

URGENT ACTION

NINE TEENAGERS FORCIBLY RETURNED TO N. KOREA

Nine North Korean teenagers have been forcibly returned to North Korea where they are at serious risk of arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance, forced labour and possible death.

Nine North Koreans, aged between 14 and 19, were arrested in Laos on 10 May, detained for illegally crossing the border from China and forcibly returned to North Korea. They were reportedly taken from Laos' capital Vientiane to Kunming in China on 27 May and flown on the same day to Beijing. Reports suggest that the nine were then taken to Pyongyang in North Korea on 28 May. North Korean officials allegedly accompanied the nine from Vientiane to Pyongyang. The South Korean government appealed to Chinese and Laos authorities to send the nine teenagers to South Korea.

North Koreans are prohibited from travelling abroad without state permission and recent crackdowns have made it increasingly difficult to cross the border into China and escape via a third country such as Laos or Thailand. China considers all undocumented North Koreans to be economic migrants and returns them if caught. Laos typically detains undocumented North Koreans found in Laos, but has previously allowed them to travel on to South Korea.

The nine North Korean teenagers are: Young Won (male aged 19) Moon Chul and, JUNG Gwang Young (both male and aged 18), LEE Gwang Hyuk, PARK Gwang Hyuk and YOO Gwang Hyuk (all male and aged 17), RYU Chul Yong (male aged 16) JANG Hae Ri (female aged 15 and ROH Ae Ji (female, aged 14).

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

- Call on the North Korean authorities to ensure that no one is detained or prosecuted for leaving North Korea, and that the nine North Koreans named are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment, subjected to forced labour, enforced disappearance or to the death penalty;
- Call on North Korean authorities to disclose the whereabouts of these nine persons;
- Urge the North Korean authorities to abolish the requirement for permission to travel internally and abroad in compliance with international obligations

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 JULY 2013 TO KIM JONG-UN, SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE KOREAN PEOPLE'S ARMY, CARE OF:

Ambassador of the Permanent Mission
of the Democratic People's Republic of
Korea to the Office of the United Nations
in New York

Mr Sin Son-ho
Permanent Mission of the Democratic
People's Republic of Korea in New York
820 Second Ave, 13th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA
Fax: +1 212 972 3154
Email: dpr.korea@verizon.net
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Ambassador of the Permanent Mission
of the Democratic People's Republic of
Korea to the Office of the United Nations
in Geneva

Mr So Se-pyong
Chemin de Plonjon 1
1207 Geneva
Switzerland
Fax: +41 22 786 0662
Email: mission.korea-dpr@ties.itu.int
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

And copies to:

Minister of People's Security
Choe Bu-il
Ministry of People's Security
Pyongyang
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Twitter: .@uriminzok (North Korean
official twitter account)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kim Jong-un who came to power after his father's death in December 2011 has reportedly increased border controls, condemned border-crossers and threatened them with severe punishments. The result 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 2012 the number dropped to around 1,500.

North Koreans who are forcibly returned typically face harsh punishment, including arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and possible execution.

In March 2013 the UN Human Rights Council voted to establish a Commission of Inquiry into human rights violations in North Korea. Among the violations to be investigated are 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.

Laos is not a state party to the UN Refugee Convention. Although China is, it has not permitted the UN refugee agency, (the UNHCR) who have offices in Beijing, to gain access to the border areas where most North Koreans fleeing the country reside. 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 who flee North Korea are entitled to see refugee status because of the threat of these human rights violations if they are returned.

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. Ongoing 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: Young Won (male aged 19) Moon Chul and JUNG Gwang Young (both male and aged 18), LEE Gwang Hyuk, PARK Gwang Hyuk and YOO Gwang Hyuk (all male and aged 17), RYU Chul Yong (male aged 16) JANG Hae Ri (female aged 15) and ROH Ae Ji (female aged 14)
Gender m/f: Seven males and two females

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