

PRISONERS OF faith

Son Jong Nam Country: North Korea

Son Jong Nam was born on March 11 1958 in Pyongyang. For more than a year, this former North Korean Army officer turned underground evangelist, has been beaten, tortured and held in a bleak, North Korean death row basement jail in North Korea's capital city Pyongyang. Charged with being a 'national traitor' and for 'receiving Christianity', he has been sentenced to public execution as an example to the North Korean people. Some years ago Son complained to the North Korean Central People's Committee when his wife, while being investigated by the secret police, was kicked in the stomach and miscarried. He made plans to leave North Korea after being pressured to drop the matter.

Son defected to China in 1998 with his wife, son and brother. His wife died after arriving there. It was in China that he met a South Korean missionary and became a Christian. Mr Son continued his religious studies and felt called to be an evangelist in North Korea. But before he could return home, Son was arrested by Chinese police in 2001 and sent back to North Korea, charged with sending missionaries into his native country. He was imprisoned in a Ham-Gyung-Buk area prison camp and brutally tortured for three years. Many of his 200 fellow inmates were Christians, imprisoned themselves for studying theology in China or just for meeting with local Christians. Many died within six months.

Son was released on parole in May 2004 and sent to Chongjin to work at a local rocket research institute. However, his health was so bad when he was released that he was unable to walk. But after receiving medical treatment, he went back to China to meet with his brother. Son returned to North Korea but was arrested again in January 2006 as he was leaving his younger sister's house in Pyongyang.

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EMAIL ALERT
for prayer & action
AUGUST 2007



He has remained in prison since. The last word of him came in February. It is suspected that because he is being kept in the capital city, North Korean officials view him as a special case and perhaps are keeping him alive, if barely, for unknown reasons. Those close to him have been exiled from Pyongyang. It is widely believed that there are tens of thousands of Christians in North Korea all of whom must practise their faith secretly and at great personal risk.

PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ Pray for a stay of execution
- ▶ Pray for peace to rest with the family of Son Jong Nam
- ▶ Pray that the letters from RI supporters and others will have an impact and help secure his release
- ▶ Pray for those Christians in North Korean who are imprisoned and for others who meet secretly

'But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him'
Acts 12:5

release INTERNATIONAL
THE VOICE OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Hebrews 13:3 'Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow-prisoners, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering'

We would be grateful if you could pray, pass on the need to pray and if you could write letters on behalf of Son Jong Nam.

Please write a polite letter to the North Korean Mission at the United Nations in Geneva, expressing concern for Son Jong Nam. Please do not mention Release International when you write.

A sample letter is given below.

Your Excellency,

I would like to bring to your attention the case of Mr Song Jong Nam (48), a North Korean who has been sentenced to public execution by the North Korean authorities. It has been reported that he is at present imprisoned in the basement of the National Security Agency in Pyongyang and is said to be 'practically dead from horrible torture.'

I am gravely concerned that the charges and alleged treatment he has received are in severe contravention of International law. I note that the DPRK is party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The International community has made political and religious freedoms important elements in its diplomatic relations with North Korea and any future cooperation or engagement will be made more difficult if it's leaders continue to persecute their own people for religious views.

May I appeal to you to take all possible measures as a matter of urgency to ensure that he is given access to medical treatment and to secure his release from prison

Yours sincerely,

Write to:

His Excellency Mr Ri Tcheul
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Chemin de Plonjon 1,
1207 Geneva

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