



5.24.2012

## NORTH KOREA | European Parliament condemns repatriation of refugees

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Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes today's European Parliament resolution condemning the repatriation of North Korean refugees by the Chinese authorities.

Speaking during the debate, European Commissioner Janez Potocnik said, "The EU is seriously concerned about the forcible repatriation of North Korean asylum seekers and refugees. We are aware that those who are returned face detention, torture and even execution. For the EU, as a matter of principle, it is important that all countries adhere to the 1951 Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Therefore the EU has raised this issue with China in the EU-China human rights dialogue and will continue to use every avenue possible to persuade China to change their policy of repatriation."

Despite its international obligations, China has prevented the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) from access to North Koreans in China and considers all undocumented North Koreans as economic migrants, rather than as asylum-seekers. Furthermore, China signed a co-operation agreement with North Korea in 1986 that obliges it to prevent illegal border crossings. There was significant international attention on the issue earlier this year when China repatriated 41 North Koreans despite international pressure from the EU and South Korea.

International law prohibits the forcible repatriation, either directly or indirectly, of any individuals to a country where they are at risk of facing persecution, torture or death. For North Koreans who are returned they are charged with "treachery against the nation" and either sent to prison camps or executed, sometimes with up to three generations of their family.

CSW has been active over the last few months in encouraging the European Parliament to speak out on this issue and has been working with MEPs to produce this resolution.

CSW's Advocacy Director, Andrew Johnston, said, "China's policy of repatriating North Korean refugees is in direct contravention of their obligations under international law. CSW welcomes this resolution on the issue and the work of the European Parliament in promoting human rights. In light of the European Parliament resolution, which shows widespread concern at their treatment of North Korean refugees, we urge the Chinese government to halt its practice of repatriating North Korean refugees and allow them to be assessed by United Nations Refugee Agency."

### Notes to Editors:

1. The EU-China Human Rights Dialogue is due to take place on May 29.