

URGENT ACTION

FAMILIES FACE FORCIBLE RETURN TO NORTH KOREA

A group of around 29 people, including a one-year-old baby, are at risk of being forcibly returned to North Korea after being detained in China. If returned to North Korea, they would be at serious risk of torture and other ill-treatment, forced labour and death.

Four North Korean families were detained by Chinese authorities in Shandong and Yunnan provinces between 15 and 17 July, along with six people who were assisting them. They were discovered on an established route to South-East Asia. According to media reports, they have already been taken to a detention centre on the border with North Korea. If returned to North Korea, illegal border-crossers typically face imprisonment, torture, and other ill-treatment, including forced labour.

The North Koreans arrested are believed to be family members of senior military officials in North Korea, and among those helping them was a North Korean who has resettled in South Korea and holds a South Korean passport.

Although China is a state party to the UN Refugee Convention, it has prevented the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, from having access to North Koreans in China. International law prohibits the forcible return either directly or indirectly of any individuals to a country where they are at risk of persecution, torture or other ill-treatment, or death. Amnesty International believes that all North Koreans in China are entitled to refugee status because of the threat of these human rights violations if they were to be returned.

Please write immediately in Chinese, English or your own language:

- Call on the Chinese authorities not to forcibly return those detained to North Korea;
- Urge them to allow those detained to travel to South Korea, or seek asylum in China or other countries;
- Call on them to provide the North Koreans access to the UNHCR.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 SEPTEMBER 2014 TO:

President

Xi Jinping
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu, Beijingshi 100017
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 6238 1025
Salutation: Your Excellency

Premier

Li Keqiang
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu, Beijingshi 100017,
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 6238 1025
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

WANG Yi Buzhang, Waijiaobu
2 Chaoyangmen Nandajie
Chaoyang District, Beijingshi 100701
People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 65591516 or 65961109 or
65962660
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

North Koreans are not allowed to travel abroad without state permission however, facing significant risks, many do cross the border into China every year without permission. China considers all undocumented North Koreans to be economic migrants, rather than asylum-seekers, and returns them to North Korea if they are caught. However, international law prohibits the forcible return either directly or indirectly of any individuals to a country where they are at risk of persecution, torture or other ill-treatment, or death.

Kim Jong-un who came to power after his father's death in December 2011 has increased border controls, condemned border crossers and threatened them with severe punishment, including death. On 19 June North Korean state news published a statement by the Ministry of People's Security vowing to "take substantial measures to physically remove despicable human scum" who leave the country without permission – an act the North Korean government views as treason. According to South Korean government figures, there has been a significant drop in the number of North Koreans reaching South Korea. In 2011, over 2,700 North Koreans escaped to South Korea, in both 2012 and 2013, the number went down to just over 1,500.

In February 2014 the UN Commission of Inquiry for human rights in North Korea released its report, which documents the systematic, widespread and grave violations of human rights in the country. Among the violations investigated were the right to food, political prison camps, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, discrimination, freedom of expression, right to life, freedom of movement and enforced disappearances.

The North Korean authorities refuse to recognize or grant access to international human rights monitors, including Amnesty International and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in North Korea. On-going restrictions on access for independent monitors, intergovernmental and humanitarian organizations impede efforts to assess the human rights situation in the country. Information that does emerge mainly through North Korean living outside North Korea points to widespread and systematic violations of human rights, including severe restrictions on freedom of association, expression and movement, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment resulting in death, and executions.

Name: A group of 35 people

Gender m/f: Both

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