

ACTS OF BETRAYAL



THE CHALLENGE
OF PROTECTING
NORTH KOREANS
IN CHINA

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NOTE ON THE PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographs that accompany this report are by Greg Constantine from his exhibit entitled, "A Matter of Exposure: The Continuing Struggle of North Koreans in Asia." They depict North Korean refugees who spent time in China but who were subsequently able to make their way to third countries, where their photographs were taken. The individuals portrayed in Mr. Constantine's photos were not interviewed by Refugees International.

Cover Photo:

Chinese authorities have made it increasingly difficult for human rights organizations to operate in China. Because of these strains, refugees become separated not only from their sources of support and protection but also from their families. This woman's daughter is missing somewhere in China. The last time she spoke with her was six years ago.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	I
Introduction	5
The Scope of the Problem	5
The Motivation for Leaving	6
The Situation in China	7
Treatment Upon Deportation	II
The Case for Refugee Status for North Koreans in China	13
Protection for North Koreans in China	15
South Korean Policy	16
United States Policy and the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004	18
Recommendations	19
Notes	22
Appendix: Interviews between Refugees International and North Korean Refugees	23



A human rights volunteer holds the North Korean ID card of a refugee in her mid-thirties who had recently been captured and imprisoned while trying to escape from China. The small group of refugees she was traveling with was arrested by the Chinese police only a few days before they were to cross out of China. The entire group was put into prison.

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“For the people in North Korea, crossing the national border is not a simple act for better living. It is considered as an ultimate resistance to the regime, on the same order as suicide. The state has indoctrinated the population rather successfully up to the level of a quasi-religious community. Thus, crossing the border means an act of secession, an act of betrayal, and the ultimate crime.”

– Chung Byung-Ho, South Korean anthropologist

<p>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</p> <p>North Koreans fleeing deprivation and political oppression in their homeland have no choice but to cross the border into the People’s Republic of China. The exodus, which increased substantially with the advent of famine in North Korea in the mid-90s, presents acute humanitarian and human rights dilemmas to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government of China, which must assure its security and the integrity of its borders while fulfilling its obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees; • The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which is prevented by the Chinese from assessing the situation for North Koreans in China directly; • The government of South Korea, which, while willing to accept North Koreans who reach South Korean consulates as refugees, is not proactive in providing protection for North Koreans in China for fear of offending the Chinese and North Korean governments; • The government of the United States, which, while concerned about the situation of North Koreans in China, is unwilling to make their treatment a major point of discussion in its ongoing political and human rights dialogue with the Chinese government. <p>The actual number of North Koreans in China is unknown. In its 2005 report on the status of North Korean asylum seekers, the U.S. State Department estimates that the current number is between 30,000 and 50,000.</p> <p>The primary motivation for North Koreans to leave their country is survival. China considers all North Koreans entering the country to be economic migrants, but this does not do justice to the level of suffering and deprivation that they experience. The North Koreans interviewed by Refugees International (RI) in 2003 and 2004 were almost all facing extreme circumstances when they left their homeland: food deprivation as the result of the collapse of the Public Distribution System, which supplied the basic food basket to North Korean families until the mid-90s famine; loss of employment as state enterprises ceased to function; death of family members in the famine, which shattered the support networks for the individual; health problems, either personal or of a family member, which led the individual to seek money for medicines in China. The vast majority of the North Koreans that RI interviewed were from North Hamgyong province, one of the poorest provinces in the country and one deliberately cut off from national and international food assistance during the famine as part of a “triage” strategy to husband scarce food resources.</p> <p>The lives of North Koreans in China are ones of constant fear of arrest and deportation. They have no good options to live freely and meet their basic needs, and the few courageous individuals and organizations seeking to provide protection and assistance, whether Korean-Chinese, South Korean, or the rare few from outside the region, are themselves under constant pressure from the Chinese authorities to curtail their activities or risk expulsion.</p> <p>Men have a difficult time finding sanctuary in China because they need to support themselves outside the home and traveling to find day labor exposes them to police searches. The overwhelming majority of North Korean women seeking to stay in China establish relationships with Chinese men, either through brokers or directly, as a survival strategy. While North Korean women sometimes find compatible companions and end up in loving relationships, most are — in effect — trafficked, sold to Chinese men or to the owners of brothels and karaoke bars. North Korean children are also vulnerable. Only a small percentage has access to education. They stay at home or in shelters all day to avoid detection. They cannot work. They are constantly worried about their families, either in North Korea or China. In the poignant words of one teenage boy, “The situation here does not allow me to dream about my future.”</p>	<p>The North Koreans interviewed by RI in 2003 and 2004 were almost all facing extreme circumstances when they left their homeland...</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>1</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">An entire class of individuals is persecuted through the functioning of North Korea's political system.</p>	<p>There is a compelling case for the majority of North Koreans in China to be considered refugees. It rests on two pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The nature of the North Korean political system and its impact on access to public goods, especially food; 2. The North Korean treatment of those arrested and deported from China as mandated by the country's Criminal Code. <p>In North Korea access to public goods — food, education, health care, shelter, employment — cannot be separated from the all-pervasive system of political persecution. The North Korean population is divided into three classes: core, wavering, and hostile. The class status of each family is for life and transfers from generation to generation. Members of the hostile class are the last to receive entitlements, which is disastrous when a comprehensive welfare regime such as that established in North Korea collapses, as it did from 1994 onwards. Thus, an entire class of individuals is persecuted through the functioning of North Korea's political system. In this context, there is no meaningful way to separate economic deprivation from political persecution.</p> <p>In addition to the fundamental discrimination within the North Korean political system, the government further limits access to food and the economic means of survival through a variety of policies that control the lives of North Korean citizens. The government controls movement within the country by requiring travel passes to move outside one's community of origin. Since foraging for food or looking for employment wherever it can be found are essential survival strategies at times of food shortages, limits on travel further prevent North Korean citizens from meeting their basic needs. The government restricts the activities of international relief agencies, declaring certain areas of the country off limits and preventing independent monitoring of the relief supplies provided.</p> <p>Thus, most North Koreans crossing the border into China are fleeing state-sponsored denial of their human rights. Members of the "hostile class" and residents of areas deliberately cut off from international food assistance have an especially strong case to be considered refugees in the sense of fleeing targeted persecution. But the denial of basic rights extends more broadly, and the hunger that drives people to flee is the direct result of the political system that has been created by the leaders of the North Korean government. Not since Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge has a government succeeded in creating such an all-encompassing reality of oppression and restrictions on the basic rights of the majority of its citizens. North Koreans fleeing their country, therefore, have a case for refugee status as compelling as those fleeing Cambodia from 1975 to 1978.</p> <p>The second pillar of the case for considering North Koreans in China for refugee status is the treatment they receive upon deportation. Leaving the country without permission is illegal under the North Korean Criminal Code. North Koreans arrested in China and deported are subject to punishments ranging from several months in a labor training center to long prison terms and even execution for individuals suspected or confirmed to have met with foreigners or converted to Christianity with the intention of becoming missionaries inside North Korea. Conditions in the labor training centers and prisons are harsh. Food rations are minimal and the work consists of hard labor such as digging canals and constructing roads. No medical care is available and prisoners too ill to work are often released so that the individuals do not die while in custody.</p> <p>The universality of the punishment for leaving the country violates the fundamental right to leave one's own country, a right enshrined both in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13(2) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12(2), to which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) is a state party.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The case for granting refugee status to North Koreans in China is compelling, but without changes in the policy of the People’s Republic of China, it is impossible to achieve. Nonetheless, any principled campaign to protect North Koreans in China must start by convincing China to: 1) Honor its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol; and 2) allow UNHCR unimpeded access to North Koreans to review their overall situation and conduct individual status determinations. This would likely result in the granting of refugee status to a significant number of North Koreans.</p> <p>In the meantime, a practical, near-term protection strategy must first and foremost seek to establish greater security for North Koreans in China. China, South Korea, and the United States have policy options available to them which would significantly enhance the protection of North Koreans outside their country without jeopardizing regional or national security. Refugees International therefore recommends that:</p> <p>The Government of the People’s Republic of China:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take immediate humanitarian steps to protect North Koreans in China, including halting all deportations of North Koreans, except for those who commit criminal acts, and granting legal residence to the spouses of Chinese citizens and their children. • Take additional steps to normalize the situation for North Koreans in China, including the granting of indefinite humanitarian status and providing North Koreans with a special resident visa if they can demonstrate that they have employment and shelter. • Grant a one-time blanket amnesty, with permission to remain in the country, for all North Koreans in China. • Fulfill its obligations under the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and allow the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees unimpeded access to North Koreans in China to review their overall situation and conduct individual status determinations. China should abide by all UNHCR decisions regarding the granting of refugee status. <p>The Government of South Korea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become more proactive in its efforts to protect North Korean refugees by engaging with China to allow more North Koreans to seek asylum legally and making efforts to identify and protect North Koreans in other Southeast Asian countries. If these efforts are successful, South Korea should increase the number of North Koreans accepted as refugees. • Recognize that North Korean refugees need more time to adapt to life in South Korea and provide financial support to Korean non-governmental organizations for alternative education, vocational, and life skills programs. <p>The Government of the United States:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the context of its ongoing human rights dialogue with Beijing, press the Chinese government to adopt measures to protect North Koreans in China, starting with immediately halting arrests and deportations and granting legal residence to the spouses of Chinese citizens and their children. 	<p>A practical, near-term protection strategy must first and foremost seek to establish greater security for North Koreans in China.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>3</p>

- Quietly appoint a senior retired official of ambassadorial rank or higher who has credibility with the Chinese authorities to engage in informal discussions of this issue and convey consistent messages of concern about the plight of North Koreans in China.
- Move cautiously to implement the assistance provisions of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 for North Koreans outside their country, being careful to ensure that funding is provided on an appropriate scale for the operating environment in the border region. Avoid support for the establishment of camps for North Koreans in China or in neighboring countries.
- Offer technical support to the Government of South Korea in the area of refugee resettlement and integration. If the offer is accepted, the United States should support technical missions of U.S. non-governmental organizations with experience resettling isolated refugee populations.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees:

- Continue to press the Chinese government to fulfill its obligations under the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and allow UNHCR unimpeded access to North Koreans in China.
- Increase the agency's public profile on the issue of protecting North Koreans in China, taking advantage of opportunities for senior officials to raise concerns regarding protection and lack of access in UNHCR Standing Committee and Executive Committee meetings, open forums and the international media.

ACTS OF BETRAYAL

THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA

INTRODUCTION

North Koreans fleeing deprivation and political oppression in their homeland have no choice but to cross the border into the People's Republic of China. The exodus, which increased substantially with the advent of famine in North Korea in the mid-90s, presents acute humanitarian and human rights dilemmas to:

- The government of China, which must assure its security and the integrity of its borders while fulfilling its obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees;
- The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which is prevented by the Chinese from assessing the situation for North Koreans in China directly;
- The government of South Korea, which, while willing to accept North Koreans who reach South Korean consulates as refugees, is not proactive in providing protection for North Koreans in China for fear of offending the Chinese and North Korean governments;
- The government of the United States which, while concerned about the situation of North Koreans in China, is unwilling to make their treatment a major point of discussion in their ongoing political and human rights dialogue with the Chinese government.

The result is a frustrating stalemate that works to the detriment of North Koreans in China. In response, South Korean and international activists have organized North Korean asylum seekers to attempt to enter embassies in Beijing and, through a global information campaign, have raised awareness of their plight to the point that the United States Congress passed the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004. The Act

authorizes substantial U.S. engagement to protect North Korean refugees.

The success in placing the issue of North Korean asylum seekers on the political agenda, however, will not be matched by success in providing greater protection to North Koreans in China as long as the Chinese government is able to ignore its obligations under the Refugee Convention with no political cost. With neither South Korea nor the United States willing to stake valuable political capital on an improvement in the situation for North Koreans in China, the only near-term options likely to be effective involve small-scale, quiet changes in the Chinese approach, solutions that provide protection for North Korean asylum seekers while recognizing China's legitimate security concerns.

THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

The exact number of North Korean migrants and asylum seekers in China is unknown. The most common estimate is 100,000 – 300,000. This estimate is problematic, first because the range itself is so wide and second because there are no credible publicly available data to support any exact figure. While it is plausible that hundreds of thousands of North Koreans have crossed the border since the advent of the famine in 1994, a significant portion of the movement across the border into China has been and remains back and forth, with North Koreans seeking temporary employment or emergency relief from support networks, then returning to their homes with cash and goods to ensure the survival of their families.

Most North Koreans who come into China do so by crossing the Tumen River into Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, where 854,000 ethnic Koreans with Chinese citizenship reside.¹ The capital of Yanbian,

The United States, while concerned about the situation of North Koreans in China, is unwilling to make their treatment a major point of discussion ...with the Chinese government.

<p>The suffocating cradle-to-grave propaganda of the North Korean government ceaselessly portrays North Korea as paradise on earth...</p>	<p>Yanji, has a population of 350,000, of whom 210,000 are ethnic Koreans. These population figures suggest that the high end estimates for the numbers of North Koreans in China are implausible, since a large portion of the 300,000 North Koreans living illegally would find it difficult to live underground in a city of 350,000, and would be even more conspicuous in rural areas where strangers are easily identified.²</p> <p>An unpublished estimate of the number of North Koreans living in Yanbian in September 2002 was 20,000.³ In its report on the status of North Korean asylum seekers, prepared for the U.S. Congress in February 2005, the U.S. Department of State estimates the current number to be between 30,000 and 50,000.⁴</p> <p>The lack of data is symptomatic of the overall vulnerability of the North Korean population in China. The Chinese authorities themselves either have no concrete idea of the scope of the in-migration, or they refuse to make public data that may be available. Church networks and humanitarian organizations in Yanbian make some effort to monitor the scale of border crossings, but they do not publish these data for fear of jeopardizing their operations.</p> <p>THE MOTIVATION FOR LEAVING</p> <p>The North Korean criminal code prohibits unauthorized departure to another country. Article 117 of the 1999 North Korean Criminal Code mandated a punishment of a maximum of three years labor re-education for crossing the border without permission. Article 47 of the Code stated that “one who escapes to another country or to the enemy in betrayal of his motherland and people” will receive a punishment of a minimum of seven years labor re-education, and for serious violations the mandated sentence is execution and forfeiture of all property.⁵ These provisions violate the fundamental right to leave one’s own country, a right enshrined both in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13(2) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 12(2), to which the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) is a state party.⁶</p> <p>Beyond the force of the criminal code is the suffocating cradle-to-grave propaganda of the North Korean government, which ceaselessly portrays North Korea as paradise on earth and China, South Korea, and the United States as horrible places of poverty and injustice. To shatter the bounds of this all-encompassing construct and even consider the possibility of crossing the border into China is indeed tantamount to treason in the mind of a North Korean citizen. South Korean anthropologist Chung Byung-Ho provides the following summary description of the decision to leave the homeland:</p> <p><i>For the people in North Korea, crossing the national border is not a simple act for better living. It is considered as an ultimate resistance to the regime, on the same order as suicide. The state has indoctrinated the population rather successfully up to the level of a quasi-religious community. Thus, crossing the border means an act of secession, an act of betrayal, and the ultimate crime.</i>⁷</p> <p>Refugees International’s own interviews with North Korean refugees in Yanbian confirm this sense of crossing the border as treason. According to one young man from Onsung, interviewed in June 2004, “Escaping is a shameful experience.” A 48-year old woman from Ch’ongjin said that she felt like a traitor for coming to China. When she was arrested in China and deported, a 32-year-old woman from Hoeryong was initially placed in a National Security Jail, where the guards repeatedly told the captured defectors that “a man without a country is worse than a dog at a funeral.”⁸</p> <p>The primary motivation for North Koreans to leave their country is survival. China considers all North Korean entering the country to be economic migrants, but this does not do justice to the level of suffering and deprivation that North Koreans experience. The North Koreans interviewed by RI</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

in 2003 and 2004 were almost all facing extreme circumstances when they left their homeland: food deprivation as the result of the collapse of the Public Distribution System, which supplied the basic food basket to North Korean families until the mid-90s famine; loss of employment as state enterprises ceased to function; death of family members in the famine, which shattered the support networks for the individual; health problems, either personal or of a family member, which led the individual to seek money for medicines in China. The vast majority of the North Koreans that RI interviewed were from North Hamgyong province, one of the poorest provinces in the country and one deliberately cut off from national and international food assistance during the famine as part of a “triage” strategy to husband scarce food resources.⁹

Among the 65 people that RI interviewed in Yanbian, only two cited political reasons for leaving. One 28-year-old woman said that one reason she left, in addition to accompanying her brother, was that her family was in the “hostile class,” the lowest and least privileged of the three strata in the North Korean class system.¹⁰ A 43-year-old woman from Onsung said that her parents were suspect because her father was a businessman (who later defected to South Korea) and her mother had studied in Germany and Russia. Her parents were treated like political prisoners. As a result, her own background was suspect and she didn’t want to pass this down to her children, so she decided to leave for China.¹¹

THE SITUATION IN CHINA

As noted above, most North Koreans seeking sanctuary in China cross the Tumen River into Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture. With its large population of Korean-Chinese, Yanbian is a place where North Koreans have a chance of finding people with whom they can communicate and who are willing to provide them shelter and economic support.

Chinese policy towards North Korean asylum seekers is predicated on the assumption that all North Koreans crossing the border do so for economic reasons. They are treated as illegal migrants and subject to arrest and deportation. While China is a signatory of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as being a member of the Executive Committee of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), China does not permit the staff of the Beijing office of UNHCR to travel to Yanbian to assess the situation for North Koreans in the region. In addition to insisting that all North Koreans are economic migrants, China also justifies its treatment of North Koreans by citing sovereign treaties with the DPRK, including agreements from the early 1960s and 1986, which oblige China to deport illegal migrants and criminals seeking to cross the border from North Korea.¹²

While Chinese policy is to arrest and deport North Koreans as illegal economic migrants, the actual implementation of this policy at the local level in Yanbian is tempered by intra-ethnic solidarity that Korean-Chinese officials feel for their deprived brothers and sisters from North Korea. Further, many people in Yanbian either had direct experience or have been told of their parents’ experiences of having been sheltered and cared for in North Korea during the political chaos and economic dislocation brought on by the Cultural Revolution in China. These experiences lead them to consider the plight of North Koreans sympathetically.

Thus, for months at a time, if individuals cross the border to survive and do not present a threat to public safety, the local authorities and police tend to look the other way. Indeed, several North Koreans told Refugees International (RI) that they received assistance from border guards when they first crossed into China.¹³

Since activists began to raise the public profile of the plight of North Korean asylum seekers in China by organizing groups of

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NORTH KOREAN WOMEN IN YANBIAN

A 30-year-old woman originally crossed into China with an unknown North Korean man that she met at the border. “There are North Korean men who look for women along the border to sell them. The Chinese client pays. In the back of my mind I knew I was going to be sold.” She was taken to a Korean-Chinese man’s house and thought she might be sold so she escaped by going to the washroom and fleeing at night. She wandered around because she didn’t know where to go. She tried to go back to the house because she didn’t know where else to go, but she couldn’t find the house, so finally she came to the village where she currently lives.

The family she stayed with had two sons and wanted her to live with one of their sons. She married the 30-year-old. After four months of living with him she was arrested when the police came to the house one night.¹⁴

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A 28-year-old woman came to China with three other girls. One was her cousin and two were her friends. They were caught by a gang of 3-4 Chinese businessmen at the border and sold to southern China (south of Beijing). She was assigned to a Chinese man and stayed with him for two hours. He left for business and locked the door. She climbed the fence and fled from the countryside. She walked all night to the city. She doesn’t speak Chinese so she stopped talking, but she knew how to write the name of Kim Il Sung in Chinese, so she wrote it down and started showing the paper to people. One Chinese man figured out the situation and arranged for her to get food and a train ticket back to Yanbian. No services were required of her. In the meantime her cousin was brought to Yanji and also managed to escape the man she was with, but she was subsequently arrested and deported to North Korea.¹⁵

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A 25-year-old woman from Onsong said that when she arrived in China, someone introduced her to a Korean Chinese man. The person who introduced them didn’t get any money to introduce them. He had been married before for seven years. Her husband is 37. She has two daughters. During the day, she farms. When he gets drunk, he beats her. She said he has mental problems due to side effects from medication. Her biggest concern is her “emotional pain.” She has problems with her husband and her mother-in-law. She’s concerned about her safety.¹⁶

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A 26-year-old woman from Ch’ongjin crossed the border in 1999. She heard that if you went to China you would have enough to eat. She asked her cousin who had been in China to take her there. “There is a rumor that Chinese treat North Korea women like slaves or abuse them. I was afraid of businessmen that take women from North Korea.” So she pretended that she was a man and she went to a house that her cousin knew. She hid in a room for two days and asked the owner to marry her to a peasant. She said she didn’t want to be sold. The house found a man for her and brought him to see her so they could see if they liked each other and they did. [They remain in a stable relationship with a daughter who was one month old at the time of the interview.]¹⁷

“There are North Korean men who look for women along the border to sell them... In the back of my mind I knew I was going to be sold.”



