

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

10 August 2017

Index: ASA 24/6921/2017

North Korea: Pastor Lim Hyeon-soo released after more than two years of imprisonment

Amnesty International welcomes the release of Lim Hyeon-soo to receive urgent medical treatment. The Canadian pastor and humanitarian worker has been detained in North Korea for the past two and a half years. He was convicted of “plotting to overthrow the government” and sentenced to life in prison with hard labour in December 2015 after spending almost one year in detention.

The Canadian government has confirmed that Lim Hyeon-soo will be soon be reunited with his family in Canada. According to North Korean state media, Lim Hyeon-soo was released “on sick bail” for “humanitarian reasons”. He had developed a host of health problems including malnutrition, high blood pressure, arthritis, and stomach problems as a side effect of medicine that was not properly administered prior to his release.

International civil society and governments have been pressuring North Korea to release Lim Hyeon-soo and to allow him to return to Canada. His release took place amid high military tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and after the death of Otto Warmbier, an American student who was previously imprisoned in North Korea and returned to the United States in a coma.

Amnesty International urges the North Korean government to release all individuals including foreign citizens who are currently detained, unless they are charged with a recognizable criminal offense through judicial procedures that meet international fair trial standards. The North Korean government must not subject detainees to torture, forced labour or other ill-treatment, and must ensure that they have prompt access to adequate nutrition and any medical treatment they require.