

# Human Rights Watch

## Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/23/china-dont-force-8-refugees-back-north-korea>

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Fleeing North Koreans Require Assistance and Urgent Protection

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(Seoul) [China](#) should immediately disclose the whereabouts of eight [North Korean](#) refugees currently detained in China, publicly pledge that none of them will be returned to North Korea, and provide them with asylum or allow departure to a third country of their choice, Human Rights Watch said today. North Koreans who are forced back after fleeing their country face a real risk of torture, sexual violence and abuse, incarceration in forced [labor camps](#), and public executions, making them *refugees sur place* in the need of urgent protection.

By now, there are plenty of survivor accounts that reveal Kim Jong-Uns administration is routinely persecuting those who are forced back to North Korea after departing illegally, and subjecting them to torture, sexual violence, forced labor and even worse, said [Phil Robertson](#), deputy Asia director. The government in Beijing should respect its obligations under the Refugee Convention by protecting these eight North Koreans, and under no circumstances force them back to North Korea.

Chinese government officials detained a group of eight North Koreans in mid-March 2017 during what appeared to be a random check on a road in northeastern China. A Christian pastor following the travel progress of the group told Human Rights Watch that the group had gathered in Shenyang city, in Liaoning province. Traffic police stopped their vehicle in the middle of the night, and after realizing the travelers did not have valid identification documents, took the group to a local police station.

While waiting inside their vehicle parked outside of the police station, they contacted the pastor, and sent him desperate voice messages and video recordings asking for help from Chinese President Xi Jinping and other world leaders. One of the members said, Please, please help us. If we are sent to North Korea, we die. Please save us. Soon after they sent those messages, the group was taken by police into the station for questioning.

Several hours later, refugees contacted Kwon, the pseudonym of one of the group members 18-year-old son, who has lived in South Korea since 2013. Then after another few hours, a member of the group contacted Kwon and told him his mother had collapsed under the pressure of the detention, and that the police had taken her to the hospital. Afterwards a Korean-speaking officer walked in and confiscated their cell phones. However, one group member hid a cell phone and later texted the pastor to tell him. The following day, the group contacted Kwon for the last time, and said the police had brought his mother back to the prison. At the beginning of April, the pastor heard from people he knows in China that the group was still in China, held close to the original location where they were detained, but he and Kwon could not get official confirmation of the exact whereabouts of the group. The pastor and Kwon fear the group could face immediate forced return to North Korea, saying they believe most repatriations happen within two months after detention.

The pastor said among the group are two women who said they had previously been sold to Chinese men and faced beatings at their hands. Those two women managed to escape their captors, but they had nowhere to go. Two other women suffered injuries that they couldnt treat in China because they couldnt go to the hospital given their undocumented status: one woman had badly hurt her head, hip, and back in a recent traffic accident and the other is Kwons mother, who had been sick for several years with an unknown disease. Her health situation has worsened in the past few months.

Myanmars Mass Detention of Rohingya in Rakhine State

Denial of Education for Rohingya Refugee Children in Bangladesh

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