Fearing arrest and repatriation back to North Korea, this woman and her young son could not leave their safe house for months at a time. As the situation grows more desperate for refugees living in China, many find they have no choice but to make the dangerous journey out of China.

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North Koreans to enter foreign embassy compounds in Beijing in the spring of 2002, local officials in Yanbian have had less and less leeway to tolerate the presence of North Koreans in the prefecture. The reaction of the national authorities to these events is to order the local government security forces to round up illegal North Korean migrants and deport them. During these periods rewards are offered for each individual arrested.¹⁸ In June 2004 in Yanji public notices were posted throughout the city imploring residents to be on the lookout for illegal North Korean migrants and to turn any in to local police for deportation.

Crime is also a factor in China's response to North Korean asylum seekers. Some North Koreans, including armed soldiers and border guards, are so desperate when they cross the border that they break into houses in villages close to the Tumen River, steal what they can find, and then cross

back into North Korea. Since gaining legal employment is impossible, a small minority of North Koreans remaining in Yanbian resort to crime to support themselves. The same 59-year-old woman who cited the initial kindness of Chinese guards when she first crossed the border in 1998 told RI that "North Koreans have committed many crimes and the Chinese don't feel sympathetic anymore."¹⁹

Regardless of the initial solidarity and support that North Koreans may receive, their lives in China are ones of constant fear of arrest and deportation. They have no good options to live freely and meet their basic needs, and the few courageous individuals and organizations seeking to provide protection and assistance, whether Korean-Chinese, South Korean, or the rare few from outside the region, are themselves under constant pressure from the Chinese authorities to curtail their activities or risk expulsion.

<p>The employer was kind, and she allowed the three kids and mother to hide in a storage area (about the size of a queen bed) for a week.</p>	<p>Men have a difficult time finding sanctuary in China because they need to support themselves outside the home and moving around Yanji or rural areas to find day labor exposes them to police searches. The few long-staying male refugees who RI interviewed were established in a safe house deep in the countryside with access to agricultural plots in the surrounding forest. There may be men managing to survive in the informal economy, but they are not reached by the refugee support organizations and their numbers are impossible to determine in the absence of a census of North Koreans in Yanbian. Otherwise, men tend to cross the border, hook up quickly with the refugee support organizations, access food and other supplies, and then return to their homes in North Korea.</p> <p>The overwhelming majority of North Korean women seeking to stay in China establish relationships with Chinese men, either through brokers or directly, as a survival</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">STRESS ON NORTH KOREAN FAMILIES</p> <p><i>The following account is about a 15-year-old girl from Orang who first arrived in China in 2001.</i></p> <p><i>Her parents were both farmers. “Starvation was normal for me.” When she was eight, her parents left her and brother with some corn. They said they would return after two or three days. She went to a neighbor to borrow food, but they only gave her a rice mill. She ground some rice husks because there was nothing else, but she could not get any food.</i></p> <p><i>When she was eight years old, her mother went to China and married a Chinese man. At that time, she was so young that she didn’t know her mother went to China but she guessed it from the clothes her mother sent her. The new husband mistreated her mother. He killed his own mother, and when the police came to the house to arrest him, they found her mother, who they deported to North Korea.</i></p> <p><i>Her father is still in North Korea and remarried after her mother escaped to China. Before coming to China, she moved between her grandmother, father, and stepmother. She went to school for only three years because she had to move around so much.</i></p> <p><i>When she was 11, her mother went to China to marry another Chinese man. After her mother left for China, she stayed with her grandmother. Her mother asked her uncle to take her to the border to deliver her to her stepfather on the Chinese side.</i></p> <p><i>Her mother’s husband is handicapped. He mistreated her and her mother. Sometimes he tried to beat her with an ax. When she first arrived, she joined her mother and siblings and lived with the new husband. However, all the kids ran away because of the husband’s abuse.</i></p> <p><i>Her mother had a job making miso. Her mother told them that when the husband was out, they should leave and go to the mother’s workplace. The employer was kind, and she allowed the three kids and mother to hide in a storage area (about the size of a queen bed) for a week. Her mom went back to her husband. She does not see her mother. They are afraid that the husband will force them to go back. She has her mother’s telephone number, but her mother has told her never to call. Her mother said it was okay to call once they are in another country.²⁰</i></p>
<p>10</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

<p>strategy. In rural Yanbian, the male-female ratio among the unmarried age group after schooling is a staggering 14-1, so there is high demand for women willing to live in rural areas.²¹ While North Korean women sometimes find compatible companions and end up in loving relationships, most are — in effect — trafficked, sold to Chinese men or to the owners of brothels and karaoke bars, whether in Yanbian or other parts of China. The fact that women seek a relationship to survive, and in this sense could be said to cooperate in the transaction, does not change the calculus of their vulnerability.</p> <p>North Korean children are also vulnerable. Few speak Chinese and are therefore at risk of detection if they venture outside of the home. Only a small percentage has access to education. A few attend church-run schools and even fewer attend Chinese schools. Some families can afford the fee to enroll their children in Chinese schools, but as of June 2004 increasing crackdowns by Chinese police were forcing North Korean children to stay out of schools to avoid detection. In rural areas, some young people are able to work on farms, but in cities, because of tighter surveillance, job opportunities are almost non-existent.</p> <p>The reality for young North Koreans in China is bleak. They stay at home all day to avoid detection. There are few opportunities for them to learn Chinese, a skill that might give them a measure of freedom to move undetected outside their homes or shelters. They cannot work. They are constantly worried about their families, either in North Korea or China. In the poignant words of one teenage boy, “The situation here does not allow me to dream about my future.”²²</p> <p>The economic deprivation and political oppression in North Korea, coupled with the lack of legal status in China, place tremendous strains on families. Precious few of the children that RI interviewed in China were part of stable families. Separation and vulnerability were the norm.</p> <p>There is also a growing problem of statelessness for the children born from marriages between North Korean women and Chinese men. Because these marriages are illegal under Chinese law, the children are not considered to be Chinese and are not given Chinese citizenship. For wealthier families, it is possible to buy citizenship for their children at a price of \$1,250, but this is far out of reach for most families. The question of citizenship will be an issue within the next few years as an unknown number of stateless children approach school age. Like North Korean children, these half-Chinese children will not be able to attend school easily.</p> <p>TREATMENT UPON DEPORTATION</p> <p>The frequency of the arrest and deportation of North Koreans in China is impossible to determine with any certainty. More than one-third of the North Koreans that Refugees International (RI) interviewed in Yanbian had been arrested and deported at least once, and fourteen percent had been arrested and deported multiple times. But it is impossible to draw any conclusions from these figures because of the small sample size and, more importantly, because only those strong and determined enough to survive their incarceration in North Korea and make it back into China were available to be interviewed. We were talking only to the survivors of a cruel system.</p> <p>When the Chinese police arrest North Koreans, they take them to a prison near the Tumen border crossing to prepare the prisoners for their official handover to the North Korean authorities. The North Koreans are especially concerned with any individuals who may have met with South Koreans, especially for the purpose of emigrating to South Korea, or met with Christian missionaries, especially for the purpose of returning to North Korea to preach the gospel clandestinely. North Koreans deported from China are interrogated for up to a week at the border, before being assigned to a prison</p>	<p>The economic deprivation and political oppression in North Korea, coupled with the lack of legal status in China, place tremendous strains on families.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>11</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">“I was treated worse than a dog. I would rather die than go there again.”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PUNISHMENT OF A CHRISTIAN WOMAN</p> <p><i>In April 2000 a 17-year-old woman from Musan, who first crossed into China in 1998, was caught along with thirteen others in the midst of Bible study. She was deported and given a sentence of one year, later commuted to ten months. When the Chinese deported her, they provided North Korean officials with documents detailing how she was caught in Bible study and had met South Koreans. Her interrogations focused especially on her Christian faith.</i></p> <p><i>She spent a total of ten months in two different National Security Jails. Rather than sending her to a labor training center, the focus was on psychological punishment. In both prisons she had to sit perfectly still all day. She was not allowed to speak at all. In the second prison there was a video camera and she believed the room was bugged. Male prisoners were beaten, but the women were not. Because she was only 17, the prison guards felt sorry for her. Despite possibly being treated more leniently, she was bitter about her time in prison. “I was treated worse than a dog. I would rather die than go there again.”</i></p> <p><i>During her time in jail she had two trials: a pre-trial to confirm the validity of the documents provided by the Chinese, and a second trial. She was released after the second trial. Most of the women were released. Two people from her group died in jail. She does not know the fate of the teachers from her Bible study. Presumably they received a harsher sentence, but she does not know.²³</i></p>
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>or labor training center depending on the severity of their crime in the eyes of the North Korean border officials.</p> <p>As noted above, leaving the country without permission is illegal under the North Korean criminal code, with those deemed minor offenders subject to imprisonment in labor training centers for up to three years and traitors subject to terms of at least seven years, or execution in extreme cases. RI’s interviews in Yanbian suggest, however, that at some point during the famine and its aftermath, the North Korean authorities made a decision to give lesser sentences to people who were obviously going to China to ensure their own survival and that of their families. In effect they recognized that migration to China was a safety valve for the North Korean system. The standard sentence for such individuals seems to have been reduced to fewer than six months in a labor training center at the county level close to the person’s legal residence at the time of his or her departure from North Korea.²⁴</p> </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>Conditions in the labor training centers are harsh. With increasing movement between North Korea and China, and increasing numbers of arrests, the centers are crowded. One 32-year-old man told RI that 40 prisoners lived in a room about five square meters. Prisoners were expected to sleep while kneeling, and any movement or deviation was punished.²⁵ Depending on the center, rations consist of corn gruel or soup with a bit of cabbage, three times per day. The work consists of hard labor such as digging canals and constructing roads. In the evening the prisoners are subjected to political lectures. If the group consists primarily of people arrested in China, the emphasis is on loyalty to North Korea and the importance of never returning to China.</p> <p>One consistent aspect of RI’s interviews on conditions in the labor training centers is the policy of releasing prisoners when they become ill. Evidently, once a prisoner becomes sick, the authorities want no part of the person, as no medical care is available</p> </div> </div>
<p style="text-align: center;">12</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

<p>and they don't want the prisoner to die in the labor training center. A 37-year-old woman from Onsong, who was arrested and deported three times over a one-year period, said that her husband, who had been arrested separately when he tried to leave North Korea a third time, died three days after being released from a labor training center. After her third arrest she was able to convince the guards to release her and her daughter so that they could go see her husband's grave. They fled immediately to China.²⁶</p> <p>Harsher penalties are reserved for those known to have met with foreigners or converted to Christianity with the intention of becoming missionaries themselves inside North Korea. RI has not yet interviewed anyone with knowledge of specific executions for these offenses, although the first person RI interviewed in Yanbian, a 33-year-old man from Hoeryung, said that "for meeting with foreigners a person could be sentenced to death. If someone gets caught with Bibles he or she will be sentenced to death." He himself was leaving that evening to smuggle Bibles back into North Korea.²⁷</p> <p>The U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea has documented eight eyewitness or first hand accounts of forced abortions or infanticide affecting pregnant women deportees.²⁸ The rationale is that the babies, being of mixed Chinese-Korean ancestry, are a living symbol of the mother's betrayal of her homeland, and therefore must be killed. Among the horrific stories is that of a 66-year-old grandmother who, while detained in the Provincial Detention Center in South Sinuiju in January 2000, helped deliver seven babies who were killed by being buried alive soon after birth. A doctor explained to her that "since North Korea was short on food, the country should not have to feed the children of foreign fathers."²⁹</p>	<p>THE CASE FOR REFUGEE STATUS FOR NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p> <p>The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which the People's Republic of China is a state party, defines a refugee as follows:</p> <p><i>"[An individual who] owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."</i>³⁰</p> <p>Because few North Koreans crossing into China have experienced direct, targeted persecution as specified in the Convention definition, China considers all North Koreans to be illegal economic migrants and, as already noted above, prohibits the staff of UNHCR from visiting Yanbian to determine the refugee status of particular individuals.</p> <p>There is a compelling case, however, for the majority of North Koreans in China to be considered refugees. It rests on two pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The nature of the North Korean political system and its inherent restrictions on access to public goods, especially food; 2. The North Korean treatment of those arrested and deported from China as mandated by the country's Criminal Code. <p>In North Korea access to public goods — food, education, health care, shelter, employment — cannot be separated from the all-pervasive system of political persecution. Based on an original registration conducted in 1947, the North Korean population is divided into three classes: core, wavering, and hostile, with the latter constituting 27% of the total. There are more than 50 subcategories.³¹ The class status of each family is for life and transfers from generation to generation. Members of the hostile class are the last to receive entitlements, which is</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>...her husband, who had been arrested separately when he tried to leave North Korea a third time, died three days after being released from a labor training center.</p> <p>13</p>

<p>Not since Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge has a government succeeded in creating such an all-encompassing reality of oppression and restrictions on the basic rights of the majority of its citizens.</p>	<p>disastrous when a comprehensive welfare regime such as that established in North Korea collapses, as it did from 1994 onwards. Thus, an entire class of individuals is persecuted through the functioning of North Korea’s political system. In this context, there is no meaningful way to separate economic deprivation from political persecution.</p> <p>In addition to the fundamental discrimination within the North Korean political system, the government further limits access to food and the economic means of survival through a variety of policies that control the lives of North Korean citizens. The government controls movement within the country by requiring travel passes to move outside one’s community of origin. Since foraging for food or looking for employment wherever it can be found are essential survival strategies at times of food shortages, limits on travel further prevent North Korean citizens from meeting their basic needs. Until very recently the government blocked access to markets where income might be earned through barter and trade. The government restricts the activities of international relief agencies, declaring certain areas of the country off limits and preventing independent monitoring of the relief supplies provided. Taken together, these measures constitute violations of internationally-recognized human rights embodied in covenants to which the DPRK is a state party.³²</p> <p>Based on Refugees International’s interviews, and the testimony collected by other human rights organizations, most North Koreans crossing the border into China are fleeing state-sponsored denial of their human rights. Members of the “hostile class” and residents of areas deliberately cut off from international food assistance have an especially strong case to be considered refugees in the sense of fleeing targeted persecution. But the denial of basic rights extends more broadly, and the hunger that drives people to flee is the direct result of the political system that has been created by the leaders of the North Korean government. Not since Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge has a government succeeded in</p> <p>creating such an all-encompassing reality of oppression and restrictions on the basic rights of the majority of its citizens. North Koreans fleeing their country, therefore, have a case for refugee status as compelling as those fleeing Cambodia from 1975 to 1978.</p> <p>The second pillar of the case for considering North Koreans in China for refugee status is the treatment they receive upon being arrested and deported. This treatment has been described above and needs no further elaboration. Almost all North Koreans face severe punishment upon deportation, regardless of their original motivation for leaving their country.</p> <p>In its November 2002 report on North Koreans in China, Human Rights Watch argued that the very fact that the punishment for deportees was universal qualified North Koreans in China for the status of <i>refugees sur place</i>. Even if these individuals had not previously been the object of persecution in North Korea, they “would now probably face a high risk of abusive punishment if returned on account of their experiences in China, which have cast a light of presumed disloyalty upon them. ... [T]he United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has a longstanding understanding that such persons are entitled to the protections of the Convention and its Protocol.”³³</p> <p>Both aspects of the case for refugee status for North Koreans in China have received international recognition. In April 2004, at the Sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission overwhelmingly endorsed a resolution on the Situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea which expressed “deep concern” regarding “[s]anctions on citizens of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea who have been repatriated from abroad, such as treating their departure as treason leading to punishments of internment, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or the death penalty, and infanticide in prison and labour camps,” among other serious human rights violations.³⁴</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

For its part, UNHCR has formally designated North Korean asylum seekers in China as persons of concern. According to its report to the 29th meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2004, “UNHCR remains deeply concerned that such individuals do not have access to a refugee status determination process and are not protected from *refoulement* [forced return.]”³⁵

PROTECTION FOR NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA

While the case for the presumption of refugee status for North Koreans in China may be clear, translating it into practical protection measures remains elusive. China continues to deflect political pressure, whether brought by UNHCR or by governments, to modify its stance that all North Koreans in China are illegal economic migrants. The Chinese position fits well within a global trend of reducing opportunities for asylum seekers to receive an impartial review of their claims. In fact, the relative tolerance by China of the presence of North Koreans in Yanbian contrasts favorably with the United States interception and deportation of Haitian asylum seekers, the European proposal to confine African asylum seekers to internment camps in Libya, and Australia’s “Pacific Solution,” which dumps Asian asylum seekers on tiny islands in the Pacific far from Australian shores.

The public profile of the issue of the human rights of North Koreans in China is increasing, however. Activists on this issue, who belong primarily to Christian evangelical churches and affiliated conservative organizations with close ties to the Bush Administration, and their supporters in the U.S. Congress, have a proven record of tenaciously working on an issue until it begins to achieve critical mass in the public consciousness, at least in the United States.³⁶ China is such a powerful country, and therefore so essential to the achievement of long-term U.S. strategic objectives in east Asia, that the North Korea refugee issue is unlikely ever to rise to the

level of disrupting bilateral relations. But it will be an irritant, and China’s hosting of the Olympics in 2008 provides a medium-term organizing target for activists seeking more direct action to protect North Koreans in China.

China has two legitimate security concerns: criminal acts committed by North Koreans on Chinese soil and the prospect of a large-scale influx of North Koreans into their territory, triggered either by social upheaval inside North Korea or by massive response to a more liberal asylum regime. As is its right, China is taking steps to enforce security in the border region and clamp down on criminal activity. The likelihood of social upheaval in North Korea relates directly to the need to work for de-nuclearization and some form of peaceful political evolution in the DPRK, a process with which China is fully engaged. As for liberalizing its treatment of North Korean migrants, China has policy options which would be unlikely to provoke a massive outflow in response.

The simplest option for China is to halt all deportations of North Koreans, except for those who commit criminal acts. This step could be taken quietly so as not to provoke a large response from North Koreans in their home country. As an immediate humanitarian gesture, China could also grant legal residency to the spouses of Chinese citizens and their children.

The next level of policy options for China requires greater political commitment to resolve the issue of North Korean migration than is likely to be demonstrated in the near term. Additional steps could include granting all North Koreans in China indefinite humanitarian status³⁷ or providing North Koreans with a special resident visa if they can show that they have employment and shelter.³⁸ A blanket, one-time amnesty for all North Koreans in China, with permission to remain in the country, is another possible approach.³⁹

These options share the advantage of allowing North Koreans to live in China rather than being based on an approach that envisages

The simplest option for China is to halt all deportations of North Koreans, except for those who commit criminal acts.

