

URGENT ACTION

PASTOR RELEASED AFTER OVER TWO YEARS OF DETENTION

Lim Hyeon-soo, a 62 year old Canadian pastor, has been released from a North Korean labour camp after spending more than two and a half years in detention. Convicted of “plotting to overthrow the government” in 2015, he had been sentenced to life in prison with hard labour. The Canadian government has confirmed that Lim Hyeon-soo will soon be reunited with his family in Canada.

Lim Hyeon-soo was “released on sick bail” for “humanitarian reasons” on Wednesday, 9 August 2017. He had developed a host of health problems during detention including malnutrition, high blood pressure, arthritis, and stomach problems as a side effect of medicine that was not properly administered prior to his release.

Lim Hyeon-soo has made more than 100 trips to North Korea on humanitarian missions since 1997. He was convicted of “plotting to overthrow the government” and sentenced to life in prison in hard labour in December 2015. Detained since January 2015, the Canadian pastor has spent the past two and a half years in detention back and forth between the labour camp and a hospital for his health problems.

The North Korea authorities have in recent years sentenced individuals, including foreign nationals, to long prison terms of ten years or more. The sentences are often handed down through judicial procedures that fall short of international fair trial standards. Individuals have been convicted of crimes such as “subversion” and “espionage” often despite a lack of evidence. Religious personnel have also accounted for a significant proportion of victims receiving these long sentences.

International civil society and governments have been pressuring North Korea to ensure that Lim Hyeon-soo receives adequate medical care and to allow him to return to Canada, while his family spokesperson thanks the global community for the continued support.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA 139/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa24/6481/2017/en/>

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