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North Korea sentences US citizen to 15 years of hard labour

North Korea's Supreme Court in Pyongyang has reportedly sentenced a US national of Korean origin to 15 years of hard labour in the country's infamous prison camps today after finding him guilty of various unspecified crimes against the nation.

Pae Jun-Ho (also known as Kenneth Bae), 44, was arrested in November 2012 in the north-eastern port city of Rason, a special economic zone near North Korea's border with China. He had been operating as a tour guide for a group of five European nationals, who were immediately deported. Since his arrest, he had been held in solitary confinement and had limited consular support.

Rajiv Narayan, Amnesty International's North Korea Researcher, said:

“The North Korean justice system makes a mockery of international fair trial standards – this case appears to be no exception. Kenneth Bae had no access to a lawyer. It is not even known what he was charged with.”

“Kenneth Bae should be released, unless he is charged with an internationally recognisable criminal offence and retried by a competent, independent and impartial court”.

“If sent to one of those detention facilities, Bae would be subject to torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, including forced hard labour and denial of food as punishment, and even the possibility of extrajudicial execution.”

“Many prisoners also die from the sheer hardships of day to day life in the camps, including due to inadequate access to food or basic medical supplies.”