<p>The South Korean government is not sympathetic to any strategy that would involve stimulating a large-scale refugee exodus to help destabilize the North Korean regime.</p>	<p>their eventually being settled as refugees in South Korea or the United States. One of the striking aspects of Refugees International’s interviews in Yanbian was the number of North Koreans who saw remaining in China as their best option, due to cultural compatibility and proximity to their homes in North Korea in case they wished to return to see their relatives, to respond to a family emergency, or to return in the event of a fundamental political change. Few people that RI interviewed were prepared to make the definitive break with their lives in North Korea that going to South Korea or to the United States would entail. This attitude may be changing as activists raise expectations among North Koreans in China in response to the passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, with its large sums of money allocated for support to refugee programs and its commitment to the resettlement of North Koreans in the United States.</p> <p>The next level of policy options for China enters the utopian realm in which it would honor its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol and allow UNHCR unimpeded access to North Koreans in China to review their overall situation and conduct individual status determinations, which would lead inevitably to the granting of refugee status to the majority of North Koreans in China. From a refugee rights perspective, this is really the only acceptable policy option, but it is the one that is least achievable. Nonetheless, advocating for this option has to be the starting point for any principled campaign to protect North Koreans in China.</p> <p>SOUTH KOREAN POLICY</p> <p>The official policy of the South Korean government, “[b]ased on brotherly love toward fellow Koreans and universal humanitarianism,” is to “accommodate all those North Korean refugees who wish to come to the South.”⁴⁰ Annual arrivals have increased from the single digits in the early 90s to 583 in 2001, 1,141 in 2002, 1,281 in 2003, and 1,894 in 2004.⁴¹ While the increase is significant, the numbers are still small compared to the numbers of North Korean refugees presently residing illegally in China and the potential number of migrants who would seek freedom and economic opportunity in the South if the border between the two countries were open.</p> <p>In an interview with Refugees International (RI) in December 2003, Ministry of Unification officials clearly stated that they are not interested in providing impetus or encouragement for more North Koreans to leave their country. The South Korean government is not sympathetic to any strategy that would involve stimulating a large-scale refugee exodus to help destabilize the North Korean regime. In the words of a senior Ministry of Unification official, their job is “to manage Korean affairs in a stable manner” and in this context the government provides support to all North Koreans who can make it to the South. If the numbers are low, so be it.</p> <p>The South Korean government and South Korean citizens have a striking ambivalence about the suffering of North Koreans. Citizens fear economic turmoil if North Koreans are admitted in large numbers, while their solidarity is limited by disdain for the poverty and lack of sophistication of North Koreans. As for the government, commitment to reconciliation on the Korean peninsula locates the fundamental solution of humanitarian issues in gradual political change in North Korea that will result from engagement, rather than in large-scale acceptance of refugees, an act that would anger the leaders of North Korea. The result is a marked lack of commitment by South Korea to offer resettlement to North Koreans.</p> <p>With proactive measures unlikely, the low annual arrivals reflect the sheer difficulty of reaching the South. As described above, Chinese policy is to arrest and deport North Korean asylum seekers and block their access to the South Korean and other consulates on their territory. Thus, North Koreans must brave incredible dangers to reach the</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

<p>South, traveling across China from the border region to Beijing with the goal of reaching an embassy or, assisted by brokers out for profit or a network of refugee activists operating illegally on Chinese soil, heading south to neighboring countries, such as Vietnam, Laos, Burma, and Thailand, where they purchase illegal travel documents or present themselves at South Korean consulates. Along every step of these journeys of several thousand miles, they risk arrest and possible deportation to North Korea.</p> <p>Officials from South Korea’s Ministry of Unification told RI that the government has entered into discussions with China about their treatment of North Korean refugees. They have urged them to stop arresting and deporting law-abiding refugees and to allow those who wish to seek asylum in South Korea to do so. China has cooperated on individual cases, allowing, for example, 50 North Koreans, out of a total of 120 occupying the South Korean consulate in Beijing, to enter South Korea in 2003. But the basic Chinese policy of treating North Koreans as illegal economic migrants remains in place. Refugee activists with South Korean NGOs questioned South Korea’s ability to influence China on this issue, considering South Korea’s dependence on cordial relations with China to maintain its economic growth and to resolve the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.</p> <p>Those refugees lucky and brave enough to reach the South are first subject to interrogation to weed out any spies or security risks. They then spend eight weeks at Hanawon, a special processing facility where they receive training that addresses the psychological stress of the journey and the adaptation to a new country and how to overcome cultural differences; basic vocational and life skills training is also provided. While the early refugee populations consisted largely of single men, recent arrivals include more families and unaccompanied women and children.</p> <p>Until 2004, the refugees received a generous financial package that dated from the early days of the refugee program when individual defectors were lavished with support to make a political statement about the wealth and generosity of the South Korean government compared to the impoverished North. Each head of household received a cash stipend of \$32,000, paid in three installments, and dependents received an additional \$6,500 each. The South Korean government, recognizing that such large cash payments were helping to fuel expensive payments to brokers charging high fees for facilitating movement from North Korea and China to South Korean consulates, has taken steps to reduce the cash component of the support package. Individuals now receive about \$10,000 in cash upfront, with the \$25,000 balance going towards direct payments for subsidized housing in public rental apartments, support for education and further vocational training, and job placement.</p> <p>Despite this generous financial support, North Koreans face tremendous challenges adapting and integrating into South Korean society. North Korea is a cradle-to-grave welfare state, albeit at a level of absolute poverty and deprivation for all but the elite, in which the omniscient North Korean Workers Party intrudes in every aspect of the life of its citizens. According to South Korean NGO workers with extensive experience working with North Koreans, the refugees feel totally lost and without support in the atomized modern culture of South Korea. This feeling of isolation is compounded by the fact that despite public expressions of intra-ethnic solidarity, South Koreans have little empathy for their Northern brethren, considering them unsophisticated visitors from a hostile country.</p> <p>North Korean children have an especially tough time. The Southern school system is hyper-competitive and exam-oriented, and North Korean children just can’t cope. Further, South Korean children isolate and reject North Korean students, leaving the latter with little choice but to express their frustration in random acts of disobedience.</p>	<p>[North Korean] refugees feel totally lost and without support in the atomized modern culture of South Korea.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>17</p>

<p>U.S. diplomacy on this issue has produced few, if any, results to date.</p>	<p>South Korean religious groups are actively involved in trying to develop alternative programs to ease the transition for North Korean refugees. The Exalting Freedom School, run by a pastor and his wife, provides supplementary education to 45 refugees, mainly young adults trying to make their way through Korean universities. The confidence and ease of expression of the students were striking, especially compared to the fearful refugees whom RI interviewed in China. Good Friends, a Buddhist human rights NGO, has established a “good neighbors” program, which pairs refugees with South Korean volunteers who assist them with the basics of surviving daily life in Seoul and other Korean cities. These programs are small, however, and are meeting only a fraction of the needs for transitional support for the North Korean refugees.</p> <p>The success of refugee resettlement programs in the United States has derived from local-level partnerships between the government and non-governmental volunteers and professional service providers. As generous as the South Korean government is to North Korean refugees, similar partnerships would make a substantial contribution to easing the transition and integration of North Korean refugees into the South. The South Korean government should increase its financial support to Korean non-governmental organizations for alternative education, vocational training, and life skills programs for North Korean refugees. South Korea should also strengthen its protection efforts on behalf of North Korean refugees, engaging with China to allow more North Koreans to seek asylum legally and making efforts to identify and protect North Koreans in other Southeast Asian countries. If these efforts are successful, the numbers of North Koreans entering the South will increase. The South Korean government should be open to this possibility, resisting the temptation to keep refugee resettlement numbers artificially low.</p> <p>UNITED STATES POLICY AND THE NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT OF 2004</p> <p>The United States government has been powerless to involve itself directly in protecting North Koreans in China and has been unable to effect a change in Chinese policy. High-level officials in the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration insist that Chinese treatment of North Korean asylum seekers does enter into the bilateral human rights dialogue, but if so, it does so at the level of quiet diplomacy rather than through public statements at the annual meetings of the UNHCR Executive Committee, of which China is a member, or the annual meetings of the UN Human Rights Commission. U.S. diplomacy on this issue has produced few, if any, results to date.</p> <p>With the government stymied and U.S.-based activism on North Korea human rights issues increasing in 2002 and 2003, the U.S. Congress took action in 2004 through the passage in October of the North Korean Human Rights Act. This ambitious and broad-based bill includes two provisions of relevance to the protection of North Koreans seeking safety and material support outside their homeland. Title II of the Act authorizes an annual expenditure of \$20 million to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees, defectors, migrants, and orphans, which may include support to refugee camps and temporary settlements, and to women victims of trafficking. Title III clarifies that North Koreans should not be barred from eligibility for resettlement in the U.S. due to any legal claim they may have to citizenship in South Korea and that the Department of State should seek to facilitate the submission of resettlement applications by North Koreans.</p> <p>The North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 is valuable as an expression of Congressional concern regarding the plight of North Koreans outside their country. Without a change in Chinese policy, however, its provisions related to North Koreans outside of their homeland are likely to remain a statement of Congress-</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

sional intent rather than having an immediate practical impact. Current assistance efforts, for example, are carried out either clandestinely or on a scale deliberately limited so as not to provoke a crackdown by the Chinese authorities. There is no way to program \$20 million effectively on assistance activities in China, as responsible agencies would refuse to devise programs on that scale. Further, large-scale programs would inevitably provoke a Chinese response, which could escalate to a clampdown on all assistance or a decision to attempt to close all movement across the border. The State Department's 2005 report on the status of North Korean asylum seekers, submitted to comply with a specific provision of the North Korean Human Rights Act, states pointedly that "governments hosting North Korean refugees would strongly oppose direct USG [U.S. Government]-funded assistance for North Korean refugees on their territories."⁴²

As for camps as a protection strategy, their establishment in China is neither necessary nor politically feasible. South Korean activists have proposed establishing camps for North Koreans in Mongolia, but the Mongolian government is ambivalent about this proposal. Any large-scale movement of North Koreans into Mongolia could only happen with the concurrence of the Chinese, who are likely to view any such movement across their territory as having a negative impact on their security and on their relations with the North Korean government.

Accepting North Koreans for resettlement is equally problematic. China blocks independent access to North Koreans on their territory, so a diplomatic agreement with the U.S. would be necessary to establish an open refugee resettlement process. This is unlikely without a dramatic change in Chinese policy. Small numbers of North Koreans are reaching countries as far away as Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, and Thailand. American embassy staff in Southeast Asian countries should be on the lookout for North Korean asylum seekers and be prepared to consider them for possible resettlement in the U.S.,

especially for family reunification cases. Post-9/11 security concerns, however, present another obstacle. The U.S. refugee resettlement program has slowed dramatically as the Departments of State and Homeland Security work out procedures to screen potential resettlement populations. Given the real possibility of deliberate infiltration of U.S. territory by North Korean government agents, the screening of North Korean refugees seeking resettlement in the U.S. is likely to be painfully slow.

The U.S. needs to pursue a more serious and persistent diplomatic strategy with China, which remains the primary obstacle to improving the protection available to North Korean asylum seekers. Changing Chinese policy requires a consistent and effective interlocutor, one whom the Chinese trust. The Bush Administration should consider the quiet appointment of a senior retired official of ambassadorial rank or higher who has credibility with the Chinese to engage government officials in informal discussion of this issue. If the Chinese authorities hear consistent messages of concern about the plight of North Koreans in China from an individual that they trust, perhaps the government will be moved to adopt at least the minimalist protection strategy of quietly halting arrests and deportations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The case for granting refugee status to North Koreans in China is compelling, but without changes in the policy of the People's Republic of China, it is impossible to achieve. Nonetheless, any principled campaign to protect North Koreans in China has to start with the objective of convincing China to honor its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol and allow UNHCR unimpeded access to North Koreans to review their overall situation and conduct individual status determinations, which would likely result in the granting of refugee status to a significant number of North Koreans.

The U.S. needs to pursue a more serious and persistent diplomatic strategy with China, which remains the primary obstacle to improving the protection available to North Korean asylum seekers.

<p>China, South Korea, and the United States have policy options available to them which would significantly enhance the protection of North Koreans outside their country without jeopardizing regional or national security.</p>	<p>In the meantime, a practical, near-term protection strategy must first and foremost seek to establish greater security for North Koreans in China. China, South Korea, and the United States have policy options available to them which would significantly enhance the protection of North Koreans outside their country without jeopardizing regional or national security.</p> <p>Refugees International therefore recommends that:</p> <p>The Government of the People’s Republic of China:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take immediate humanitarian steps to protect North Koreans in China, including halting all deportations of North Koreans, except for those who commit criminal acts, and granting legal residence to the spouses of Chinese citizens and their children. • Take additional steps to normalize the situation for North Koreans in China, including the granting of indefinite humanitarian status and providing North Koreans with a special resident visa if they can demonstrate that they have employment and shelter. • Grant a one-time blanket amnesty, with permission to remain in the country, for all North Koreans in China. • Fulfill its obligations under the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and allow the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees unimpeded access to North Koreans in China to review their overall situation and conduct individual status determinations. China should abide by all UNHCR decisions regarding the granting of refugee status. <p>The Government of South Korea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become more proactive in protection efforts for North Korean refugees, engaging with China to allow more North Koreans to seek asylum legally and making efforts <p>to identify and protect North Koreans in other Southeast Asia countries. If these efforts are successful, increase the number of North Koreans accepted as refugees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that North Korean refugees need more time to adapt to life in South Korea and provide financial support to Korean non-governmental organizations for alternative education, vocational, and life skills programs. <p>The Government of the United States:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the context of its on-going human rights dialogue with Beijing, press the Chinese government to adopt measures to protect North Koreans in China, starting with immediately halting arrests and deportations and granting legal residence to the spouses of Chinese citizens and their children. • Quietly appoint a senior retired official of ambassadorial rank or higher who has credibility with the Chinese authorities to engage in informal discussions of this issue and convey consistent messages of concern about the plight of North Koreans in China. • Move cautiously to implement the assistance provisions of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 for North Koreans outside their country, being careful to ensure that funding is provided on an appropriate scale for the operating environment in the border region. Avoid support for the establishment of camps for North Koreans in China or in neighboring countries. • Offer technical support to the Government of South Korea in the area of refugee resettlement and integration. If the offer is accepted, support technical missions of U.S. non-governmental organizations with experience resettling isolated refugee populations.
<p>20</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees:

- Continue to press the Chinese government to fulfill its obligations under the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and allow UNHCR unimpeded access to North Koreans in China.
- Increase the agency's public profile on the issue of protecting North Koreans in China, taking advantage of opportunities for senior officials to raise concerns regarding protection and lack of access in UNHCR Standing Committee and Executive Committee meetings, open forums and the international media.

NOTES

¹ The population figures in this paragraph are from Hazel Smith, University of Warwick, “North Koreans in China: Defining the Problems and Offering Some Solutions,” unpublished manuscript (December 2002), p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴ “The Status of North Korean Asylum Seekers and the USG Policy Towards Them,” report submitted by the Secretary of State to the U.S. Congress pursuant to section 301 of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, p. 3.

⁵ Human Rights Watch, “The Invisible Exodus: North Koreans in the People’s Republic of China,” Vol.14, No. 8 (C), November 2002, pp. 20-21. These citations are from the 1999 North Korean Criminal Code, which was substantially revised in April 2004. While the author has not been able to obtain an English translation of the latest version, an analysis of the new code by Dae-Kyu Yoon of Kyungnam University does not cite any changes to the unauthorized departure provisions. See Dae-Kyu Yoon, “Changes in the New DPRK Criminal Code: Characteristics and Implications,” http://ifes.kyungnam.ac.kr/ifes/ifes/eng/activity/05_ifes_forum.asp. Thanks to Karin Lee of the Friends Committee on National Legislation for bringing this article to my attention.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷ Chung Byung-Ho, “Living Dangerously in Two Worlds: The Risks and Tactics of North Korean Refugee Children in China,” *Korea Journal* (Autumn 2003), pp. 206-7.

⁸ Refugees International (RI) interviews 28, 34, and 29. RI interviewed a total of 64 North Korean refugees in China over the course of two visits to Yanbian in June 2003 and May-June 2004. These interviews were conducted through interpreters with individuals selected by local organizations providing assistance and protection to North Koreans in the region. The transcripts of these interviews are recorded in the Appendix to this report and will be cited by interview number as indicated in the Appendix.

⁹ Andrew Natsios, “The Politics of Famine in North Korea,” United States Institute of Peace Special Report (August 2, 1999), p. 5. See also, Hazel Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁰ RI interview 12.

¹¹ RI interview 42.

¹² Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹³ RI interview 31.

¹⁴ RI interview 7.

¹⁵ RI interview 9.

¹⁶ RI interview 41.

¹⁷ RI interview 13.

¹⁸ In June 2003 RI was told by local sources in Yanbian that the reward per North Korean was 100 RMB, or about \$12. It was not clear, however, if that was a consistent policy or a one-time amount valid for the most recent crackdown.

¹⁹ RI interview 31.

²⁰ RI interview 44.

²¹ Byung-Ho, *op. cit.*, p. 198 at footnote 14.

²² RI interview 27.

²³ RI interview 46.

²⁴ The 2004 revision of the North Korean Criminal Code formally recognizes “light labor” as a form of punishment and it is broadly employed in the revised code, especially for crimes that are economic in nature. See Dae-Kyu Yoon, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3. As RI’s interviews attest, however, “light labor” is a harsh punishment. “Light” seems to refer less to the type of work than to the length of the sentence and the treatment upon release.

²⁵ RI interview 15.

²⁶ RI interview 11. On releases of ill prisoners, see also David Hawk, U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, “The Hidden Gulag: Exposing North Korea’s Prison Camps,” (October 2003), p. 58.

²⁷ RI interview 1.

²⁸ David Hawk, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-72.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³⁰ 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 1 (A,2).

³¹ Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

³² See Amnesty International, “Starved of Rights: Human Rights and the Food Crisis in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea),” January 2004, found on the web at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/EN-GASA240032004>, especially pp. 9-15, and Good Friends, “Human Rights and the Food Crisis in North Korea: A Summarized Version,” December 2003, pp. 8-10.

³³ Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

³⁴ Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, Sixtieth session, Agenda item 9, “Situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” E/CN.4/2004/L.21 (8 April 2004).

³⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Bullet point summary of the strategic presentation on UNHCR’s operations in Asia and the Pacific,” 29th meeting of the Standing Committee, 9-11 March 2004.

³⁶ Their success in making achievement of a north-south peace agreement in Sudan the top African foreign policy priority of the Bush Administration is an example of their impact.

³⁷ Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³⁸ Hazel Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 17

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Unification, Republic of Korea, “Social Adaptation Training and Settlement Support for North Korean Refugees,” Hanawon, December 12, 2003, p. 4.

⁴¹ “The Status of North Korean Asylum Seekers and the USG Policy Towards Them,” *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

APPENDIX: INTERVIEWS BETWEEN REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL AND NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

The following section consists of summaries of interviews conducted by Refugees International (RI) staff with North Koreans in China in June 2003 and May-June 2004. The interviews were conducted through interpreters. For reasons of security RI did not attempt to obtain or record the real names of any individuals.

North Koreans give their ages dating from conception. The age data in the following summary have been adapted to the American practice of giving age from birth.

INTERVIEW 1

MALE, Age 34

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Hoeryong

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: June 2003

Three years ago, he was employed as a driver but then he got sick with a liver problem and was laid off. "Even when you go to the hospital, there are no medicines."

His wife is good at needlework that they sell in North Korea. She can make about 15,000 North Korean won in 45 days of work. Because he doesn't work in a factory he doesn't get food, except on the Leader's [Kim Jong Il's] birthday or holidays. His daughter goes to kindergarten but must bring her own food to school.

It's his first time in China. The manager of the local church has known him for years because the manager often goes to North Korea.

He came to China because his "house faced difficulties in surviving so I came to get help and to study the Bible." He came to China with another North Korean man on a secret route.

He will go back to North Korea tonight to bring back Bibles. He wants to stay in North Korea. His first impression of China is "freedom." [At this point he started crying.] "Honestly speaking, I don't want to go back but North Korea is my home country." He might return to China alone or with his close friends but not with his family.

There is radio in North Korea but no international news. In some places the TV can receive Chinese stations. After the new economic reform, the situation got worse.

It then worsened further when SARS started. Some people have committed suicide because the situation is so hard. His relatives went for a trip and one of them, a woman, committed suicide.

Before SARS, he could get one kilogram of rice for 150 Won. The price increased to 300 won per kilo and now it's down to 250 Won per kilo. He has not had any problems with the Chinese authorities. "If you come to China for food the penalty in North Korea is 1-6 months of prison. For meeting with foreigners a person could be sentenced to death." If someone gets caught with Bibles he or she will be sentenced to death. He knows many people who have been put in prison for getting food in China.

"I ask you to work for freedom of the North Korean people. I want political and religious freedom. In the law we have freedom, but that's not the reality."

INTERVIEW 2

SIX GIRLS, Ages 17, 16, 16, 14, 13, 3

BOY, Age 17

PLACES OF ORIGIN IN

NORTH KOREA: Not recorded for all; two

sisters in the group were from Pyongyang

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2002

[This interview was conducted in a group setting, with the teenagers sitting on the floor in a circle.]

They used to be tutored in China but the situation became tougher after the incidents at the embassies in Beijing. Now the teachers cannot come.

