People 'starving' in North Korea, 10 million need humanitarian aid, says UN Expert

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Tomas Ojea Quintana, UN special rapporteur on human rights in the DPRK, said an increasing number of families eat only twice a day, or eat only corn, and some are starving.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (C) speaks during the 13th Political Bureau meeting of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in an undisclosed location in North Korea.(AFP)

Geneva: A United Nations human rights expert voiced alarm on Tuesday at what he called â€œwidespread food shortages and malnutritionâ€• in North Korea, which have been exacerbated by a nearly five-month border closure with China and measures against COVID-19.

Tomas Ojea Quintana, U.N. special rapporteur on human rights in the Democratic Peopleâ€™s Republic of Korea (DPRK), urged the U.N. Security Council to â€œreconsider sanctionsâ€• on the isolated country so as to ensure the flow of food supplies.

â€œThere have been reports of an increase of homeless people in large cities â€“ including kotjebi (street children), and medicine prices have reportedly skyrocketed. An increasing number of families eat only twice a day, or eat only corn, and some are starving,â€• he said in a statement.

Elisabeth Byrs, spokeswoman of the U.N.â€™s World Food Programme (WFP), told a Geneva news briefing that the humanitarian situation in North Korea â€œremains bleakâ€•, with some 10 million, or 40% of the population, needing humanitarian aid.

- Reuters