

Some North Korean Refugees Are So Depressed By Their Life In The South That They Go Back North

For many of its citizens, North Korea isn't a great place to live. You know very little of the outside world, you go hungry, and there's always a possibility that you (and three generations of your family) could end up in a labor camp system.

As such, its not that surprising that some North Koreans attempt to escape, and many do, beginning an dangerous journey by crossing over the border into China and seeking asylum in South Korea. As of 2011, there were thought to be 23,000 North Korean refugees living in the South.

What is surprising, however, is that some people go back to North Korea. According to reports in Joongang Daily, as many as 100 "double defectors" may have crossed back over the Chinese border this year to return to their home state. "Double defectors" have even been used in press conferences by the North to tell the people of the hermit state of the horrors that await people in the south.

Today at NKNews, Gianluca Spezza writes about the economic, social, and personal reasons many that could cause North Koreans to return home. It makes for a depressing read. Spezza points out that many North Korean refugees are either poor originally, or sometimes a member of the richer elite. Both are often dismayed to find that their relative position in society is worse in South Korea than it is in the North. Half of North Koreans in South Korea are currently registered as unemployed, for example, often because they lack any employable skill.

In addition to economic reasons, many find themselves unable to cope with the faster pace of life in South Korea, and they are often looked down upon by their new Southern neighbours. Recent North Korean government actions have led South Koreans to view Northern refugees with suspicion, and language differences mark them out and create problems communicating. Sadly, even simple social practices such as dating, can seem impossible for North Koreans, Spezza writes, and some simply decide they were better off North of the border.