**"Honestly speaking,
I don't want
to go back but
North Korea is my
home country."**

<p>“My impression of China is that I can breathe. It was like there was no oxygen in North Korea.”</p>	<p>Girl (16): Her dad died in North Korea so she came here with her mother. She was arrested in October 2002 because she went with her mother to Beijing in hope of going to South Korea. They got out of the taxi and because they didn't speak Chinese, they were noticed. The man who arranged for them to go to Beijing turned them in. She stayed in a Beijing jail with her mother for six days and then they were sent back to North Korea. Her mother was sent to a labor center and she was sent to an orphanage center (which is like a jail) in Undok. She got three meals a day in the orphanage but it wasn't enough food. She told the orphanage that she was sick and said she'd like to go to the hospital. She ran away once she got to the hospital.</p> <p>She returned to China by herself in February. She has had no contact with her mother. When she came here she was very weak. Everyone could recognize that she was North Korean.</p> <p>She's learning the Bible now. They go one by one to an elementary Chinese class because it's less noticeable.</p> <p>When asked that they wanted to do in the future, one girl said that she wanted to be a pastor; another wants to be a hair stylist; another wants to be the manager of an orphanage. One girl (14) wants to be the President of North Korea and change things.</p> <p>The boy said that he was sent to an orphanage in North Korea. There were rules there. One rule was that you had to kneel from 5:00 am until 10:00 pm before you get your sentence. Another rule is that you cannot move. If you disobey, you might be hung from your feet.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 3 MALE, Age 40 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Ch'ongjin FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: March 2003</p> <p>He came to China because he had a problem with his throat so he hadn't been able to work at his job of milling rice since 1996. "It's difficult for me to survive. I was living like a beggar and almost died." Two of his sons died of starvation in 1998.</p> <p>He had no connections in China but friends told him that he could find food in China. He came across the river by himself in the middle of the night and came to a church close to the border.</p> <p>"My impression of China is that I can breathe. It was like there was no oxygen in North Korea." North Korea is closed and they have no way of knowing international policies. The North Korean government sends people to prison because when people leave they condemn the North Korean government because of what they have learned about the outside situation.</p> <p>He's now waiting for an operation but it's expensive. He has no idea about the future. He's just waiting for his operation. "Life is quite okay here because NGOs are helping us."</p> <p>"We don't want to go back to North Korea. We're definitely willing to go to South Korea. North Korea won't change."</p> <p>INTERVIEW 4 MALE, Age 25 PLACE OF ORIGIN: North Hamgyong FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2000</p> <p>He first came to China in 2000 because his parents and siblings died of starvation between 1995 and 1997. In May 2002 he was arrested and deported, but he was sick with a kidney problem and his hand was injured during work. After being in prison for only two days, the North Korean government released him because they thought he couldn't work. There were about 400 other North Koreans in prison (men, women and children). The law is that defectors will be punished in labor centers. But since January the law changed and people are sent to prison.</p> <p>The Chinese police do random checks to look for foreigners, Falun Gong adherents, and North Koreans. One day the police came and asked for his ID; he said he had lost it.</p>
<p>24</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

He's afraid to stay at home during the day because of the police checks so he wanders the streets and goes to his apartment just at night to sleep. People who hire North Koreans get fined so they are afraid to hire them. [An NGO in China pays for his rent, food, and medicine.] His health is improving but he's waiting for a cure from the doctors so he doesn't know his future.

INTERVIEW 5

GIRL, Age 17

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: May 2003

She misses her parents, two sisters and brother. Her father works in a mine and her mother is a homemaker. Her father received food distributions but only enough for 4-5 days each month. Before the economic reform he earned 100 won/month. Now he gets 2000 won/month. She has a big family

so it's difficult to survive. She came because she lost the \$120 that was supposed to be for her older sister's marriage. She couldn't go home after losing that money because she was ashamed so she came to China. This is her first time in China but she had some Chinese money. After she came she was dining alone in a restaurant, met a man, and they married.

She finished high school. Her sister is at the university.

She came to China because she wanted to have a stable life and give money back to her family. She married a 27-year old Chinese man. She can't work because she has no identification. She lives in a village and her husband is a peasant. She likes living here but hasn't betrayed her country. If she doesn't get caught then she'll be fine going home. She sends messages to her family saying that she's safe here but she's heard no reply.



Many North Koreans pay or have someone help them escape from North Korea to China, where they are given to someone who they are told will help protect them. A growing number of North Korean women are then sold as domestic slaves or are forced into prostitution. Many women, like this refugee, end up having to escape from their Chinese husbands.

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“If you go to South Korea it’s freedom and in North Korea it’s death.”

INTERVIEW 6

WOMAN, Age 37, and her Son, Age 15

PLACE OF ORIGIN: unknown

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: Woman in 1999, her son June 2003

She is sad that she left her children in North Korea. Her other son, who is 13, is still there. Her plan was to come to China to find work and then go back to North Korea to help her family. When she came to China she came with a neighbor and he got arrested. She lived along the border for a year and found work in the quarry. She worked very hard cutting stones for three months but was paid nothing except room and board. She worked like a man, using dynamite to break up the rock formations. Then she went to another place to work in a quarry but again found no pay. She worked very hard there also.

In February 2003 she met a Korean-Chinese man who told her she’d have a good job in the northeast province of Heilongjiang, which is about 1,000 kilometers away. She agreed to go with him, but felt something was strange about this man. She heard him whispering about her to another man about how they might sell her. She pretended to go to the washroom and then fled to the railway station even though she didn’t know any Chinese. She met another Korean-Chinese who helped her and wrote down how to get a ticket and travel. She had stayed in that province for one month and then returned in March 2003 by train.

Her son is happy that he has enough food, but he doesn’t like his mother to complain about North Korea. He’s patriotic. He wants to return to North Korea.

INTERVIEW 7

WOMAN, Age 30

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Unknown

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2001

She was arrested and deported in 2001, but returned to China immediately. In November 2002, she was arrested again and returned in December 2002.

She originally crossed into China with an unknown North Korean man that she met at the border. “There are North Korean men who look for women along the border to sell them. The Chinese client pays. In the back of my mind I knew I was going to be sold.” She was taken to a Korean-Chinese man’s house and thought she might be sold so she escaped by going to the washroom and fleeing at night. She wandered around because she didn’t know where to go. She tried to go back to the house because she didn’t know where else to go, but she couldn’t find the house, so finally she came to the village where she currently lives.

The family she stayed with had two sons and wanted her to live with one of their sons. She married the 30-year-old. After four months of living with him she was arrested when the police came to the house one night.

She was so sick in North Korea that they released her. She found that it was still difficult to survive there so she left immediately and took a taxi to the house she’s in now. Her husband paid for the taxi ride because he was happy to see her.

Her parents-in-law said she could go to South Korea if she wanted to and they found a businessman to help her. She was trying to go to Beijing in November 2002 with the intention of getting fake documents and going to the embassy. But she was arrested on the train because she had no ID.

“If you go to South Korea it’s freedom and in North Korea it’s death.” She was sent to a labor-training center in North Korea. After one month she got stomach problems and almost died. They let her go and she returned to China in December 2002.

Her mother (age 69), younger brother, and younger sister are still in North Korea. Her father died. Her younger brother is handicapped.

She saw some people in North Korea die of hunger. “The word ‘dying’ is easy to say but when you face death it’s much harder to deal with.”

The Chinese police say that North Koreans aren't a problem, but the laws of the Chinese government state that North Koreans can't stay.

INTERVIEW 8

WOMAN, Age 51

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Unknown

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2000

Her husband died six years ago. Her son (age 23) lives in North Korea and is a beggar. She got married to a Korean-Chinese man here and is doing farm work. "China's good for living because the more you work, the more you get. ... In North Korea it's difficult to get rice. North Korea was better when Kim Il-Sung was alive." Food distribution was good until 1994. After 1995 the distribution slowed down until it stopped.

She's nervous because of the police checks. She's heard that they'll beat you if you get caught. She wants to stay here with her husband.

INTERVIEW 9

WOMAN, Age 28

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Unknown

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1999

She came to China with three other girls. One was her cousin and two were her friends. They were caught by a gang of 3-4 Chinese businessmen at the border and sold to southern China (south of Beijing). She was assigned to a Chinese man and stayed with him for two hours. He left for business and locked the door. She climbed the fence and fled from the countryside. She walked all night to the city. She doesn't speak Chinese so she stopped talking, but she knew how to write the name of Kim Il Sung in Chinese, so she wrote it down and started showing the paper to people. One Chinese man figured out the situation and arranged for her to get food and a train ticket back to Yanbian. No services were required of her. In the meantime her cousin was brought to Yanji and also managed to escape the man she was with, but she was subsequently arrested and deported to North Korea.

She's been in Yanbian with a Korean-Chinese man for three years.

She was arrested in 2000 during a random check and was deported. In North Korea she was sent to a labor-training center for two months. The food was corn porridge. The work was digging and constructing. There were about 100 people in the center with her. They are forced to memorize and sing songs about the Great Leader. To be released her parents had to sign a contract guaranteeing her loyalty to North Korea. Although she fled again she assumes that her parents just received a warning.

INTERVIEW 10

WOMAN, Age 47

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Ch'ongjin

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1998

Several of her father's relatives live in Yanji. Her relatives sent things to her but she never received them, so she called her relatives in Yanji and decided to come here. She's worried about security. She married a Chinese man the same year that she came. She was introduced to him by her relatives because they couldn't take care of her.

Since she's North Korean, no one wants to hire her because she doesn't have an ID. She was arrested in 1999. The police told her that if she paid a bribe of 2000 RMB then they'd release her. She said she was married to a poor man and finally paid only 800 RMB.

She has two children back in North Korea. At one time she had a connection to her children and her Korean-Chinese husband was going to go to North Korea to find them. But they lost contact with her children.

"Under Kim Il Sung, life was not sufficient but it was okay; after his son took over it got bad."

She had always heard that life in South Korea was bad, but after coming to China she learned that South Korea was developed and people had a good life. Most people who go to China and return to North Korea find it very hard so they want to return here. She wants to stay here.

"China's good for living because the more you work, the more you get.... In North Korea it's difficult to get rice."

<p>...the police came to the house again and they were all arrested and deported again.</p>	<p>Three years ago, life started getting more difficult in China. The police started searching for North Koreans more because North Koreans were committing crimes.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 11 WOMAN, Age 37, her Daughter, Age 15, and her Son, Age 13 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Onsong FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1997</p> <p>In 1997 their whole family came to China. In April 2002, the husband, wife, and son were arrested. The daughter happened to be out; “She was lucky not to be there.”</p> <p>They were deported and sent to the county labor-training center because there are too many cases in the big training center. They did construction and paved roads. The family was together in the training center. They got bad quality corn porridge to eat.</p> <p>In June 2002, after finishing working at the center her husband, son, and she returned to China. The son was delivered across the river. They took the bus to come here. For bus money they had had to swallow money and retrieve it three days later. The daughter had stayed in China the whole time. After returning to China in June 2002, they farmed. In September 2002, there was an order from the government and the police came to the house again and they were all arrested and deported again. After four days in the training center, they were sent to the local training center for 20 days to harvest. This time at the training center was harder because the same guard was there.</p> <p>In October 2002, only she and her daughter came; her husband and son stayed in North Korea because it’s difficult to come to China as a family. They came again to their current house in China. The police know they’re there because they’re always returning to the same house, but the police don’t bother them unless they get local orders to round up people.</p> <p>In February 2003 when her husband and son tried to come they were arrested. Her son was sent to an orphanage and her husband was sent to a local training center. She heard from a neighbor woman at the border that her husband was sick and died three days after being released from the center.</p> <p>The son was arrested four times for trying to cross the border to return to China and each time he was returned to the orphanage. He finally crossed successfully in March 2003.</p> <p>In April 2003, she and her daughter were arrested again. The son was not arrested and stayed in China by himself. The church took care of him. She and her daughter didn’t stay for long at the local training center. There was a different guard at the center so he didn’t recognize them. She told a guard that she wanted to go see her husband’s grave and then they fled back to China.</p> <p>She wants to take her family to South Korea. If they are arrested one more time, she doesn’t know what they’ll do. The daughter wants to go to South Korea with her mother. Until last year she could go to school.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 12 WOMAN, 28, and her Daughter, 4 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Unknown FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1998</p> <p>She came to China with her older brother, who is 45. Her brother was familiar with the border situation and he knows people in China. He does some smuggling across the border so he returned to North Korea. She has no contact with him. One reason she left North Korea is because her family is in the hostile class.</p> <p>When she came to China she had three choices: 1) Go to South Korea; 2) Marry a Chinese man; or 3) Take care of an elderly person. She was afraid to go to South Korea because once that became known to the North Korean Government her family in North Korea would get into trouble. She was introduced to a Korean-Chinese man and married him.</p> <p>Since she was educated, she knew about life outside of North Korea. As she got older</p>
<p>28</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

she wanted more freedom. She wanted to be a teacher in China but found it impossible. She used to be a teacher in a primary school in North Korea. She learned a little teaching. Most teachers were educated and knew something about the world, but they didn't dare leave because the Government gave them a salary and a teaching certificate, which is an honor that they can't throw away.

Living conditions in China are much more comfortable, but sometimes she wonders why she didn't go to South Korea. She missed her mother so her brother brought her mother to China in February 2003. But her mother was arrested and deported.

INTERVIEW 13

WOMAN, Age 26

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Ch'ongjin

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1999

She lived with her parents in North Korea but life was hard. She heard that if you went to China you would have enough to eat. She asked her cousin who had been in China to take her there. "There is a rumor that Chinese treat North Korea women like slaves or abuse them. I was afraid of businessmen that take women from North Korea." So she pretended that she was a man and she went to a house that her cousin knew. She hid in a room for two days and asked the owner to marry her to a peasant. She said she didn't want to be sold. The house found a man for her and brought him to see her so they could see if they liked each other and they did.

Her cousin returned to North Korea. For a single male, it's hard to live in China because a North Korean man never marries a Korean-Chinese woman, so he had no choice but to return.

Her father passed away. She has a mother, older sister and older brother. Her older sister is here but they have no connection.

She now has a one-month-old daughter. "Some people here treat me like someone from a lower class because they think North Korea is poor, but it's good living here. I'm

happy here. If North Korea opens up in the future and one can make money there, then I'll go there with my husband."

INTERVIEW 14

WOMAN, Age 27, and her Daughter, Age 4

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Onsong

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1998

She came across the river by herself and met a man at the border village. She lived there for a while but they separated because he was a thief and got arrested. She then came to Yanji. She worked at a restaurant and met another man who she's with now.

She worked in a brick factory in North Korea but there was no salary so she decided to come to China. She has no family in North Korea. Her parents died in 1999 and her siblings went in separate directions. Her father came to China and stayed for a while but when he went to North Korea to get her mother he got arrested and died.

She doesn't know what she'll do in the future because the police and the insecure environment make it difficult to live here. "If the government would allow us to live freely, then I'd like to stay."

Her daughter will go to school next year. She thinks the police won't arrest children.

INTERVIEW 15

MAN, Age 32, Woman (his wife), age 31, and their baby, Age seven months

PLACES OF ORIGIN: Kyonsong (man), Unknown (woman)

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1997 (man), 2001 (woman)

In 1997 he was in the army but was discharged and came home. He wasn't assigned a job. Many people were dying of starvation and no rice was given. So he came to Musan to find a job. There he heard that people were coming to China. He crossed and was caught in three months and deported. He was sent to a prison in Ch'ongjin for ten days. He escaped and came directly to China again.

She heard that if you went to China you would have enough to eat.

<p style="text-align: center;">“Living here, although we have to hide, is like living in paradise compared to North Korea. Our only plan is surviving day by day.”</p>	<p>In 1998, the Chinese police were searching for North Koreans so he moved to an isolated, mountainous region. His wife is North Korean. She had no parents but her uncle said he'd find her a husband. In 2001, she came with her uncle to China and they met the husband the next day and got married.</p> <p>The husband and wife were arrested separately in 2002. They had been living in another area in the mountains for about a year. Border guards had come to that place several times but no one was caught until August 2002 when the husband was arrested in a nearby town while getting food. While he was in North Korea, his wife was afraid, so she lived in the house of the manager of the shelter where they were living. Someone reported her, so she was arrested and deported on October 18, 2002 at 9:00 am. Meanwhile her husband crossed the border at 11:00 am that very day to return to China.</p> <p>While in prison she gave birth and stayed for 12 days. The people in her hometown gave the officers money so that she'd be released.</p> <p>The husband said, “In 1997, it was much harder in the prison. In the past couple years so many people have been crossing that it's out of the ability of the North Korean Government to handle all of the prisoners. But it is still very inhumane.”</p> <p>He was in a prison room about 5 square meters and about 40 people stayed there. They knelt and could not move at all. “You even have to sleep in that position or you will be punished.” His wife gave birth in that position after she was arrested in October 2002.</p> <p>He doesn't want to go back to North Korea. Sometimes he wants to go to South Korea but he knows it would be really hard. Plus, he knew people in the North Korean prison who had tried to go to South Korea and were caught. People who tried to go to South Korea are sent somewhere else and they are killed. The first question they ask you when you are deported to North Korea is “Have you been to church?” Those that say “yes” will be killed right away or sent to a prison camp for life.</p> <p>He was in the army for ten years. Everybody was starving. He was in Pyongyang and had only a small amount of rice. The soldiers would go out at night and steal from houses or sell their boots or other things.</p> <p>“In 1997 and 1998 many people died from starvation. Those that weren't smart or strong enough died. The people that are alive now know how to live and do whatever it takes to survive.” Those that survived the famine still know how to live.</p> <p>People in the army want to come to China but if they're caught then generations of their family will be punished harshly.</p> <p>While he was in the army his mother died of cancer. He doesn't know what happened to his father, two brothers and sister.</p> <p>“Living here, although we have to hide, is like living in paradise compared to North Korea. Our only plan is surviving day by day.”</p> <p>INTERVIEW 16 WOMAN, Age 47, and her Son, Age 14 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Unknown FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: March 2002</p> <p>In 2002 her 22-year-old daughter disappeared so she went to China to find her. Her husband had died. A year later she found out that the daughter had been sold to a Chinese man.</p> <p>There are so many things here. To have one bowl of rice in North Korea you have to work all day or more than a day, but here it's easier. You can eat three meals of rice a day.</p> <p>In North Korea she heard the name of the man who sold her daughter and where he came from, but when she went there, he had left.</p> <p>If she's caught and deported, returning to her hometown might be the only way she can find out more information on where her daughter is.</p> <p>While crossing the border she met someone she knows who hooked her up with an organization that helped her.</p>
<p>30</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

<p>Her son came in January 2003. The woman in this safe house who gave birth in the prison (See Interview 15 above) went to find him in his village after she was released. While living here she couldn't eat without thinking of her son in North Korea.</p> <p>Her son says that life in China is good but he misses having friends. In North Korea, he went to his second year in junior high school but then had to drop out when his mother moved to China because he moved to a rural area to live with his grandmother. He's missed a year of school. There's no food at North Korean schools.</p> <p>They want to stay for another year and then go back to North Korea to farm.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 17 WOMAN, Age 43, and Son, Age 11 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Unknown FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1997</p> <p>In 1997 her husband went to China, met a good person and worked for his family for a little money to buy oil to bring home. Once he came home all he would think about was China. He was obsessed with China. Another man went to China and came back to North Korea with her husband. This man had relatives in China and he brought a TV home that proved he had been there. When that man was caught, he told the authorities that her husband had been to China as well. So her husband had to leave North Korea right away to escape arrest.</p> <p>All six of them went to China. They had no relatives in China so it was hard to settle for a long time. Her husband died two years ago and her three daughters got married in China (two to Chinese men and one to a Korean-Chinese man). She now has a husband again. Her first daughter disappeared in 1997 and they later heard that she was kidnapped and sold. When her husband was dying, someone found the daughter so now they're in contact with her. Her second daughter is in the area and the third is in another province. After her husband died, she</p>	<p>was introduced to a Korean-Chinese man; someone got money for giving her to an old poor man. She was unhappy with her new husband because she didn't speak Chinese and the new husband didn't like her son. So she saved a bit of spare cash every time she was given money to get groceries. These savings allowed her to leave him and come to Yanji.</p> <p>Her North Korean husband was an artist (a painter) and a dentist and did some carpentry. She worked on a farm and worked really hard and was recognized for her farming. When Kim Il Sung died she was the only one from her village invited to go to Pyongyang and see the dead body of Kim Il Sung.</p> <p>It was mentally hard for her to leave North Korea but because her husband was in danger she had to leave.</p> <p>She got caught in 1999 and was deported but because she was well known in North Korea they didn't send her to a labor camp. She lived there one month and five days and then returned to China because families in North Korea couldn't help her with food.</p> <p>She wants to stay in China because she doesn't know when the system in North Korea will change. Kim Il Sung was a really good man and wanted people in North Korea to live richly but he couldn't fulfill his dreams. "Kim Jong Il isn't like his father. He never had war and was really spoiled. He didn't know the life of the normal people. People under him gave him false reports and this sucked the blood of the normal people."</p> <p>Her sister's whole family died of starvation like many other people. The situation is terrible.</p> <p>"I don't believe there will be change in my lifetime. <i>No one</i> believes it will change in his or her lifetime. Only unification can do something."</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>31</p>

She met a North Korean man who said he's a Christian and she believed him, but he stole all of her money.

