**Urgent Letter for Rescuing NK refugees**

To: Joe Biden, President of the United States

Cc: Jeff Zients, Chief of staff to the President

From: 28 Korean, U.S., and Canadian NGOs, including the North Korean Human Rights Corporation (President, Kim Tae-hoon) E thkim8279@gmail.com, M 010-9077-6759

Subject: Call on China to stop forcibly repatriating North Korean escapees, etc.

Dear Honorable President Joe Biden,

How are you?

As you may be aware, on October 9, at around 8 p.m., China conducted a surprise repatriation of more than 600 North Koreans escapees, including Kim Cheol Ok, 40, and Lee Soon Geum, 42, who had been detained by public security authorities through Hunchun, Tumen, Changpai, Nanping, and Dandong. This happened shortly after the closing ceremony of the Hangzhou Asian Games. More than 90 percent of them are women, and a significant number are children. Since last year, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in North Korea and many North Korean human rights organizations have estimated that there are more than 2,000 North Korean escapees that China has been detaining but has been unable to repatriate due to the closure of the border between North Korea and China due to the coronavirus.

China's practice of forcibly repatriating North Korean escapees is more than 20 years old, but this is the first time it has done so on a mass scale. China has always claimed that it has treated North Korean escapees in accordance with international and domestic laws and humanitarian principles. However, North Korean escapees who have been repatriated have been subjected to human rights abuses such as torture, political prison camps, and executions, and the abuses have become more severe since 2014. Repatriating North Koreans to face torture, violence, and execution is complicity in murder. As the UN COI has noted, North Korean escapees in China are, at the very least, refugees sur place.

China had acceded to and ratified the UN Refugee Convention, the Convention Against Torture, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nevertheless, its unscrupulous deportation of North Korean escapees as soon as it enjoyed the privilege of hosting the Hangzhou Asian Games is a grave violation of jus cogens, the principle of non-refoulement under international law.

China does not deserve a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, which was founded to promote global peace, let alone a seat on the Human Rights Council.

There are still a huge number of North Korean escapees in China, including those in detention, who are terrified and desperate for freedom. China's mass repatriation of North Korean escapees is a grave human rights violation on par with Hamas's hostage-taking of Israelis, but it has yet to garner the world's attention. In response, 27 international NGOs issued a joint statement on 13as follows.

Furthermore, we, 28 North Korean human rights organizations from South Korea, the United States, and Canada including the 27 organizations mentioned above, request you, a lover of human rights and peace in the world, to directly and publicly call on Chinese President Xi Jinping to end the forced repatriation of North Korean escapees and to put in place institutional arrangements to allow North Korean escapees to safely go where they want to go.

As President of the United States, your call to Xi Jinping will go a long way toward rescuing the North Korean escapees. We look forward to your kind consideration.

Thank you.

October 16, 2023

List of 28 North Korean human rights organizations from South Korea, the United States of America, and Canada is as follows;

Human Rights Foundation (HRF), Freedom Speakers International (FSI), Liberty in North Korea (LiNK), Unification Media Group, PEN International (North Korea center in Exile), Forget-Me-Not Incorporated, North Korea Reform Radio, Committee for the Democratization of North Korea, Now! Act for North Koreans! (NANK), North Korean Human Rights Corporation, North Korean Human Rights Union, Improving North Korean Human Rights Center, North Korea Strategy Center, Justice for North Korea, Korean Unification Solidarity, Trans-Pacific Culture Institute, PSCORE, World Institute For North Korea Studies, Citizen’s Association for fundamental North Korean Human Right Law, EUM Research Institute, Free North Korea Radio, Fighters for a Free North Korea, National Association of North Korean Refugees, Unification Education Association, Unification Academy, Unification Preparation Institute, Lawyers for Human Rights and Unification of Korea (Hanbyun), The Council for Human Rights in North Korea(HRNK Canada)