

WOMEN AND POLICE CLASH IN DPRK MARKETS

Recently, North Korea passed a measure prohibiting women younger than 49 from selling goods in markets, leading to clashes between police enforcing the rule and younger women wanting to work in markets.

The March 19th newsletter from 'Good Friends', an organization providing aid for North Korea, reported that on February 5th in Haeju, South Hwanghae Province, women who were not allowed to enter the local market and so were selling goods on a nearby corner physically clashed with police. This reportedly led to the arrest and detention of 9 people.

The newsletter reported, "The women held at the police station were subjected to harsh interrogation as to 'who was the ringleader', and after being subjected to four days of torture, one who could no longer hold out confessed to being the ringleader and was sent to a detention center, while the remaining women were all released."

North Korean authorities announced the measure restricting women under 49 from selling goods in markets after December 1st last year, and that measure is being enforced not only in Pyongyang, but in rural areas as well.

According to Good Friends, "Just like other cities, Haeju City has received absolutely no food rations since March," and "Women from households barely managing regular meals through market trading are being reduced to the weakest level by North Korean authorities' prohibition on trading."

It follows that in Haeju City, either authorities recognize that if these women can not sell in the markets their families will starve to death and so turn a blind eye to their activities, or these women, prevented from selling in markets, will continue to clash with authorities.

The newsletter also reported, “On March 3, in Chungjin City, North Hamkyung Province, organized protests by women prevented from market activities by the new regulations broke out, and Chungjin City authorities are now allowing all women, with no exception, to sell goods in markets.”

Immediately following organized protests by these women, Chungjin City officials reported the disturbances, but no policies to deal with the issue were forthcoming, and so it appears that all women, with no exception, are now allowed to conduct market activities.