INTERVIEW 18

GIRL, Age 15

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Najin-Sonbong

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: February 2003

She came into China with her father and brother. Her mother had disappeared and life was very hard without her, so they decided to leave. At first they lived in the countryside. There are many abandoned homes and they all lived together.

Just one week after they crossed the border, they were arrested and deported by the Chinese police. When she crossed again, she came by herself. She was spotted by some Christian activists along the border and they brought her to Hunchun City. She was told to pray and that if the North Korean situation gets better than she should go to North Korea and spread the word. This was the first time that she heard about God and prayer.

She lives with a North Korean woman and a Chinese man here.

She's not allowed to study much here, but she studies the Bible in the morning and Chinese in the afternoon. She wants to study the Bible more and hopes to educate people about religion. She wants to go back to North Korea if the situation gets better.

Today is the first time she's left her home for two reasons: 1) fear of the Chinese police, and 2) the desire to study the Bible more. Because she believes in God, she has no problems in China.

She went up to the 3rd grade and her brother never went to school. Their family had no shoes, clothes or bags, so they couldn't go to school.

INTERVIEW 19

WOMAN, Age 39

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Ch'ongjin

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1999

Her parents and two brothers died of tuberculosis. Since her family had all died, she decided to leave North Korea. She had been married but her husband had died of starvation.

She had two kids: one died after she left North Korea. She gave her other child, who is five, to a North Korean family and told them that she'd go to China to make money. She sent them 1000 RMB. The first time she worked as a housekeeper. She met a North Korean man who said he's a Christian and she believed him, but he stole all of her money. So she prayed and went to church and met a Christian Chinese man. She married him before she got arrested.

When she was arrested she first went to Hunchun jail and was then deported to North Korea. She went to the police station and then went to Ch'ongjin provincial detention center for two months and worked in a factory. She got three meals a day (soup that had only one piece of cabbage and much salt; she also received residue from milling corn). Every meal was like this.

A month after she was released she returned to China.

Between 1999 and 2002, the situation in North Korea had gotten worse. She has an older sister who told her how bad the food situation is. When she was deported and then released in North Korea, she tried to find her son but she didn't have an ID so she didn't go to the house. But her elder sister went to check up on the boy several times and the family demanded money to bring up the child. The elder sister had no money. Her sister said the boy looked like he was malnourished.

In the future she wants to go to another place in China or back to North Korea so that she can spread the word.

INTERVIEW 20

MALE, Age 27

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Undok

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: June 2003

He had just arrived in China three days before. He had a very difficult life in North Korea. He had no food or money. He left his parents and three brothers in North Korea and came alone.

<p>When he crossed the border and saw the situation in China he wondered why North Korea is so poor. He has no relatives in China and wondered how he could make money. He wants to return soon to North Korea to give help to his family. He and his parents worked on the farm. One of his brothers works on the farm, one goes to elementary school and the other goes to middle school. There is no food at school.</p> <p>He walked for 12 hours to get to Yanji. He didn't know there'd be help here; he just knew about the shelter manager. A friend in his hometown had told him about the manager.</p> <p>In North Korea they work on the farm and are provided food by the farm manager. Last year their six-person family got 150 kilograms of food per year per family member. The 150 kilograms includes the cornhusks. There's no other way to get food. If they don't complete the planting, the farm manager gives them a little corn and they have to buy food. But if they don't have money, the farm manager won't give money.</p> <p>He goes to the mountains to collect medicinal plants and then sells them in the market. Now, too many people are doing this. He can only collect one kilogram of medicinal plants in a day. They can only be collected in the spring and fall. One kilogram sells for 450 won (if you get a good buyer from China). But generally you get 400 won in North Korea.</p> <p>His father has some kind of heart disease and low blood pressure. His mother can't walk for very long because of pain from the sciatic nerve. One of his brothers had kidney problems. There's no medicine available. They have no possessions to sell in the market because they've already sold everything.</p> <p>He then started asking his interviewers questions about whether there will be a war in North Korea, how outsiders can help the North Korea people, and so on.</p> <p>"Most North Korean people think about the war. If war breaks out, it's good because</p> <p>that's the only solution. Most North Koreans think the North Korean regime should be changed. That's the only way for North Koreans to survive. The food from the U.S., the UN and South Korea was not provided to the common people in North Korea, so it's a very useless thing. The only way to save the North Korean people is war because internal collapse is impossible in North Korea. Everybody knows that international food doesn't reach the people. It's North Korean policy that every donation from the outside goes to the army, not the common people. The North Korean political system is like a military regime. The army is taught they have to give their life for Kim Jong Il. In North Korea, from baby to adult, North Koreans are educated about the family of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. During a day of school you have 3-4 hours of Kim Il Sung's family history. 40 students used to be in a class but since 1996 or 1997 it's about 20. Every student in the school must 'battle for crops' and work in the fields."</p> <p>INTERVIEW 21 WOMAN, Age 29 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Onsong FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: April 2003</p> <p>She has a mother and three brothers (two live with their mother and one is in the army), a husband, and a 3-year-old daughter in North Korea. She came to China three months ago to make some money. She worked one day as a waitress in a Chinese restaurant but had to stop because she doesn't speak Chinese. She lives with relatives in Yanji and they take care of her.</p> <p>In North Korea before marriage she worked in a coal mine on some machines. After marriage she made Korean snacks in the market. Her two brothers are coal miners. Her husband is also a coal miner.</p> <p>If the mining plan gets completed, they get 1000 won/month. In March, her husband got 1000 won. In January, he got 800 won and in February he only got 750 won because they didn't complete their work. In the coal</p>	<p>"Most North Koreans think the North Korean regime should be changed. That's the only way for North Koreans to survive."</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>33</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">She's afraid to be caught by the Chinese police. She's so afraid so she doesn't go outside.</p>	<p>mine there are 10,000 people working. Everyone is in the same condition.</p> <p>They go to the market to buy rice. In March she could buy nine kilograms in the market but it's not enough so she goes to the mountains to make a small field to grow corn. She also sells Korean pie and corn noodles in the market. One kilogram of corn is not enough for her family so she mixes it with the left-over water from making tofu.</p> <p>After a couple more days in China she will go back to North Korea.</p> <p>"China is beyond description. Chinese eat rice everyday but in North Korea there is no rice. I want to feed my children rice but there isn't any. There is no hope in North Korea. North Korea should be open like South Korea and China. I think there should be a big change in North Korea. I saw the Iraq war on TV and think that should happen in North Korea. The condition of Iraq is the same as North Korea. North Korea always says they're prepared for war so I'm desperate for the war to break out soon. I also want reunification with South Korea so that North Korea can be as rich as South Korea."</p> <p>INTERVIEW 22 WOMAN, Age 32 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Hoeryong FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: June 2003</p> <p>In North Korea she has a 7-year-old son. Her husband died in a car accident four years ago. She came here three weeks ago to make money for her child because now her boy is with her parents, but they're poor. She wants him to go to school but she needs money. She can't work here because she doesn't speak Chinese.</p> <p>She met a fine Korean-Chinese man and lives with him. He's taking care of her; they're not married. He guided her to Yanji.</p> <p>She only thinks of her child. She wants to bring him here but he's too young to walk alone.</p> <p>She worked at a paper company until 1997 when she got 70-100 won a month. After 1997 she got married and quit her job. She now sells rice from Hoeryong to Ch'ongjin. Her parents manage a small farm and because she has no husband and has to take care of her son, her parents care for them.</p> <p>She's afraid to be caught by the Chinese police. She's so afraid so she doesn't go outside. It took three days to walk to Yanji but it's not comfortable to live here because of her fear of the Chinese police.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 23 GIRL, Age 18 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2002</p> <p>She first came to China two years ago with her mother and younger brother but was deported two months after she arrived. Her previous trip familiarized her with the route to China.</p> <p>Her mother and younger brother first came to China four years ago. After two years in China, her mother returned to North Korea for her. After only two months in China she was arrested while her mother and brother went out to the market. (Her mother and brother could speak Chinese.) She was at home alone. Someone had informed the police.</p> <p>She spent a week in jail in China. She couldn't remember too many of the details of her stay in prison because she was too upset. The food in the prison was okay, but she doesn't like Chinese food. The guards did not mistreat her. She was put onto a bus with nine other people and sent back to North Korea.</p> <p>She was sent to Ch'ongjin to a National Security prison for interrogation, and put in jail along with the nine other defectors for one month. The lack of food was the most difficult to bear. Sometimes she found worms in her soup. She had to struggle.</p> <p>At 16 years old, she was the youngest in the jail. The guards forced her to sit perfectly</p>
<p>34</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

<p>straight on the ground from 6:00 am until 9:00 pm without a blanket or cushion. If she moved or stretched, she would have to stand all day with her hands over her head. For the first ten days, she was always punished like this. Everyone in the prison was a defector. None of the other prisoners had to work, and they all had to sit perfectly still. At the end of the month, all the prisoners had to swear that they would not return to China.</p> <p>Once their sentence was done, all the prisoners were sent to labor centers in their places of origin. Relocating to a labor center in Musan took ten days, mainly due to administrative errors (she said she had to travel between the first prison and the factory several times). She traveled by train, and she was sent alone with two guards.</p> <p>The main job in the factory was farming. They grew corn, potatoes, and rice. Because she was so young, she wasn't given a job. She said she would have preferred to work; it would have been easier than doing nothing. She said she spent each day thinking: "Why was I born in this country? I wish I had been born in China. Why didn't my mother give birth to me in China?" She said she started to realize that it was not her parents' fault but rather the fault of the Leader. "If I marry, I will take care of my children well and not put them in this situation." She said the hardest thing for her is surviving without her parents.</p> <p>Most of the other prisoners in the factory had defected to China. Because she was young, she was put in the jail adjacent to the labor reeducation center. Adults were sent to the factory. There were 30 people in jail with her. They were all adults. The authorities were trying to get information from them. She spent 20 days in the second jail.</p> <p>She went home. Her mother and younger brother were still in China. Her father had married another woman, so she stayed with her aunt in Ch'ayu. The situation was bad for her aunt and she felt sorry for her, so she looked for other places to go. She went to her grandmother and then friends but everyone</p>	<p>was in a bad situation. She wandered from place to place for two years, and wanted to return to China. When the river was frozen in March 2004, she crossed over into China.</p> <p>She said the economic situation became worse after August 2003. Now the price of corn is up to 200 won (2 RMB). Corn is usually 80. When she left in March there were many beggars, mainly orphans, on the streets.</p> <p>She was totally alone during her two years of wandering. Last September [2003], she decided to commit suicide. Around 10:00 am she walked into the sea. She almost drowned. She kept sinking and sinking. She thought she was dead. She felt the sea floor. She felt something grab her body and bring her up to the surface. There was nothing holding her or touching her. She thought it was definitely God. Two years ago in China, she received the gospel. She knew who God was, but she was not a Christian. She felt God in the middle of the sea. She came out of the sea at 10:00 pm, 12 hours later.</p> <p>After that she felt a need to worship God, so she prayed and prayed. "If you're real, lead me to China again."</p> <p>The journey back to China was not too difficult because she was familiar with the route. She crossed alone in one day. It only took 10 minutes to cross the frozen river. There were no guards on the North Korean side. There are usually many guards. After crossing the river, she crossed the snow-covered mountain. The only difficulty she faced was climbing the snow-covered mountain inside China.</p> <p>Before she left for China, her aunt had given her some money, so she got on a bus. She was trying to go to Seusung because she had been there two years earlier. She doesn't know where her mother is. She couldn't speak Chinese or read the bus sign so she ended up in Yanji around 5:00 pm. She wandered around until 11:00 pm and then went to sleep under a bridge. She prayed for a taxi to come to her, and she met a driver who</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEEINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>"Why was I born in this country? I wish I had been born in China."</p> <p>35</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">At first, Korean-Chinese individuals were sympathetic to people from North Korea and provided money and food to North Koreans who recently arrived.</p>	<p>spoke Korean. She went to Seusung and met a missionary who she had known two years ago. The missionary brought her to the shelter.</p> <p>She went to school in North Korea. There are supposed to be 50 students in each class, but usually only 30 attend. Poor kids can't go because they have to help their parents. The teachers can't teach because they are hungry. Sometimes they fall down during teaching. She went to school for eight years. She studied math, English, Korean, and stories about Kim Il Sung. In middle school, they had to take "Revolution I (Kim Il Sung), Revolution II (Kim Jong Il) and Revolution III (Kim Jong Suk). There were four classes a week on the revolutions.</p> <p>When she first crossed over into China, she couldn't believe how developed China was. "I felt good that I can eat. Here I can have freedom."</p> <p>In North Korea people really believe the political education. Now she feels like she was deceived.</p> <p>"If I were born in another country, maybe I would have gotten more affection from my parents or maybe I could have fulfilled my dreams, but now I rely on God."</p> <p>INTERVIEW 24 MAN, Age 20 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Unknown FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1999</p> <p>He came to China alone for the first time five years ago, and he has come back and forth seven times. He was 15 when he first came. He has been caught in China five times.</p> <p>When he was captured, he escaped four out of the five times. The fifth time he was sent to reeducation in his hometown. The center was not just for defectors but for criminals as well.</p> <p>The first time he left for China, he had had no intention to stay. His mother had stomach cancer and he thought he could earn some money trading corn to different villages. He gathered 600 NK won and left</p> <p>home. He wandered from place to place in North Korea, but some of his money was stolen and with some he had to pay in fines. Soon all his money was gone so he decided to steal something because he had to go back with something.</p> <p>He went to Ch'ongjin, where laws were strictly enforced, and the police caught him because he was a young boy wandering on the streets alone. The police took him to a hotel-like building. The police office kept children on the third floor. There he met a ten year old who told him that he had been in China and had worked for one month and had earned 100 RMB (2500 NK won). So he decided to escape to China. That night, while the two guards were sleeping, he got the key and escaped.</p> <p>It was November when he escaped. It was not difficult to cross; at the time, there were no guards. In 1997-98 there were many other Koreans escaping to China.</p> <p>At first, Korean-Chinese individuals were sympathetic to people from North Korea and provided money and food to North Koreans who recently arrived. But the sympathy stopped when some defectors began to rob and kill Korean-Chinese people.</p> <p>When he arrived, the boy entered a house where some old people were living. They were Christians, and they invited some Canadians to meet him. Four Canadians gave him food and 200 RMB, and prayed for him. He thought 200 RMB was a huge amount of money, more than enough to take home, so he immediately decided to go back to North Korea.</p> <p>He tried to cross the border. He was caught, but the border guards didn't know that he had come from China, because he was wearing his school uniform. The guards searched him and found the 200 RMB and arrested him. He escaped during the transport to the labor center.</p> <p>He described the conditions in the labor center when he was caught. He was sent to his hometown and spent most of 2003 in the</p>
<p>36</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

center. Security was very strict. Barbed wire and electric fencing lined the three meter high walls. Soldiers were armed with guns and swords. If the guards spotted someone escaping (which they always did), they would first yell “Stop,” and if the escapee didn’t stop, the guards could shoot. He never saw anyone get shot, nor did anyone ever escape, but some tried.

If someone tried to escape, they were put in solitary confinement. In the small cell, prisoners had to sit totally still with a straight back and only received a small amount of food. They could rejoin the other prisoners after being confined for ten days.

The guards did not physically mistreat them as long as they didn’t try to escape. But, there was a great deal of violence between prisoners. Defectors and criminals were mixed together, and the prisoners would beat each other.

The conditions in the center were bad. There were 12 rooms in the center, and there were 500-600 prisoners. Anyone over 18 could go there. They woke at 6:00 am, and as soon as they got up there was roll call so the guards could check the number of prisoners. They ate breakfast at 6:30, which usually was corn, rice (3 spoons), and beans. No side dishes except on Kim Jong Il’s birthday. The cafeteria could only seat 100, so they had to eat in five minutes because others were waiting to eat.

They started work at 8:30. There was a river near the center, and their job was to dig a canal. Prisoners were expected to carry dirt and gravel on their back: one cubic meter per person. There were 50 people in each group, so each group had to carry the equivalent of 50 cubic meters. Not everyone carried earth, so the quota for each worker/prisoner was actually much higher.

It took 40 minutes to walk from their rooms to the work site. They would bring everything to cook lunch with them—cabbage, a big pot—and they would cook lunch where they worked. They had a 1.5 hour break, and during this time they would eat lunch, do their laundry, and bathe.

Their work schedule was as follows: 9:00-12:00 work; lunch 12:00-1:30; work 1:30-4:30 and dinner from 7:00-7:30. After dinner, they had political education classes. They had to sing political education songs and memorize slogans.

He became sick with diarrhea in prison. He said he was just like an animal, eating anything that fell on the ground and even bark off trees. The food problem in prison was the most difficult. The guards did not allow the prisoners to drink water in case they contracted diarrhea.

There was a hospital at the prison, but there was no medicine. He said sometime they were given an herbal remedy but it didn’t work. There was a room for the morgue, where they piled the dead bodies. The guards would bury them in the nearby town. Two or three prisoners died every day from diarrhea.

He stayed there ten months. He got a special amnesty because of the 55th anniversary of the party. Most of the prisoners who came before March 2003 (around 300) received amnesty. He thinks this happened all over North Korea.

When he was granted amnesty he went home. He was still sick from diarrhea, and his arms were very thin when he arrived. His father and stepmother were there. The living conditions were not so bad. His father was a farmer. His wife was able to sell some eggs. The prices of food had increased (230 NK won/ 1 kg rice). He said he felt no hope at home. He couldn’t study, he couldn’t work, so he came again to China. A minister at a church near the border led him to the shelter.

INTERVIEW 25

WOMAN, Age 30

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Pyongyang

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2000

Prior to leaving, she had been living with her mother, father, brother and sister. In Pyongyang, she worked in a textile factory. She decided to go to China to make money. When she left North Korea, the conditions

There was a room for the morgue, where they piled the dead bodies. The guards would bury them in the nearby town.

<p style="text-align: center;">“We came here from hunger pains, not politics. We want the rest of the world to understand our situation and help us.”</p>	<p>were bad. She ate soup cooked with dandelion greens and rice husks. Three years after Kim Il Sung’s death, the economic conditions had become worse and worse. She had not been paid for a long time, and there were many dead bodies on the street.</p> <p>She had heard rumors people could travel to China and make lots of money. She wanted to do odd jobs or menial labor in China. She came to China with her neighbors — three women together — when she was 26. The neighbors knew the route after living in China with their new husbands and children before being deported. Each of the neighbors had spent six months in prison and wanted to return to China to be with their families. They carried 1000 NK won to bribe the North Korean border guards. It was a 10-day journey by train to the border (the train was very slow). She did not have much food on the journey.</p> <p>The two neighbors went to their husbands and children as soon as they crossed the border. She was walking around alone by the railroad station. She was poorly dressed. A Korean-Chinese man saw her and felt sorry for her and tried to help her. He called his relatives who introduced her to a man in the village. This man is now her husband. He treats her well and is kind to her and their child.</p> <p>There was no religion in North Korea. She met some missionaries in China, and now she relies on religion. Now she has no problem with eating, but she faces new difficulties. She does not have a good relationship with her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law gives her a hard time. There is no physical mistreatment, but she always says, “Get out. We can live better without you.” She also threatens to turn her into the police. She said that even if she had a hard time in North Korea, she didn’t have to deal with this difficult relationship.</p> <p>She has a daughter, who has Chinese citizenship and who can eventually go to school. Her husband is a Party member. He went to South Korea to earn money, and now</p> <p>he is a sailor. She gets about 800 RMB every 2 months, but her mother-in-law controls it.</p> <p>She knows a little Chinese, basic survival words, but not enough to get a job. She stays at home, and plants and farms in the field.</p> <p>She hasn’t received any assistance from any organization since she came to China. There is no problem going to the hospital as long as she can pay.</p> <p>There are seven North Korean women in her village — all married to Korean-Chinese men.</p> <p>Her biggest problem is that she wants to be free from fear. She is frightened by small sounds and she is always afraid that someone is watching her. She also wants to live a better life here. She wants to wear makeup and nice clothes. Now she always wears second-hand clothes. She wants to have a life like other Chinese girls. She doesn’t want to be depressed any more.</p> <p>She doesn’t know anything about North Korean women in prostitution. She stays at home and doesn’t really talk to anyone. She has heard that some women were deported from the next village.</p> <p>“We came here from hunger pains, not politics. We want the rest of the world to understand our situation and help us.” She hears news about North Korean refugees on South Korean radio. “We want to live more comfortably.” She said that China is a good place to live. There are lots of foods, lots of products, but she lives in continual fear.</p> <p>When she decided to come to China, her plan was to make money and return. At first she missed her mother and father, but now she is a mother and she has a good husband so she doesn’t want to return. She hasn’t received any news from her mother and father. She has heard that her neighbors from Pyongyang arrived 15 days ago, but she’s afraid to go and see them in case someone from North Korea catches her.</p>
<p>38</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

INTERVIEW 26

WOMAN, Age 44

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Pyongyang
FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1997

She was a housewife in North Korea and her husband a Party member. He worked in a government security office. In 1995, her husband died from kidney disease. The food rations stopped, even though her husband was a Party member. She decided to go to China to make money. She has two adult children in North Korea, but she doesn't know anything about their situation.

