

URGENT ACTION

TV PRODUCER HELD IN NORTH KOREA FOR 50 YEARS

Hwang Won, a former TV producer from South Korea, was not allowed to return to his home country after arriving involuntarily to North Korea on a hijacked plane on 11 December 1969. Despite repeated requests from his family, the North Korean authorities have refused to disclose information regarding Hwang Won's vital status or whereabouts for the last 50 years. South Korean authorities must call on the North Korean authorities to provide accurate information on Hwang Won, who will turn 82 this year.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President of the Republic of Korea, Moon Jae-in
1 Cheongwadae-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul 03048
Republic of Korea
Email: president@president.go.kr,
webmaster@president.go.kr

Dear President Moon,

I am saddened to learn that Hwang Won, a former TV producer, has not returned for almost 50 years since 11 December 1969, when the airplane he was travelling on from the South Korean city of Gangneung to Seoul was hijacked to North Korea. While 39 passengers returned to South Korea in February 1970, 11 people, including Hwang Won, continued to be held in North Korea.

Hwang Won is among hundreds of individuals who have vanished in connection with illegal operations of North Korean agents after the Korean War. Despite repeated requests from his son Hwang In-cheol, the North Korean authorities have refused to confirm the whereabouts of Hwang Won, or whether he is alive or dead. Through piecing together limited information provided in recent years by a broker who took people out of North Korea, Hwang In-cheol has strong reasons to believe that his father is still alive.

If indeed he is alive, Hwang Won will turn 82 years old this year. Time is running out for him to be reunited with his family in South Korea. With the visit to Seoul of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un approaching, I ask you to help end the enforced disappearances in North Korea of Hwang Won and all other persons of South Korean origin, which constitutes ill-treatment of both the disappeared and their families.

I urge you to ask Kim Jong-un or relevant North Korean authorities to:

- ***immediately investigate the cases of Hwang Won who may have been held in North Korea against their will and provide accurate information regarding their fate without further delay; and***
- ***respect the right of these individuals to return to South Korea, if it is their preference to do so.***

I also urge you to promptly initiate a review of the procedures concerning inter-Korean family reunions, so that the families of Hwang Won and others separated due to enforced disappearance are differentiated from other eligible candidates for reunion and are dealt with through effective measures that will help them find truth and redress.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Korean War (1950-53) caused a mass displacement of people and led to the involuntary separation of many families between the two sides of the inter-Korean border since the Armistice Agreement in 1953. The war, however, has not ended officially with the agreement. With the two Koreas still technically at war, North Korea has continued to employ tactics over the past few decades such as the abduction of South Koreans or persons of other nationalities, resulting in the enforced disappearance of these individuals. The North Korean government even acknowledged the abduction of 13 Japanese nationals in 2002, but only five of them were allowed to return to Japan.

Like Hwang Won, many of those held captive in North Korea were people with special skills. From information given by a broker who helped people who left North Korea contact their relatives back home and sometimes to take them out of the country, Hwang In-cheol understands that his father had worked in the North Korean state broadcasting agencies. However, according to testimonies, including those from former victims of abductions by North Korea, persons who are forcibly taken to North Korea are deprived of not only the right to leave the country, but also the right to move freely within the country. Most of them face the risk of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, a higher degree of surveillance from the state than other people in North Korea, as well as disadvantages in education and employment opportunities.

In 2000, the Ministry of Unification of South Korea published a list of 516 people who have disappeared as a result of alleged abduction by North Korea since the 1953 Armistice. Although a law requiring the government to clearly differentiate between “displaced persons” and “abductees” was also passed the same year, such distinction has been limited in practice. Indeed, although Hwang In-cheol and his father are included on the list of families separated on the two sides of the inter-Korean border that are eligible for reunions, both governments have done little to ascertain the situation of Hwang Won. The family reunion events are co-organized by the governments of the two Koreas, but they only take place sporadically, depending on the prevailing political situation between two governments. Only about 100 out of the more than 60,000 eligible families are reunited in each event, and only one person from the same hijacked flight Hwang Won was on has ever had a reunion with her family. The chance of Hwang In-cheol being able to confirm the status of his father only through these arranged reunions is thus extremely slim.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Korean

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 10 May 2019.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Hwang Won (he/him)