

URGENT ACTION

YOUNG NORTH KOREANS FEARED EXECUTED

Two North Koreans who were forcibly returned to North Korea from Laos in May 2013 are reported to have been executed. Seven others arrested with them are believed to have been sent to a prison camp, where they would be at risk of torture, forced labour and other ill-treatment, and death.

Moon Chul and another unnamed person were reportedly executed in August or September 2014, according to 'Forget-me-not' (Mool-mang-cho), a non-profit organization that provides education to North Koreans who arrive in South Korea. The seven other young people who were also forcibly returned from Laos are reported to have been sent to the Kaechon political prison camp, otherwise known as Camp 14, where they would be at risk of torture, forced labour, inadequate food rations, and other ill-treatment, as well as unhygienic living conditions.

The nine North Koreans, aged between 14 and 19 at the time, were arrested in Laos on 10 May 2013 for illegally crossing the border from China. They were reportedly taken from Vientiane in Laos to Kunming in China and then onto Beijing, before being flown to Pyongyang in North Korea on 28 May. The South Korean government appealed unsuccessfully to the Chinese and Laos authorities to send the nine teenagers to South Korea.

In June 2013, the teenagers appeared on a television programme in North Korea, where they were seen speaking about their experience while outside the country, claiming that they had been abducted and were being taken to South Korea, and saying how 'pleased they were to be rescued and returned to North Korea'. This is consistent with other reports that North Koreans who are forcibly returned are coerced into appearing in such interviews and giving false accounts, to be used as propaganda and a deterrent to others considering crossing the border.

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

- Call on the authorities to immediately provide information on the fate of the nine North Koreans (named overleaf) who were forcibly returned from Laos in May 2013, including confirmation of any executions;
- Urge them to release any of the nine people if they are being detained, and ensure they are not subjected to torture, forced labour, other ill-treatment, or to the death penalty;
- Call on them to remove the requirement for permission to travel internally and abroad, in compliance with international obligations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 JANUARY 2014 TO:

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

Mr Ja Song-nam
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

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. This is the first update of UA 141/14. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA24/006/2013/en>

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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 since then. There has been a significant drop in the number of North Koreans reaching South Korea in the last years. In 2011, over 2,700 North Koreans escaped to South Korea, in 2012 and 2013 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 investigated were those concerning 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 a state party, it has not permitted the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which has 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 serious risk of human rights abuses, including persecution, torture or other ill-treatment. Amnesty International believes that anyone fleeing North Korea is entitled to international protection because they are at serious risk of grave human rights violations for having left the country.

The North Korean authorities refuse to recognize or grant access to international human rights monitors, including the Commission of Inquiry, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in North Korea, or Amnesty International. These 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.

The Commission of Inquiry in its report in February 2014 documented widespread forced labour, deliberate starvation, executions, torture, rape, and infanticide, and concluded that the gravity, scale, and nature of the human rights violations in North Korea are "without parallel in the contemporary world." On 18 November a committee of the UN General Assembly affirmed a resolution condemning North Korea for systemic, widespread and gross human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, and encouraging the UN Security Council to take appropriate action to ensure accountability, including through consideration of referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court.

Name: Young Won (m), Moon Chul (m), Jung Gwang Young (m), Lee Gwang Hyuk (m), Park Gwang Hyuk (m) and Yoo Gwang Hyuk (m), Ryu Chul Yong (m) Jang Hae Ri (f) and Roh Ae Ji (f)

Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 141/14 Index: ASA 24/008/2014 Issue Date: 5 December 2014