She came to China with five women. She escaped alone and met the others at the border and crossed without difficulty. She didn't have money to bribe the border guards. She and the five women (ages ranging from 26 to early 40s) all crossed the river together. She wanted to do small-scale trade, but she couldn't speak Chinese. She didn't have any idea where to go when she first arrived.

At the border, she met some Korean-Chinese people who knew she was from North Korea and felt sorry for her. They gave her some food and helped her buy a train ticket to Dun Hua. She met the man who became her husband by accident in front of the railway station a week after she arrived. She followed him to his house and they started living together. He is 47, and he is Korean-Chinese. He's a moto-rickshaw driver. She doesn't know Chinese, so she can't work.

Her life in China is better than her life was in North Korea. She worries constantly, however, about being caught. Someone informed the police about her, and she was caught twice. Each time she had to pay a fine of 2000 RMB. The police asked for 5000. Her husband was also caught because he was living with a North Korean woman and had to pay a fine.

She used to have six North Korean neighbors, but now she is the only North Korean left. Some were deported and others went to other areas. She stays at home so she doesn't know about new arrivals or the conditions in North Korea. She stays at home and cultivates.

Her Chinese neighbors are nice. When there is a crackdown, they inform her.

Her plan was to return to North Korea when she made some money, but now conditions are too bad there to go back. She has sent mail to her children several times, but there has been no response. She thinks they may have moved. Her daughter would be 24 now, if she is alive.

INTERVIEW 27

BOY, Age 18

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan
FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2001

He decided to go to China primarily to earn money, but also to learn in a developed country like China. He had heard rumors that people could make money in China. He wanted to earn money farming. He had also been told that you will be caught, arrested and sent back if you go to China.

He went to China in 2001 with two male neighbors. One was the same age and the other was 23. The older neighbor led the others because he was familiar with the route. On the first day, he climbed a mountain for 18 hours. It was difficult, but the next day he crossed the border. He arrived at the border at dawn. There were no guards. It was spring so the water in the river was up to his chest. He had no trouble crossing the border.

He left behind an older brother in North Korea. He learned from a trader who travels to North Korea that his brother's situation is not bad. His brother didn't want to go to China. He was studying to be a driver. His brother did not stop him or try to dissuade him from coming.

In 1998, three years prior to his departure for China, his father died. His mother changed oil in trucks in the Musan mine for the gas company. She decided to go to China to make money. After she escaped to China, he was living only with his brother. His mother was deported back to North Korea. She was sent to a labor center. His

Her plan was to return to North Korea when she made some money, but now conditions are too bad there to go back.

<p>“The situation here does not allow me to dream about my future.”</p>	<p>aunt and uncle bribed the guards to release her. She decided to go to China again. She had no job, no house, no money, so she had no choice but to go. She was caught a second time in 2001 and deported again. After she left for China the second time, he never saw her again. The news of her deportation is the last news he has of her.</p> <p>After his mother escaped to China, he and his brother did not have food. He knew some workers at the company where his mother worked, and they would try to help them out. His brother also had friends in an orphanage. He and his brother entered the orphanage and stayed there for 2 years. The food was bad, only porridge. There were around 40 children in the orphanage, and now there are only 10 because of the bad conditions. During his stay in the orphanage, he did farming.</p> <p>He realizes that people in China look down on him because he’s from North Korea. Much of the time, he slept in a tent in the mountains — except in winter. The tent was a bit larger than a twin size bed. It needed to be small so that it wouldn’t be detected. Three people stayed in the tent. The tent was a 10 minute walk from the village. During the winter, there weren’t so many people in the village. There are many North Koreans in the village. They usually go back to North Korea during the winter because they can’t farm. In the winter he stayed inside a home. He earned 500 RMB a year. He didn’t need to pay for food, so he could keep the 500 RMB for himself. He thinks he can earn 2000 RMB in bigger cities. He was friends with a trader who traveled back and forth between China and North Korea and who could deliver money to North Korea. Sometimes he sent money back to his brother. The first year he was in China, he sent 400 RMB to his brother. Later, when he saw his brother, he found out that the trader had given his brother only 100 RMB. He didn’t ask the trader to take money to his brother again. He heard that the trader was caught in North Korea last year and he hasn’t heard from him since.</p> <p>He has traveled back and forth to North Korea twice. Last September, he went to see his brother for 15 days. His brother is living with their uncle who is a truck driver. The brother was a worker on a train. It is hard for them to eat because the economic situation is getting worse. Escapees from Musan are able to send money, food, or clothes to their families in North Korea because of the town’s proximity to the border.</p> <p>His landlord knew a Christian woman in Yanji. She called the landlord and said she wanted to take care of a needy North Korean orphan. He went to Yanji three months ago to live with the woman. He is the only North Korean living with her. He doesn’t do any farming anymore. He wants to study and learn. Even though there is a computer in his house, it is not connected to the internet. He’s learning Chinese, but he does not have a proper teacher. Sometimes he feels angry and believes that he is wasting his time.</p> <p>In North Korea, he went to primary school and earned good grades. In middle school, he didn’t study and didn’t get good grades. In the future he wants to be a driver, learn English, and computers. “I’m upset because I haven’t had a chance to learn.”</p> <p>Every day he reads books, magazines, the Bible, works on the computer, or studies Chinese. He doesn’t leave the house. He feels very frustrated. “I want to lead a normal life like other teenagers. The situation here does not allow me to dream about my future.”</p> <p>Until last year, he sent money back to his brother, but now his own situation has changed. He wants to settle down. He wants to meet his brother again in the future.</p> <p>Sometimes he thinks about going to South Korea. He said it would be hard to lead a happy life in South Korea because it would be difficult to readjust. Ultimately, he just wants a chance to learn.</p>
<p>40</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

INTERVIEW 28

MAN, Age 21

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Onsong

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: May 2004

He came to China in May 2004. He had never been to China before. In Onsong, he went to primary school, middle school, and a vocational school to learn to be a driver. He was a driver for one and a half years. He lived with his mother, his father, and he had an older sister (age 23) who was married.

His father was a driver at a fire station, but he quit his job two years ago. His mother doesn't work, but earned some money doing small-scale trade. Life was difficult. He decided to go to China to make some money. He had no information on how he could earn money or what kind of job he could find before arriving. All he knew was that he wanted to earn money. He said that he is finding out that it is really hard to make money in China.

Others in his town had gone to China also. He didn't tell anyone, including his parents, that he was leaving. He had been thinking about going to China for a long time. He went to Musan to see a friend. In Musan, he met a 13-year-old boy (see Interview 29) who had been to China, so he decided to go to China with the boy.

The living conditions in North Korea were bad when he left. They had to eat bark and grass and most people were out of work. They would eat rice about 10 days a month and the rest of the days they ate dandelion porridge. The economic conditions are a little better than two years earlier. Food rations are distributed irregularly. Each family receives a five-day ration, which is only sufficient for one family member. Prices of food have increased. There is more rice — most of which comes from China — and clothes in the market, but prices are high. One kilo of rice costs 350-400 NK won; last April or May, the price was 200-250 NK won.

He was not well-paid in his job. There have been salary increases for people, but prices have also increased. He earned 1500 NK won per month.

Entering China was easy. He crossed the river at dawn, and didn't see any guards. The 13-year-old he was traveling with brought him to the house of an acquaintance in Yanji. At first it was hard to survive because conditions were so different than in North Korea. He doesn't have Chinese citizenship and can't speak Chinese. He doesn't know much about Yanji and spends all day at home. He was ashamed when he first came to China. Escaping is a shameful experience.

His landlord is Korean-Chinese. He went to another city to make money. There is no one taking care of them (himself, the 13-year-old, and the son of the Korean Chinese landlord). [We later found out that the "son of the Korean Chinese landlord" was in fact from North Korea but did not want to talk to us so said he was Chinese.] He doesn't eat well. The neighbors will sometimes give them side dishes. Otherwise there is nothing to eat.

Every day he stays inside the house all day watching TV. He hasn't received any kind of assistance yet. His biggest concern is work. "Nothing is going the right way here. The reality is very different from my expectations." He is not certain whether he wants to return to North Korea. He worries about being caught by the Chinese police. He hasn't heard anything specific about them, but believes that if he doesn't do anything wrong and is not discovered, he may survive in China.

INTERVIEW 29

BOY, Age 13

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2003

He went to primary school, but he was too poor to go to middle school. He doesn't have any brothers or sisters. He lives with his father. His parents are separated, and he doesn't have any information about his mother.

He was ashamed when he first came to China. Escaping is a shameful experience.

<p style="text-align: center;">“If I stay here, I could die of starvation, so maybe I should just go to China.”</p>	<p>His father worked in a mine and earned about 1200 NK won. His father received rations — corn or South Korean rice — every two months. He would add to his father’s earnings by selling wood. He couldn’t say exactly how much money he could earn, but he could sell a big piece of wood for around 150 NK won. He usually ate corn meal porridge. He only ate rice on holidays and special occasions.</p> <p>He would usually go to the mountains with groups of people. They would drag the tree home and cut it into smaller pieces. It was easy to do in winter because they could drag it in the snow. He did this kind of work for two years. He mentioned now there are not many trees on the mountains because of heavy logging.</p> <p>The living situation in North Korea has become worse. He said that the rich have become richer and the poor are now poorer. Prices have only increased. A few years ago a kilo of rice cost 250-300 NK won. Now it is upwards of 400 NK won. Although there are many products available, they are all too expensive to buy.</p> <p>He decided to go to China because it was too difficult to live in North Korea. He said that everyone would make the same decision in his situation. Last summer, he came to China for the first time. He followed his older neighbor to meet someone in Yanji, but they were not able to contact the person. They decided to go to another town, where they found an abandoned house. There were some clothes in the house, so they took them back to North Korea. They stayed in China for a week. They had to move at night and hide during the day.</p> <p>In December, he visited China again with a 16 year old neighbor. The neighbor convinced him to go to China to learn Chinese and computers. They avoided the guards who were sleeping. They went to the neighbor’s relative’s house. The living conditions were bad, and it was hard to stay with the relative for long. The relative gave them an old cell phone to take back to North Korea to</p> <p>sell. They stayed for 15 days in China before they returned. They sold the cell phone for 30,000 NK won, but had to pay a “fine,” which left them with about 1000 won.</p> <p>He explained that his father’s workplace was far from their home. He spent a lot of time commuting because his father had to return home every night to see him. Otherwise, his father could just stay at the workplace. He felt sorry that his father had to travel so much, so he decided to escape to China again. In April, he left for China, with the 21-year-old (see Interview 28, above).</p> <p>INTERVIEW 29 WOMAN, Age 32 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Hoeryong FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1998</p> <p>In North Korea, she was single and did farming work. Her father died in 1991 from a stroke. At that time, they were receiving food rations but not enough to survive. She had six brothers and sisters. In 1992 her older sister died, and last year another older sister died.</p> <p>She came to China for the first time in 1998, and came for the last time in Dec 2002. She has been caught five times.</p> <p>In 1993-94, food rations stopped. She waited for conditions to improve, but when they did not, she left for China. “If I stay here, I could die of starvation, so maybe I should just go to China.” Many people started to escape starting in 1996. At that time China was not too serious about deporting North Koreans. Now they watch out on the Chinese side.</p> <p>Since 2001, new policies are being implemented in her town. These policies are not in place all over North Korea. Before, everyone got the same salary; however, with these policies in place, people get a higher salary if they work and produce more. Also, now people have to pay for health care. She said the rich like this system, and the poor only suffer.</p> <p>In 1998, she came to China for the first time. She had heard rumors that if North</p>
<p>42</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

<p>Koreans go to China, South Koreans would give them rice and the Chinese would beat them. She admitted that she was from an extremely rural area and she didn't know how things worked.</p> <p>The river was high because of heavy rains. She escaped with two men who held her hand and helped her to cross the river. When she first arrived in China, a stranger invited her to live with him. He took good care of her. She continues to live with him and he is in effect her husband.</p> <p>In 1999, she was caught twice. Both times she paid a bribe of 1000 RMB to the police. Her "in-laws" borrowed money to pay the bribe. In 2001 and 2002 she was caught and sent back to North Korea. She was on her way to South Korea when she was caught in 2002.</p> <p>One of her neighbors, a North Korean woman who had been living in her village in China, called her from South Korea to tell her how much better off she would be in South Korea. Her plan was to take the train to Beijing and meet someone who could help her enter South Korea. She didn't know who would be meeting her. Her neighbor in South Korea had paid someone, and she would repay her once she made some money. She thinks her neighbor works in a cafeteria. Her neighbor is also very Christian, and she thinks the neighbor now has a high position in the church.</p> <p>But she was apprehended halfway to Beijing. There was a Party meeting in Beijing at the time and security was very tight. She was caught on the train because she couldn't speak Chinese.</p> <p>In her four arrests, she was not mistreated by the Chinese police. She explained that many police officers are Korean Chinese and feel sorry for North Koreans. The police say they don't want to catch the North Koreans, but it's the law.</p> <p>In 2001, when she was first arrested and deported, she was sent to a detention center near Yanji. She stayed for two days. The</p>	<p>Chinese would just send everyone back to North Korea once the detention center filled up. In her case, there were lots of defectors, and after two days they were all sent back.</p> <p>She was sent to the National Security Jail. Besides political education, officials told them over and over that they could never return to China. She mentioned a North Korean guard telling the defectors that "a man without a country is worse than a dog at a funeral." She was not mistreated, and the food wasn't too bad. They ate corn and kimchee. She was not certain about the exact number of prisoners because defectors were mixed with criminals. But, there were three or four guards taking care of them. She was in jail for 20 days. Before being released, she had to promise not to return to China. She was sent back to her hometown, but had no place to go, nothing to live on, no job. She stayed at her sister's house, but her sister was facing many hardships. After 15 days, she decided to go back to China and her husband.</p> <p>She was caught again in December 2002 on her way to Beijing. She had the same experience as in 2001. The officials at the National Security Jail remembered her.</p> <p>She worries about getting caught again. The Chinese are cracking down. Having been caught several times, she thinks the police know that she's staying in this village. She is uncertain if the police have come looking for her. She doesn't speak Chinese so she stays at home all day. Sometimes she leaves to do some farming work.</p> <p>Her biggest concern is her safety. She does not want to feel afraid anymore. She remembers her family in North Korea during holidays and special occasions. However, the family doesn't have a telephone so she has not been able to contact them.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>The [Chinese] police say they don't want to catch the North Koreans, but it's the law.</p> <p>43</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">He came to China both times to get medicine for his mother.</p>	<p>INTERVIEW 31 WOMAN, Age 59 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1998</p> <p>In North Korea, she cut firewood for a living. She could barter a cart of firewood for 500g of corn. Her husband was a lumberjack.</p> <p>When her husband became sick, she sold their house to buy medicine. Her husband died in 1997, possibly from lung cancer. After he died, her family had no house and no food so they decided to go to China. She had heard that they could be better off in China because the Chinese felt sorry for North Koreans so they were nice to them.</p> <p>Her two daughters and one son escaped to China in 1997, a year before she came. The plan was for her children to go ahead to China, establish themselves, and she would come later.</p> <p>The daughters went ahead to China and found an older man. He is Han Chinese, but had lived in North Korea in the 1960s when things were bad in China. He can speak some Korean.</p> <p>She came to China for the first time in 1998 with two others. One was caught by North Korean guards. A Chinese guard helped her and the other to hide so they were able to make it into China. Her daughter had advised on how to cross.</p> <p>Before she left, her daughter had given her the address of the older man. She stopped to ask directions along the way, and everyone was very kind to her: "They were better than my real relatives." She was able to find her "husband."</p> <p>She was sent back to North Korea three times. The first time, she was caught in April 2001 and she returned to China in June. The second time, she was caught in April 2003, and she returned to China in August. In 2004 she was caught in April yet again, and she returned just a few weeks later. She was caught all three times when she was out farming. The Chinese did not mistreat her:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">"Everyone was nice to me."</p> <p>One daughter and her son were caught, but they are now back in China.</p> <p>In each case, she was sent to the National Security Jail. The conditions were okay, as long as you follow the rules.</p> <p>She explained that it is different in China now because the North Koreans have committed many crimes and the Chinese don't feel sympathetic anymore.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 32 MAN, Age 32 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: March 2001</p> <p>He works in a warehouse at a mine in Musan. He receives 2-3 kilos of corn per month, but the distribution is irregular. His wife does some small-scale trade. She buys cigarettes from Chinese traders and resells them. She buys a packet for 82 NK won and sells them for 85 NK won. She sells 20-30 packets a day.</p> <p>His father died in 2001. His two sisters are married. His mother is sick. He has been married for four years, and he has a two year old daughter.</p> <p>This is his second time to come to China. He came to China both times to get medicine for his mother. He heard from people who had been in China before that if he went to China, the church would assist him.</p> <p>On his first trip, he traveled with someone familiar with the route who knew about a church in Kilji. The missionary was out, so he got some clothes from the man in charge. He went back to North Korea three days later and started working again at the mine.</p> <p>He earns around 700 NK won at the mine, and he gets an irregular food distribution. The prices of goods have increased. Rice is 360 NK won per kilo. In 2001, the price was 280 NK won. 1996 was an especially difficult year. They had to eat porridge made from bark. He thinks the economic situation has gotten worse since last winter. He</p>
<p>44</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

