

**NKHR and APRRN call upon China to immediately stop the forcible repatriation of nine North Korean refugees**

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Nine North Korean refugees in China, including an 11-month-old infant, appear to be facing imminent repatriation to North Korea. If repatriated, these nine refugees would face torture and other severe human rights violations. **Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR)** and the **Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)** call upon China to immediately halt the repatriation of these refugees and permit their safe travel to a third country such as South Korea.

Vietnamese officials arrested the nine refugees on October 22, 2015, in Vietnam, as the group was making their way to the South Korean embassy in Laos. A few days later, the refugees were reportedly transferred to Dongxing, China, near the border with Vietnam. On November 16, Chinese authorities reportedly moved the group to Shenyang, a major transit city in Northeast China, much closer to North Korea. The proximity to the North Korean border raises serious concerns that the nine refugees will be repatriated soon.

If the nine refugees are repatriated to North Korea by China, they face an extreme risk of torture, imprisonment, and possibly even execution. North Korea strictly restricts its citizens from leaving the country and severely punishes those who attempt to escape. The 2014 report of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea found that refugees forcibly repatriated are commonly subjected to torture, arbitrary detention, summary execution, forced abortions, and other sexual violence.

Given these well-documented human rights violations, China's forcible repatriation of these nine refugees would violate its international law obligations, including the Convention against Torture and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Less than two weeks ago, on November 17, the UN Committee on Torture raised this very concern with China about its policy of repatriating North Korean refugees despite reports of torture. China routinely repatriates North Korean refugees to China, labeling them "economic migrants", in an attempt to evade its international law obligations.

Vietnam's transfer of the nine North Korean refugees to China also violates its obligations under international law, including the Convention against Torture, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

NKHR and APRRN thus call on China and Vietnam to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of the nine North Korea refugees. China must also stop the forcible repatriation of the nine refugees immediately, and permit them to travel safely onwards to a third country such as South Korea.

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*While APRRN statements are prepared in consultations with APRRN members, they do not necessarily reflect the views of all members.*