make public the legal grounds for the establishment and operation of political prison camps and related rules and regulations, and treat prisoners in accordance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Accordingly, all imprisonment facilities, conditions and operational systems must be brought up to international standards, political prison camps must be closed and prisoners under court-approved sentences must be transferred to official prisons.

Sixth, human rights education for law enforcement officials and citizens must be strengthened, and human rights education provided for all prisoners. In particular, human rights education for officers of the State Security Agency and political prison camps must be given special attention

and importance. Guidelines to North Korean laws must be published and distributed to the people of North Korea. Access to international human rights training programs must be provided to North Korean law enforcement officials at the same time.

4. Conclusions

It has been confirmed that human rights are violated, massively and systematically, in political prison camps in North Korea. Most camps are maximum security camps, full of violence and torture, where prisoners are imprisoned for life without judiciary process.

North Korea is duty bound to dismantle the system of political prison camps and release prisoners and their families immediately. However, the immediate dismantlement of camps would be a great burden on the government of North Korea given that the system of political prison camps has a special political and, at the same time, industrial implication. It is assumed that the North Korean leadership may attempt to execute all political prisoners in the event of crisis for the North Korean regime. We must not forget that over 100,000 political prisoners may simply perish unless we stop political prison camps in North Korea today.

Accordingly, a new strategy is needed to improve human rights in the camps immediately but without representing a threat to the government of North Korea, as the top priority is to swiftly improve the conditions in the camps in terms of food rations, forced labor, inadequate medical provisions and cruel and arbitrary punishments. The system of political prison camps in North Korea is the most critical example of human rights violations in North Korea in terms of the absence of judicial processes, punishment of entire families, violation of the right to life, forced labor and degrading conditions for prisoners. The issue of political prison camps in North Korea is recognized as among the most urgent situations and a barometer by which to measure the improvement of human rights in North Korea. It is the duty and responsibility of North Korea, South Korea,

international and South Korean citizens and international human rights organizations to rescue the innocent victims living in horrendous conditions in the camps as we speak.

Accordingly, improving the situation in the camps and rescuing prisoners from life-threatening circumstances must receive the greatest degree of international attention and be treated as an urgent international agenda item. To this end, South Korean and international civil society, the South Korean government and UN human rights regime must cooperate to develop a new wisdom through which to solve the issue, while North Korea is strongly urged to end the camps and pay greater attention to the protection of the rights of prisoners in all internment facilities within its borders.

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