<p>does not know why, but he has heard that the Americans are causing it. Last year, he earned less than 500, but it is now 700. Most of the people working in the mine got an increase.</p> <p>Lots of things are available in the market. There are different kinds of food, clothes, and kitchen items. The people who have been to China can buy these products because they have money. People like him who have not worked in China cannot afford these things. It is hard for people to survive if they have not been to China. He constantly thinks to himself, "I need to go to China."</p> <p>He talked to someone who went to a National Security Jail. If people know the guards or have money to bribe the guards, they can survive. Otherwise you come out half-dead.</p> <p>He has only been to middle school. He took two years off because he had a stomach disease. Afterwards he started working in the mine. He has been working there for 13 years.</p> <p>He arrived in China three days ago with a neighbor. They were able to find assistance in the church. He wanted to get some painkillers for his mother. He expects to return to North Korea later tonight. His family is waiting for him. If life is hard, he will come back to China. He is planning on paying 100 RMB to the North Korean guards. Musan is only a three-hour walk from the Chinese border.</p> <p>There has not been an increase in people leaving Musan because North Koreans know about the Chinese crackdowns. The presence of Chinese border guards has increased.</p> <p>Every day he eats cornmeal mixed with greens. He eats two meals a day. Usually he doesn't eat rice. He saves his rice for his daughter.</p> <p>If a person gets sick, they can go to the hospital. Injections are free, but there is no medicine. Doctors tell patients to buy the medicine off Chinese traders.</p> <p>Some people have radios. Most people buy them in China. People are able to get</p>	<p>Chinese, North Korean and South Korean stations, but they are punished if they are caught listening to South Korean news. Usually radios are fixed to receive only a single channel.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 33 MAN, Age 32 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: Unclear; most recent arrival June 2004</p> <p>He has three brothers and sisters. Both his parents died in 1998-1999. He is married with a one-year old son. He has been married seven years. He and his wife worked on the same farm. He came to China to get money for birthday presents for his son. His birthday is on June 2. He has some relatives who are Chinese and sometimes he can get some help from them. He wants to go back to North Korea before his son's birthday and will probably leave tonight. He has never been caught before. He just crosses back and forth to get assistance.</p> <p>He has been to China five times. Three times he came to get medicine for his father, and he came twice to get clothes for his children. Each time, he has to pay a 100 RMB bribe to the North Korean guards. He travels back and forth with the same neighbor each time.</p> <p>Living conditions in North Korea are difficult. He eats corn and greens every day, and he receives an irregular food distribution. He grows corn, but has to give all his crops to the officials. The officials, in turn, distribute the food to others. He only receives a small portion. He never has enough to eat. Why else would he have to come to China to get money and clothes?</p> <p>He borrowed 30,000 NK won from his neighbors and he has to pay back 36,000 NK won. He borrowed the money for his son's birthday party. He had two children before, and they died before they reached one year — the first after two months and the second after eight months. This time he doesn't want his son to die.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>45</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">The Chinese authorities have not caused problems for her so far. She said, “God protects me.”</p>	<p>He brought some seaweed and trout, which are cheap in North Korea, to China for his relatives to sell. He will use the profits to pay off his debt. He is afraid that his relatives have not had any success in selling the food.</p> <p>He said there is no mistreatment for families of defectors. Only the defectors themselves are sent to National Security Jail and the labor centers. He feels safe in North Korea and doesn't want to live in China because his wife is in North Korea. He said he is not treated well in China.</p> <p>In terms of health, most people are weak and skinny, like him. Now they have to pay to get treatment. The policy of free medical care has gradually changed since 2000. One injection costs 1000 NK won. If people get sick, they don't go to the hospital. They take Chinese medicine. One of his children that died had lung disease and he had to pay 6000 NK won to get medicine. Women have their babies at home. He said three or four women every year in his town of 500 die in childbirth.</p> <p>For 400 RMB, North Koreans can buy official permission to go to China. You have to know an official, however, to get the permission. One person in his town, whose uncle is in a high political position, received permission.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 34 WOMAN, Age 48 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Ch'ongjin FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: September 1999</p> <p>She has not returned to North Korea since she arrived in 1999. Her two daughters are still there. Her husband worked at a company that exported mushrooms to Japan. He died in a car accident when she was 29. She worked in a post office as a receptionist in North Korea. She said she felt like a traitor for coming to China. Her salary 10 years ago was 47 NK won. Back then 100 NK won was enough to live on. After her salary stopped in 1998, she decided to come to China.</p> <p>She had no intention to live here; she only planned to stay for a little while and get</p> <p>some assistance from her Chinese relatives. When she came, her Chinese relative set her up with a Chinese man. She became his second wife. He treats her well. They go to church together. They are the same age. He is Korean Chinese. She speaks a little Chinese.</p> <p>Once she got a letter from her daughter saying that she was getting married to a man in Musan. The letter did not mention anything else, and she has not heard from her since then.</p> <p>The Chinese authorities have not caused problems for her so far. She said, “God protects me.” Other people have been caught.</p> <p>Three years ago, it was easy to cross because surveillance in China was minimal. When she escaped, she promised she would pay the North Korean guard 200 RMB when she returned. She had planned on staying for three days, and she even made an appointment with him for three days later, but she never went back.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 35 WOMAN, age 68 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Ch'angdo FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: December 1999</p> <p>When she was young, she worked in a food factory. Her husband had been a truck driver, but he earned 60 NK won per month as a pension. In 1994, the food rations stopped because there was no supply. They have two daughters and a son.</p> <p>Her husband in North Korea died in 1997. She moved in with her son, but she did not tell him when she decided to go to China. She had heard that living in China was good. She traveled with two women and two men in November. One of the men knew the route.</p> <p>She had been in China many years ago to see her relatives. Her family lived in Tumen, and she was able to remember where they lived. She stayed with her cousin for two months, and she asked him to help her find a man to marry. She married a Korean Chinese,</p>
<p>46</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

but he died of a stroke six months later. She remarried, and her current husband had a stroke and is totally paralyzed. Her husband's son (a 40-year-old) is living in Qingdao and he sends money. She has never met him. She has had no contact with her family in North Korea.

INTERVIEW 36

WOMAN, Age 38, and her Son, Age 14
PLACE OF ORIGIN: Onsong
FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: August 1997

She came to China in August 1997 with her husband, who is now dead, her seven-year-old son, and her six-year-old daughter. Her husband knew the route because he had been to China before to meet his Chinese relatives. Her husband wanted to come to China. She didn't want to leave. She fought her husband for 15 days.

Her father is Chinese, but left for North Korea in the 1960s. At that time, North Korea was better off than China and Chinese sometimes moved to North Korea to survive.

In North Korea her husband was sick. He had a stroke and half his body was paralyzed. Their living conditions deteriorated because they had to buy medicine for him.

Both she and her husband were farmers. They got a food distribution once a year after the harvest. The food distribution was supposed to be 700 grams per day, but only 150 grams per day remained after all the deductions.

In 2002, there was a serious crackdown and her family was caught. Her daughter was not caught because she was at her English tutor's house. They were sent back to North Korea and went to the National Security Jail to be interrogated. They were there for a week before being taken to a labor center for three days. Her son, because he was a child, and her husband, because he was sick, did not have to work. "I was so lucky that we only had to spend three days there." In May, they returned to China. In September, the four family members were caught. Again, they

went to the National Security Jail, and then were sent to the labor center for five days.

The conditions at the labor center were hard. Two people carried stones. They couldn't walk. They had to run. If someone fell down, they were kicked. It was like a race, and the first six people could rest. They had to run for 100 meters, 30 times. They had a 30 minute rest period. Defectors had to run with the stones that criminals handed them. Both men and women did this work. Eighty percent of the prisoners were defectors. In the labor center, the guards cursed at the prisoners. She said she was hit and kicked. Everyone had to use the toilet in the open with ten guards watching.

They usually got up at 6:00 am and marched singing, "I won't betray again."

They ate porridge made from rice husks and scraps of Chinese cabbage. Sometimes there were stones in their food.

Her family was released together. Usually, the punishment is more severe to people who are caught twice. She thinks God is taking care of her because her family was spared from extra punishment.

Her husband died when they were deported back to North Korea the second time, and now she is married to a Chinese man. They farm together.

"When can I have a normal life? I don't even want to go to South Korea. I just want to live here and feel safe."

INTERVIEW 37

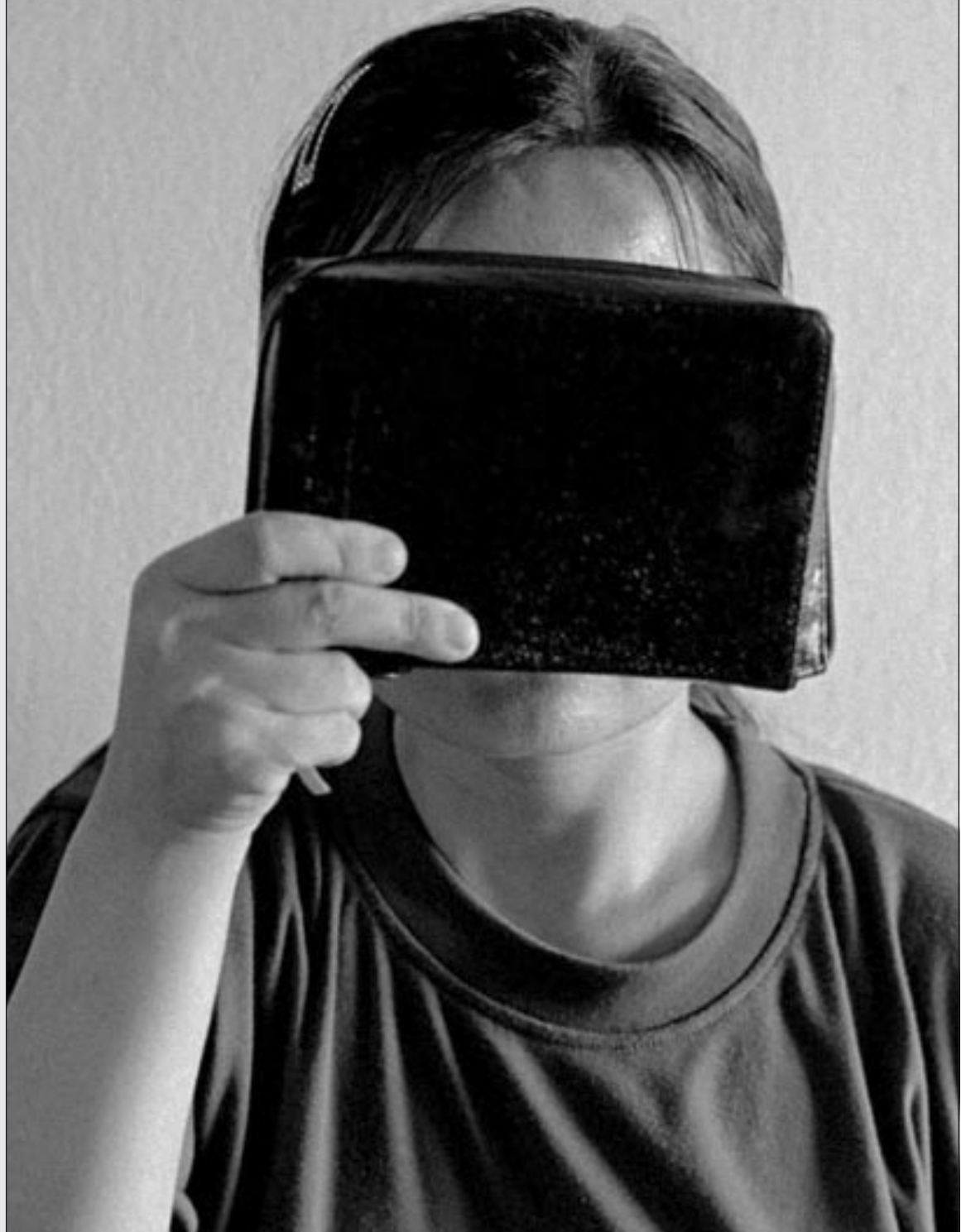
WOMAN, Age 34
PLACE OF ORIGIN: Unknown
FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: December 1997

Her mother and father died when she was 25. She started working in a mine at 17, but when she was 22, the mine collapsed and she developed a heart condition. She got married when she was 25 and got divorced six months later months due to the heart disease. She has seizures about twice a month. Her mother-in-law buys her snake eyes and heart for medicine.

"I just want to live here and feel safe."

Having endured severe physical and mental abuse by those protecting her from the Chinese authorities, this refugee felt she had no choice but to escape from China. Now out of China, she lives in a safe house in a third-party country and continues to struggle with health related problems.

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<p>She lived alone after her parents died. Her house was broken into three times. One day, after the third robbery, a man (she later discovered that he was the person robbing her house) knocked on her door and suggested that she go to China. He promised to introduce her to a Chinese man. She had no idea about China, but after being robbed, she thought going to China was the only way for her to survive. She crossed the border with a “guide” and worked as a housekeeper for two or three months.</p> <p>On the Chinese New Year holiday, there were fireworks, which scared her and caused her to have a seizure. The landlord saw that she was sick so they kicked her out. The landlord did not mistreat her. She didn’t get paid while she was working, but when she was kicked out, she was given 20 RMB. On her way back in to North Korea, a guard discovered her and took her 20 RMB and some clothes. She went to the National Security Jail, and the doctor saw that she had a heart problem so she didn’t have to go to the labor center. She spent a week in the jail.</p> <p>In the National Security Jail, she was separated from the others because she was sick. When guards mistreated people, they took them out one by one, so she does not know to what extent they were mistreated. Defectors and criminals were separated. They were given only a small amount of corn meal mixed with greens.</p> <p>After prison, she returned home, and she saw that everything was gone. She learned that the robber had stripped her house down after she left for China. She also said that he was eventually caught and sentenced to ten years in prison, although he was released after five. She did menial farming jobs for the next six or seven years.</p> <p>She returned to China in March 2004. The broker was released from jail, and he showed up again and started watching her. She had allowed a homeless old woman, her daughter, and granddaughter to come and stay with her, but one day the three of them took her house from her.</p> <p>The broker showed up again. She wanted to die. Her heart disease got worse and worse. Her neighbor told her that her death would only make the three happy. He told her, “You have to survive. Why don’t you go to China?” Her neighbor introduced her to a North Korean man who brought her to China and then introduced her to a Korean Chinese man. Now she is married to him. The Korean Chinese paid 1500 RMB for her. He treats her well, and they go to church together. Her biggest concern is money. She stays at home and does some farming.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 38 MAN, Age 62 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1997</p> <p>He came here to get medicine from a Chinese relative. The next year his son came here with his two daughters. He has four children: two daughters in China, one son died, and one son is married in North Korea. He has never been caught in China. He said that his relatives stopped him from going back to North Korea when he came to get medicine. In the 1980s, he came back and forth three times legally to visit his relatives. His relatives in China sent an official invitation, and he applied for permission. He did not need to pay. In the 1980s, policies allowed people living near the border to cross over and see their families.</p> <p>His daughters have never been caught either. One daughter is in Harbin. She paid a bribe and got Chinese citizenship. His other daughter is married to a Chinese, and now her two children go to a Han Chinese school. In order for North Korean children, or even half North Korean children, to go to school, they have to pay a bribe. The price is usually 300 RMB, but they paid 500 RMB.</p> <p>He was a mechanic, but now works in a public bathhouse. He got this job two years ago because the employer’s brother (Korean Chinese) is his friend. He lives in a dormitory for bathhouse workers. He earns 30 RMB at the bathhouse. He is the only North</p>	<p>In order for North Korean children... to go to school, they have to pay a bribe.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>49</p>

He believes that North Koreans who commit crimes increase the risk of random crackdowns.

Korean working there. When asked, he said there were no North Korean women working there, but he later admitted that there was one working in the karaoke section. His employer knows the police, so the police warn the employer whenever there is a crackdown. The police have never caused him problems, but he is expecting it to happen any day. He believes that North Koreans who commit crimes increase the risk of random crackdowns. Ten days ago there was a murder case in town, and the police contacted his employer. His employer told him to stay away from work for a few days.

INTERVIEW 39

WOMAN, Age 31
 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Pyongyang
 FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: June 1999

Her father was a chauffeur for a Party member in the 1970s. Her mother worked in a cosmetics factory. In 1991, there was an economic crisis and they started to have food problems. In general, life became very difficult. Divorce rates were high. Also, people started traveling to China, so families would be separated.

Her mother died in 1998 from an operation, and her father died in 1999 from malnutrition. Her brother died from falling from a fifth floor apartment. She has a sister in North Korea. After middle school, she went to a vocational night school. She studied chemistry. She graduated from the vocational school in three and a half years and went to work full time at the dye factory.

One of her close neighbors was planning to get married in China. The neighbor told her to go to China with her. She came to China with her neighbor and a “guide” and met a broker in China. She does not know who paid the guide — either her neighbor or the person waiting for her in China. She ran away when she heard the broker talking on the phone to someone about a North Korean woman and a karaoke parlor.

After escaping from the broker, she caught a train. There were several North Korean

women on the train so she began talking to them. Her future husband was sitting in the next row and suggested that she come to his town because there were even more North Korean women in his town. She followed him to her present village, and now she has a four-year-old daughter. She said authorities don’t bother North Korean women with children. She works on a farm. Her husband treats her well. Her child doesn’t have Chinese citizenship, which would require a 10,000 RMB bribe. Her biggest concern is safety. She does not want to go back to North Korea.

INTERVIEW 40

WOMAN, Age 29
 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Onsong
 FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: February 1998

As soon as she arrived in China, she married, so now she has a three-year old daughter. She has never been caught.

In North Korea she worked in a brick factory. She finished middle school.

She has three younger sisters. Two came to this town, and one went to another town in China. Her sisters have never been caught.

In 1999, her father went to China. He went back to North Korea to get her mother. While he was away, her mother tried to go to China because she had not heard anything from her family in China. She tried to go on her own. She took the same path as her husband, but they missed each other. She tried to cross the river, and at that time, it was half frozen. She fell into the river, so she had cuts from the ice. She decided to return to North Korea. At that time, her father was caught crossing into North Korea and sent to the National Security Jail. Her mother was also caught and sent to the National Security Jail. Her father probably died in March 1999 and mother died in April 1999, both a month after their release from the prison.

She decided to come to China because she could not survive in North Korea. She had no food, clothes, or income. She did not know what to expect; she felt young and naive. She

<p>wanted to make money and help her parents. “I had fantasies about China that I would go there and be better off than in North Korea.”</p> <p>Two of her sisters came to China first in order to get some assistance. The two sisters traveled to China on their own without a broker. The people that the two sisters met in a town told them to stay. They told some people that they had another sister. One man (Korean Chinese) from the town went to North Korea to get her. She married the man but divorced him three years later. She had a child with her ex-husband. He mistreated her, beat her and cheated on her. Her husband was put in jail for other crimes.</p> <p>After her husband was arrested, she went to her sister’s mother-in-law’s house. She started to work in a Chinese restaurant as a waitress. She met her current husband at the restaurant. He is an older Korean Chinese farmer. He treats her and her child well.</p> <p>She’s concerned about the rumors that North Korean women with children older than five will be sent back. Her child does not have Chinese citizenship, but she has also heard that if the North Korean mother is deported, the child can get citizenship.</p> <p>Her biggest concern is her daughter’s education. She wants her daughter to have the chance to study. “I will try to make money to send her to school.” It costs at least 1000 RMB for North Korean kids to go to school, even though the normal fee is only 700 RMB.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 41 WOMEN, ages 25 and 24 (the younger sisters of the women in Interview 40) PLACE OF ORIGIN: Onsong FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: One in 1999 and one in 1998</p> <p>She has a three year old son. Her sister’s ex-husband set her up with a Han Chinese man (31 years old). She couldn’t communicate with him. She tried to run away from him four times so, he started to beat her. He paid 5000 RMB for her to her sister’s ex-husband. The last time she ran away, she</p>	<p>prayed, and she was successful. She went to her younger sister’s house, and six months later she married again. Her younger sister’s neighbor was a Christian and set her up with her current husband. The father of her child is her current husband. She was eight months pregnant with her ex-husband’s baby, and when they met, her current husband told her to get an abortion. He paid for it.</p> <p>Her current husband is 38 years old. He’s Han Chinese, so she is learning Chinese. He treats her “so-so.” “He’s good-natured but a bit stubborn.”</p> <p>Her biggest concern is how to send her son to school and how her son will meet a woman. She’s also worried about her safety.</p> <p>The other sister said that when she arrived in China, someone introduced her to a Korean Chinese man. The person who introduced them didn’t get any money to introduce them. He had been married before for seven years. Her husband is 37. She has two daughters. During the day, she farms. When he gets drunk, he beats her. She said he has mental problems due to side effects from medication. Her biggest concern is her “emotional pain.” She has problems with her husband and her mother-in-law. She’s concerned about her safety.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 42 WOMAN, Age 43 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Onsong FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2000</p> <p>In North Korea, she was a dancer and her husband was a farmer. Because both of their backgrounds were suspect, they couldn’t become Party members. Her father was a businessman and defected to South Korea, while her mother studied in Germany and Russia when she was young. Her parents were treated like political prisoners, so her own background was suspect, as well as that of her husband. She didn’t want her children to have the same stigma, so she decided to bring her family to China.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>51</p>

“I had fantasies about China that I would go there and be better off than in North Korea.”

“Even though all family members are separated, I hope God will put us together some day.”

She came with four family members: her husband, 19-year-old daughter, her son, and six month-old daughter. They traveled to China in the winter when the river was frozen. She traveled with a sword. She had no intention to kill anyone, but she carried it just in case. She did not have to pay a bribe. The people in town knew the guards' schedules, so she got information about when they ate, when they slept, etc.

It was difficult for her to take care of her six month-old in China. She met a Christian who introduced her to a “foster” mother. She decided to give her baby to this woman. The woman tried to give her some money for the baby, but she refused to accept it. “Even if I die of starvation, I can’t accept the money. I hope the baby will grow up like Moses.”

Life was extremely difficult when she arrived in China. She and her family wandered from place to place. She and her husband had to do menial work. Her husband even cleaned rich people’s dog houses. She heard that if they went to Kilim they could survive. They took a train there without a ticket. The ticket collector, a Han Chinese, felt sorry for them. He knew they were from North Korea and he let them ride the train. They got sporadic assistance. The woman who helped her give away her baby converted her to Christianity, and someone from her church introduced her to her current husband.

Her 19 year old daughter was caught in 2000 during a Bible study in Yanji. Bible study is illegal in North Korea so she got harsh treatment. She was put in a prison for political criminals for one and a half years. Her daughter is now at her sister’s house. Meeting Americans or South Koreans and studying the Bible are all treated like political treason. She is trying to bring her daughter back to China through a broker. She will pay as much as the broker wants. The usual price of bringing someone from the Chinese border is 1000-1500 RMB. She doesn’t know how much it will cost to bring her daughter from her sister’s house, which is near the border with South Korea, to the Chinese bor-

der. The brokers work on both sides of the border. In the defector community, it is easy to contact brokers. In early April she asked the broker to start the process of bringing her daughter to China. She will pay the broker after her daughter is delivered.

