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## **SOUTH KOREA DEPORTS NORTH FISHERMEN WHO KILLED 16 CREW BEFORE FLEEING SOUTHWARD**

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The Japan Times (8 November 2019)

In an extremely unusual case, South Korea deported two North Korean fishermen on Thursday after determining they had killed 16 other crew members on their boat and then fled to South Korean waters, Seoul officials said.

South Korea has a policy of accepting North Koreans who want to resettle in the South to avoid political oppression and poverty at home. This weeks deportations were the first South Korea has carried out of any North Korean who came to the South since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, according to Seouls Unification Ministry, which deals with North Korean affairs.

The two North Koreans, both men in their 20s, were captured in their boat south of the countries eastern sea border last Saturday, according to the Unification Ministry. It said a South Korean investigation later found the two had killed 16 colleagues, including the captain.

Ministry spokesman Lee Sang-min said South Korea decided to expel the two fishermen to North Korea because they were heinous criminals who could not be recognized as refugees under international laws. Lee said the two were sent back through the Koreas land border.

According to the South Korean investigation, 19 people were aboard the squid fishing boat when it left the Norths Kimchaek port on its east coast in August. While fishing in waters near Russia and elsewhere, the two men collaborated with another crew member and killed the captain, who they said had abused them. The trio later killed 15 other fishermen on the boat to cover up their action.

The three went back to Kimchaek port with the intention of moving to another region of North Korea. But the third fisherman was arrested near the port, and the two fled North Korea using the same boat, the Unification Ministry said, citing the government investigation.

When their boat sailed across the sea border last week, they were chased by a South Korean navy ship which fired warning shots at them. After two days, the two were captured by the South Korean navy on Saturday. They later told investigators they wanted to resettle in South Korea, but South Korean authorities determined they only wanted to avoid North Korean arrest and on Tuesday informed North Korea of the plan to deport them, the ministry said.

Observers say the men are likely to receive heavy punishment in North Korea, including possible execution.

Read more at: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/08/asia-pacific/south-korea-deports-north-koreans-who-killed-16/#.XcUWEzMzY2w>

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