

URGENT ACTION

EIGHT NORTH KOREANS AT RISK OF FORCIBLE RETURN

Eight North Korean refugees have been detained in China since mid-March 2017. If forcibly returned, they are at risk of persecution or other serious human rights violations, such as arbitrary detention, torture or other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and execution.

A group of eight North Koreans have been detained in North-eastern China since mid-March 2017 and are at imminent risk of being returned to North Korea. According to Human Rights Watch, the group was stopped by traffic police while travelling in Shenyang city in Liaoning province. The eight were then taken to the local police station after the officials realised they did not hold any valid identification documents.

The group contacted a Christian pastor, who had been following the group's travels, to ask for help after they had been brought to the station by the police. The pastor reported that as of mid-June, the group remained detained at the same police station and were at risk of imminent forcible repatriation.

Among the group are two women who said they had previously been sold to Chinese men and were beaten. Two other women suffered injuries and were not able to go to the hospital for treatment given their undocumented status in China.

The Chinese government considers North Koreans crossing the border without prior permission not as asylum seekers, but as irregular, economic migrants, and forcibly returns them to North Korea if caught. Although China is a state party to the UN Refugee Convention, it does not currently allow the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, access to North Koreans fleeing the country. Forcibly repatriated North Koreans are often subjected to arbitrary imprisonment, forced labour, torture or other ill-treatment, and possibly execution.

Please write immediately in English, Chinese or your own language urging the Chinese authorities to:

- Stop the forced return of any person to North Korea, including this group of eight detained North Koreans;
- Grant refugee status to those North Koreans who are entitled to it and to give them immediate access to the UNHCR ;
- Ensure the eight North Koreans are protected from torture and other ill-treatment while in detention and have prompt access to legal counsel of their choosing and any necessary medical treatment;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 AUGUST 2017 TO:

President

XI Jinping Guojia Zhuxi
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu, Beijingshi 100017,
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 6238 1025
Email: gov@govonline.cn
Salutation: Your Excellency

Director

Wang Dawei
Liaoning Public Security Department
No. 2 Qishanzhonglu
Huangguqu
Shenyangshi
Lianingsheng 110032
People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Director

And copies to:

China Office, UNHCR
1-2-1, Tayuan Diplomatic Office Building,
14 Liangmahe Nan Lu, Beijing 100600,
China
Telephone: (+86) 10 6532 6806
Fax: (+86) 10 6532 1647
Email: chibe@unhcr.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR LIU XIAOMING, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, 49-51 Portland Place W1B 1JL, 020 7299 4049, press_uk@mfa.gov.cn

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In February 2014 the UN Commission of Inquiry released *Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*. The report documents the systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in the country. Individuals or families in the DPRK fled the country to escape persecution for political or religious reasons, and they often had no choice but to cross the Sino-Korean border illegally for the desperate need of food and work.

Border controls in North Korea have reportedly been tightened in recent years since Kim Jong-un came to power in December 2011. The regime condemned people crossing the border without prior permission and threatened them with severe punishments. However, such crossings into China have not stopped.

The Chinese government considers North Koreans crossing the border without prior permission not as asylum seekers, but as irregular, economic migrants. If caught, they would be forcibly returned to North Korea. Forcibly repatriated individuals are often subject to arbitrary imprisonment, forced labour, torture or other ill-treatment, and possibly execution. It is reported that some repatriated women were even subject to degrading treatment, including forced abortions at detention facilities.

The principle of non-refoulement, codified in the Refugee Convention which China is a state party to, and in other numerous international human rights instruments binding on China prohibit the transfer of anyone to a place where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations. Amnesty International believes that anyone fleeing North Korea is entitled to international protection because they are at risk of serious human rights violations if returned to North Korea just for having left the country.

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