Her husband was sent back to North Korea in 2002. He remarried in North Korea.

Later, she married a Korean Chinese man. The aunt of her current husband introduced them. He works at a government run factory. He has a low-level job calculating the size of wood. She does not speak Chinese. She sells embroidery to her church. She can earn about 500 RMB for a large piece. For example, the other day, she embroidered “The Lord’s Prayer” and a pastor from South Korea bought two pieces for 1,000 RMB.

Her son is studying the Bible. She is not certain where he lives. When someone does Bible study, they don’t inform their family where they are.

Her biggest concern is that she can’t earn a living off embroidery. Her eyesight is getting worse.

“Even though all family members are separated, I hope God will put us together some day.”

INTERVIEW 43

WOMAN, Age 24, and her Aunt, Age 45

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Onsong

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: Woman in September 2003 and her Aunt in 1999

She wanted to be a teacher in North Korea. It was hard to go to university so she gave up and began farming. Her father had a high position in the army. In 1990 he received 150 NK won. At that time 100 NK won was enough to live on. They had a good life. He retired in 1994. He was supposed to get a pension, but he never received it. If he still received his pension, it should be around 2400 NK won. Without the pension, her parents started selling everything (TV, furniture, etc) in order to survive. Because he was

<p>in the military, they were supposed to receive double the normal ration, but they did not receive any food. Before he retired, they lived in Hyesan. After he retired, they moved to Onsong.</p> <p>She came with her sister who has TB. One sister died in North Korea from TB. Her father, mother, and older brother are still in North Korea.</p> <p>She went with a broker to China. She did not have any specific plans for what she was going to do in China. The broker in North Korea said there were lots of jobs and that she could make a lot of money. The broker took them to a woman's house. Her sister was sick so she kept coughing. She had edema and the woman thought she was pregnant. The woman decided to send them back to North Korea. They decided to find her aunt, who had lived in China for four years. She knew that her cousins were attending school in Yanji so she went to the school to find her cousin. They told the broker that they had an aunt in Yanji so the broker went with them to the school. The broker went to the aunt's house and demanded 700 RMB but settled for 500 RMB.</p> <p>Her aunt's house is secure. She stays at home all day and she learns Chinese from her cousins who are attending school. She does not leave the house very often in case she is discovered. She cannot go to church. She has church service at home.</p> <p>Her biggest concerns are her father and mother. She misses them, and she's worried because her father is sick. Also, she doesn't like staying at home all day. She can only go for a walk early in the morning and at night.</p> <p>Her brother came to China a few days ago in search of assistance. She was able to give him some money. Her brother needed help getting medicine for their father who had become sick since she came to China.</p> <p>The aunt then added that her nephew said the situation in North Korea is getting worse. This year, the government gave land to farmers. Farmers are now in charge of their own</p> <p>fields. If a farmer produces more, then they get more rice. There is no fertilizer so they cannot increase their productivity. (It's a new policy. It sounds great, but actually it didn't make a difference at all.)</p> <p>Her nephew was a soldier, but now he does not have a job. He was forced to grow corn and beans in the mountains because he cannot access good land. He eats one meal a day—porridge mixed with tofu and corn. Her nephew has two sons and when he saw the Chinese children in school, he felt bad that his kids could not go to school.</p> <p>The price of rice has increased to 300 NK won. The aunt explained that Chinese currency influences the price of goods in North Korea. When the value of Chinese money goes up, prices also increase. Her nephew is not receiving any food rations. This was the first time that he had come to China for assistance. There is no way to send money to him if he does not go to China to meet her.</p> <p>When the aunt first came here, North Korean defectors felt lonely and they tried to meet each other and build a community. One of them was caught, and he told the police who caught some more, who then told about the others, like a chain. Now they avoid each other for their own safety.</p> <p>The aunt's husband came in 1998. He got some assistance and returned to North Korea 20 days later. As a Party Member, his absence from home aroused the suspicions of the National Security Agency. He was sent to the National Security Jail where he received severe punishment. All of his ribs were broken. Because he was a Party member, he was treated more severely. He received criticisms and had to sign a written oath that he would not return to China. After one month, he was released but he had received a lot of punishment.</p> <p>A month after his release, another jail made the same charges against him. She explained that after all the punishment, he developed ill-feelings for his country and wanted to escape. He went to the second security office</p>	<p>He was sent to the National Security Jail where he received severe punishment. All of his ribs were broken.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>53</p>

<p>Her mother's husband is handicapped. He mistreated her and her mother. Sometimes he tried to beat her with an ax.</p>	<p>and they told him to come back the next day. He escaped to China that day. He did not even inform her that he was leaving. Her husband stayed with a relative in Wang Chung. They helped him get a job in a textile factory. He earned 500 RMB/month.</p> <p>Her sister traveled often back and forth. Her sister contacted her husband in China. Ten months after he left for China he returned to North Korea to take her to China. The entire family—husband, daughter (now 19) and two sons (now 11 and 14) —went to China. They crossed at night and had to bribe the guards (700 RMB).</p> <p>At first when the family came, they went to the mountains and picked greens to sell in the market. For a while she worked as a domestic servant. Her husband would sell salvaged iron. Now she has been embroidering for the past three years. She gets work from a company and she can earn 100-300 RMB per piece. She has poor eyesight and sore shoulders all the time. When they first arrived, they moved from house to house, but now they are renting a house. Usually you have to show a Chinese ID card to rent, but her landlord is an old woman who doesn't know that they need to show her identification. She doesn't know that they are North Korean. It is usually very difficult for North Koreans to rent property. She has lived in the apartment since last year. She pays about 600 RMB per month.</p> <p>Her sons attend school. Rural students can go to school in Yanji if they pay a 3600 RMB fee. She pretended that they came from a rural area. The teacher does not know that they are North Korean. Her oldest daughter does not study. She stays at home all day and sews and studies the Bible.</p> <p>Her biggest concern is safety. She does not have Chinese citizenship. The last formal crackdown was last September. Others have been deported because of informers. She is also worried about her children's future and being able to send them to school.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 44 GIRL, Age 15 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Orang FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 2001</p> <p>Her parents were both farmers. "Starvation was normal for me." When she was eight, her parents left her and brother with some corn. They said they would return after two or three days. She went to a neighbor to borrow food, but they only gave her a rice mill. She ground some rice husks because there was nothing else, but she could not get any food.</p> <p>When she was eight years old, her mother went to China and married a Chinese man. At that time, she was so young that she didn't know her mother went to China but she guessed it from the clothes her mother sent her. The new husband mistreated her mother. He killed his own mother, and when the police came to the house to arrest him, they found her mother, who they deported to North Korea.</p> <p>Her father is still in North Korea and remarried after her mother escaped to China. Before coming to China, she moved between her grandmother, father, and stepmother. She went to school for only three years because she had to move around so much.</p> <p>When she was 11, her mother went to China to marry another Chinese man. After her mother left for China, she stayed with her grandmother. Her mother asked her uncle to take her to the border to deliver her to her stepfather on the Chinese side.</p> <p>Her mother's husband is handicapped. He mistreated her and her mother. Sometimes he tried to beat her with an ax. When she first arrived, she joined her mother and siblings and lived with the new husband. However, all the kids ran away because of the husband's abuse.</p> <p>Her mother had a job making miso. Her mother told them that when the husband was out, they should leave and go to the mother's workplace. The employer was kind, and she allowed the three kids and mother to hide in a storage area (about the size</p>
<p>54</p>	<p>ACTS OF BETRAYAL: THE CHALLENGE OF PROTECTING NORTH KOREANS IN CHINA</p>

<p>of queen bed) for a week. Her mom went back to her husband. She does not see her mother. They are afraid that the husband will force them to go back. She has her mother's telephone number, but her mother has told her never to call. Her mother said it was okay to call once they are in another country.</p> <p>Now she lives with a missionary. She just stays home and studies Chinese and the Bible.</p> <p>At her school in North Korea they had learned that North Korea is better off than China. She first thought that this might be wrong when her mother sent clothes back from China. "The things that I learned in school are not true." When she crossed the border, the Chinese side was shiny and bright and the North Korean side was totally dark [due to lack of electricity on the North Korean side of the border.] After she crossed the border, she took a taxi for the first time in her life. "I feel like I'm a party member."</p> <p>She had to work when she was staying with her stepfather. In the winter she would collect firewood, and in the summer she would farm.</p> <p>Now she is living with her friend (see Interview 45) and each of their sisters. There are four of them living there. Her brother is living in a shelter.</p> <p>"I have no worries, but I want to see my mom again." She also wants to be able to study. She feels safe with the missionary as long as she stays inside.</p> <p>Her top priority is to go abroad, be successful, and meet her mother. "Then I can think about my dreams." She wants to go to South Korea.</p> <p>INTERVIEW 45 GIRL, Age 15 PLACE OF ORIGIN: Ch'ongjin FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1999</p> <p>She is presently living with her sister (and her friend and her sister) with a missionary.</p> <p>She was living in North Korea with her mother, father, and sister. A broker told her mother that if you go to China, you could get</p>	<p>food and assistance. Her mother followed the broker who sold her to a Han Chinese to be married for 7000 RMB. She was later deported.</p> <p>Her mother came again to China in 1999, this time she brought her and her sister. Both she and her mother were caught at church and deported in 2001. The Chinese did not mistreat them. She and her mother were sent to the National Security Jail and later to a labor center. She was in the labor center for two months. She was not an adult so she did not have to work. At the labor center, they ate a small amount of corn every day, three times a day. Her mother had to work all day farming. The North Korean guards did not physically mistreat them. She stayed with her mother in the labor center.</p> <p>One month after they were released, her mother decided to go to China again. This time her mother took her younger sister. As soon as they arrived in China, her mother contacted a broker. She called the missionary who they stayed with before from the broker's house. The missionary wanted to know where the girl who became her friend was (see Interview 44), and her mother lied and said she was sick. The missionary, who was worried about her, found out it was not true and that she was actually in North Korea. Then her mother returned to North Korea to get her out. The missionary paid 1600 RMB for all three. The broker had been planning to sell her mother and her sister. Her mother went back to the Han Chinese man.</p> <p>Last July, her mother was caught again. Her mother is now in North Korea, and she has no information about her.</p> <p>Her biggest concern is her mother. She doesn't know what happened to her mother. Her strongest memory of North Korea is starvation. She stopped attending school in North Korea after the third grade because of starvation. She once went five days without food.</p>
<p>WWW.REFUGEESINTERNATIONAL.ORG</p>	<p>55</p>

"The things that I learned in school are not true."

Women had other punishments such as having food withheld and being forced to sit perfectly still.

INTERVIEW 46

WOMAN, Age 21

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: 1998

She remembers 1997 being the most difficult year for her in North Korea. She almost starved, and she could not attend school. She thought she would die if she stayed in North Korea, so she decided to go to China. She told her mother that she was going to escape. Her mother cried, but did not try to stop her. She did not have an idea of what she wanted to do in China before she crossed. She only knew that she had to escape. She had heard two different rumors: she would be sold in China and could eat well if she made it.

She was 15 years old when she crossed. For the first four months, she lived in a rural area. She wandered around and sometimes slept in corn fields. She traveled around China with the father of a friend with whom she crossed. She occasionally did some farming work.

One day on the street she met an old Korean Chinese woman who convinced her to look after her son in Yanji. At first she was afraid, but decided to go to Yanji because she did not have anywhere else to go. The old woman did not physically mistreat her, but did verbally abuse her. The old woman would threaten to turn her into the police. The son also verbally abused her, but not as badly as the old woman. After two years, when the son's health conditions really deteriorated, the old woman kicked her out and sent her to a South Korean-run shelter.

In April 2000, a Chinese employee at the shelter turned them in to the police. She and 13 others were caught during Bible study and were later deported. She was in jail in North Korea for one year.

She spent two months at the National Security Jail. After that, she was sent to a bigger National Security Jail where she was put on trial twice in eight months. Her charges were serious. She claims that Kim Il Jong himself signed her documents. When the Chinese

deported her, they provided North Korean officials with documents detailing how she was caught in Bible study and had met South Koreans. During interrogations, they asked her questions about the church and about her ideology. The interrogations especially focused on her Christian faith.

In both prisons she had to sit perfectly still all day. She did not go to a labor center. She received psychological punishment and couldn't speak at all. "I was treated worse than a dog. I would rather die than go there again." The men were beaten, but the women were not. Women had other punishments such as having food withheld and being forced to sit perfectly still. She was the youngest (age 17), so the prison guards felt sorry for her, even though in North Korea 17-year-olds are treated as adults.

In the second prison, there was no mess hall, and people had to eat their meals in their cells. They never left their cell unless they were being interrogated. She shared a cell with seven women — the women she was caught with in China and one other. She did not know about any of the other prisoners. They referred to each other according to the prisoner numbers the guards used. The first jail was crowded but the second jail was not. The cell was about 10 by 10 and they had to sit apart from each other so they would not talk. She never talked because there was a video camera and the room was bugged. The uncovered toilet made the cell smell. They were fed a small amount of corn three times a day.

She was interrogated every night for one or two hours. Interrogations took a long time because the guards had to write down all the information. She said that the prisoners usually tell lies, so the guards keep repeating the same question. It was hard to remember all the answers she gave the guards. She had to report on the 14 others she was captured with, and they were reporting on her as well. They tried to make sure everyone's answer matched.

She had two trials — a pre-trial to confirm the documents and her “story” and a second trial. She was released after the second trial. Most of the women were released.

Two people from her group died in jail, one in the first jail and one in the second. The three teachers from her Bible study were sentenced. She does not know about their sentence.

She came back to China a month after being released. Three months after she had come to China for the first time, her father came to find her. He couldn’t find her so he sent his address to North Korea. When she went home after jail, she got his address in China. She decided to go to China. She met a North Korean guard at the border who helped her cross. She called her father, and he came to get her. Her father paid the guard 500 RMB. She said it is not easy for North Korean guards to cross the border but it happens all the time. She finally met her father in 2001. She could not stay with him because he was farming. He sent her to a church, and later she moved to Yanji.

Her younger brother also came to China to find her and her father in 1999. One of his friends he was traveling with knew a church. They went to the church and the missionary sent him to Harbin. He is now 18 and was sent to South Korea last year. Her mother and younger brother are still in North Korea. Her mother does not want to come to China because her father had been caught several times by the Chinese. In January 2004, her father went to South Korea and met her brother.

She is learning to cut hair at a vocational training center for North Koreans. She does not have Chinese citizenship, and speaks only a little Chinese. She always feels nervous and unsafe. Her biggest concern is her safety. Her dream is to be a haircutter.

She wants to go to South Korea to see her father and brother. She has not seen her brother in six years. She has only talked to him over the phone, and she did not recognize his voice because it had become deep.

INTERVIEW 47

BOY, Age 18

PLACE OF ORIGIN: Musan

FIRST ARRIVAL IN CHINA: March 1998

In 1998, he first came to China with his mother, sister and sister’s friend. Life was difficult without his father. His father had been a miner until he died in 1995. Their initial plan was to make money and go back to North Korea.

They traveled on their own across the border. When they were in China, they stopped by a house near the border and the owner’s cousin was a broker. The broker brought them to Yanji. His mother had a typical North Korean hairstyle, so as soon as they arrived the broker took her to a beauty shop. Once she got her hair cut, the broker introduced his mother to a Chinese man. His mother married the man but ran away as soon as he paid money to the broker. He doesn’t know how much money the broker was paid.

For his first 15 days in China, he did odd jobs at the house of the broker’s friend. At first he wanted to return to North Korea. When he was walking in front of the train station, he recognized a man he had met previously, and was invited to live with him. His mother later came to live with them. They all lived together until his mother was killed in a train accident in 2000. After her death, he moved in with a missionary, and began studying Chinese and the Bible.

In 2002, he went back to North Korea to see his younger brother. At the time his younger brother was in a home for beggars (an orphanage or “wanderers” home). When he was crossing the border, a North Korean soldier saw him and was suspicious of his clothes. At first he lied and said he was visiting family but the soldier kept interrogating them and he finally admitted that they had been in China. He lied to the soldier, telling him that he went to China in 2000, that he went alone, that he hadn’t been in church, and that he hadn’t met South Koreans or foreigners. Surveillance on the North Korean

When he was crossing the border, a North Korean soldier saw him and was suspicious of his clothes.

...every night there was political education. The prisoners had to memorize slogans.

side was strong because New Year's Day was approaching. They had 300 RMB but they did not think to pay a bribe.

He was not sent to the National Security Jail. He says that the facility is only for defectors caught inside China. But because he was caught by the military he was sent to six or seven military jails (from platoon to company to squadron to regiment in a row) in a span of 15 days. During this time, he was beaten so severely that his nose would bleed. He was forced to sit outside in the winter with no clothes on. They were not the only prisoners; most of the others were defectors as well. He was released and sent to a "wanderers home" because he had no other place to go. Every town has one. He was there from January to March.

In March 2003, he returned to China with the same friend he was caught with. He called the missionary he lived with before. He was given some money and clothes and left for North Korea the same day. This time he paid 500 RMB to the guards. His friend had family in North Korea and was worried about his family. The boy being interviewed was worried that his friend would get in trouble in North Korea if he did not go with him. So he returned to North Korea and stayed until June 2003. He lived at a neighbor's house and did some farming.

He returned to China on June 19, 2003. He went to the same church that his mother had first gone to, and the people in the church helped him. He lived with some people from the church. He studied the Bible and how to play the organ.

He was caught again on November 16, 2003 during a church service. He was sent back to North Korea. The Chinese did not send any documentation with information about where he was found. He said he was lucky because the fact that he was in church was not discovered. He lied and said he had never been to church.

He spent two days at the Tumen prison. He was not mistreated by the Chinese. He spent

16 days in the National Security Jail. He said beating is pretty common, but he was not beaten. Instead, he had to sit still all day.

He spent 14 days in the labor center. He kept telling them he was 15 so he would not have to work. He does not know what kind of labor was performed there because he could not leave his cell. He had to stay in the cell and sit perfectly still all day. He was in a cell with adults. Most of the prisoners were defectors. He was not physically mistreated. He ate a small amount of corn porridge three times a day. He was eventually released and sent to a home.

When he was at the orphanage, it was discovered that he had lied about his age. He was sent back to the labor center. He was sentenced to six months. This time, he had to work. He cut firewood. Every day he worked from 8:00 to 12:00 in the morning and from 1:30 to 6:00 in the evening. There were about 60 people in the labor center, most of whom were defectors, but some were criminals. There were many women. There was no physical mistreatment unless you were caught trying to escape, then you were almost killed. In general he said there was no physical mistreatment or interrogations. But every night there was political education. The prisoners had to memorize slogans. Sometimes classes would last until all the slogans were memorized. He remembers a few of the slogans:

- Sit only where assigned.
- Regret your sins.
- Fight against crime.
- Never remember the national anthem and memories of another country.
- Never contact people outside North Korea.
- Never try to escape; if caught you will be sent to a more severe prison.
- Keep clean.

Labor centers are different in each hometown. The Musan labor center was relatively okay. The National Security Jail was the worst: bad

food, overcooked noodles made into porridge, and lots of interrogation. He said most interrogations were focused on what he did in China. Church activities are most severely punished. Also, people are not allowed to walk around in the National Security prison; they have to sit perfectly still. Plus, it is very crowded. With 30 people in each 10 x 10 cell, it is hard to find a place to sleep. There are people even sleeping in the hallways. He said that at least in the labor center, he could walk around. He was in the National Security Jail in Onsong.

He escaped from the labor center. "I was almost dead." He said prisoners are given broken spoons at meal times because the long part of spoon could be used as tools for suicide. Guards even count the number of spoon after meal. He heard the prisoner next door had 10 nails for suicide. At the labor center, because there weren't enough official guards, sometimes prisoners had to be guards. He said that the 30 minutes after meal time was the best time to escape, because it was a bit chaotic, with other prisoners going to eat and some returning to their cells. He escaped by telling one of the official guards that he was supposed to perform guard duty.

It was easier for prisoners with parents because they could give them food or go and visit them. It was difficult for him because he is an orphan.

After he escaped, he immediately came to China on January 27, 2004. He returned to the same church. Now stays with some people from the church. He is learning how to use computers at home, but he is afraid to walk around because he does not want to be caught again. Safety is his biggest concern. His dream is to convert North Korea to Christianity. "It was extremely hard to bear in a prison, but I think it is a good lesson. Now I understand prisoners and I can be a good missionary."

Prisoners are given broken spoons at meal times because the long part of the spoon could be used as tools for suicide.

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