

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH FEARS FOR IMPRISONED CANADIAN PASTOR

Lim Hyeon-soo, sentenced to life in prison in hard labour in North Korea, has developed a host of health problems including malnutrition, high blood pressure, arthritis, and stomach problems as a side effect of medicine that was not properly administered. Lim Hyeon-soo has been detained by North Korean authorities allegedly for “plotting to overthrow the government”.

Lim Hyeon-soo, aged 62, is a pastor of a church in Toronto, Canada. He has made more than 100 trips to North Korea on humanitarian missions since 1997. He was convicted of “plotting to overthrow the government” in December 2015 after spending almost one year in detention, and was sentenced to life in prison in hard labour. He spent the past two years in detention back and forth between a labour camp and a hospital for his health problems. He has been suffering from weight loss and high blood pressure. He recently developed arthritis, and because the medicine was not administered properly along with meals, he is suffering from stomach problems as a side effect.

Since being detained, Lim Hyeon-soo has been able to receive and send letters, and was allowed to make a direct phone call to his family in December 2016. He was likely monitored by authorities while making the phone call, and he delivered a message asking the Canadian government to negotiate with North Korea. In several other previous cases, North Korean authorities have allowed family visits to foreigners who have been detained.

According to media reports, Canadian officials have travelled to North Korea to visit Lim Hyeon-soo and discuss his release, but this effort has not lead to the end of his detention. He also received a visit from Swedish diplomats from the embassy in Pyongyang in May 2017. As Canada does not have diplomatic relations with North Korea, Sweden offers consular services, and has been an important interlocutor in these types of cases previously.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Urging the authorities to ensure that Lim Hyeon-soo is not subjected to any ill treatment and has prompt access to adequate nutrition and any medical treatment he requires, including outside the country if needed.
- Urging the authorities to allow him regular access to his family, including through telephone calls and arranged visits.

Contact this official before 26 July, 2017:

Ambassador

Ja Song-nam,

Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations,
820 Second Ave, 13th Floor New York, NY 10017, USA

Fax: +1 212 973-3154

E-mail: dpr.korea@verizon.net

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 139.17*

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The North Korea authorities have in recent years sentenced individuals, including foreign nationals, to long prison terms of ten years or more. The sentences were handed down often through judicial procedures that fall short of international fair trial standards. Individuals have been convicted of crimes such as “subversion” and “espionage” despite the lack of evidence showing that they have been involved in activities that meet the international definition of these offences. Religious personnel have also accounted for a significant proportion of victims receiving these long sentences.

Most of the individuals recently convicted received sentences of 15 years or less, but Lim Hyeon-soo was one of the exceptional cases receiving a life sentence. Many of the foreigners who were given long sentences did not end up serving their full prison term. The North Korean authorities have in the past released these prisoners for reasons such as the age of the prisoners, or because “the prisoner has apologized.”

Foreign prisoners are likely to be detained in a separate facility where they have no contact with North Korean prisoners. Imprisonment comes with long hours of work and surveillance by staff in detention facilities. Basic medical care outside the prison has been provided when needed.

Foreign detainees have been allowed to send and receive letters, and in some cases they were able to make telephone calls to their families. Calls were typically monitored, and detainees may be instructed to deliver a message to their family, typically asking the prisoner’s home government to resolve the issue through diplomatic means.

According to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Mandela Rules), prisoners should be allowed, under necessary supervision, to communicate with their family and friends at regular intervals, not only through written correspondence and using telecommunication, electronic, digital and other means where available, but also by receiving visits.

Name: Lim Hyeon-soo
Gender m/f: m

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