

*United States Senate*  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1604

September 29, 2003

His Excellency Hu Jintao  
President  
People's Republic of China

Dear President Jintao:

I am writing to express my deep concern over the arrest, trial, and imprisonment of four South Korean nationals in China over the past few months.

On April 12, 2002, Reverend Choi Bong-il, a South Korean national, was charged and detained for allegedly aiding a group of North Korean defectors in crossing the Mongolian-China border. A trial was held on December 5, 2002, and despite the failure of the court to render a verdict or set a future date on which the verdict will be delivered, Rev. Choi remains in custody.

On August 13, 2002, Mr. Kim Hee-tae, a South Korean national, was charged and detained for allegedly transporting North Korean defectors from one location to another within China. A trial was held on April 22, 2003, however, the court did not issue a decision nor did they set a date on which a verdict will be delivered. Mr. Kim has been detained for over a year.

Mr. Choi Yong-hun was arrested in Yantai City on January 18, 2003, for aiding a group of North Korean defectors in fleeing China. The trial, held on April 22, 2003, was reported to have included serious violations of international standards of due process, including Mr. Choi being detained and interrogated without legal counsel, without opportunity to choose a defense attorney, without opportunity to consult his attorney before trial, and having an incompetent translator at the trial. He was sentenced on May 22, 2003, to five years in prison and fined 30,000RMB for the crime of organizing illegal border crossings. An appeal was filed on June 2, however, the court has not yet set a date for the hearing. Furthermore, Mr. Choi suffers from hypertension, diabetes, and asthma. Though it is imperative that he take his prescribed medications daily and be given an adequate diet. As it has been reported, he has been denied both.

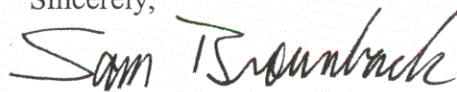
Along with Mr. Choi Yong-hun, Mr. Seok Jae-hyun was also arrested in Yantai City on January 18<sup>th</sup>. As a freelance journalist, Mr. Seok was documenting the escape of the North Korean defectors. Yet on May 22, 2003, Mr. Seok was convicted of organizing illegal border crossings, was given a two year prison sentence, and fined 5,000RMB. His arrest and detention appears to be in violation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regarding the right to freedom of expression and the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas. Furthermore, during the first visit by his wife, she observed that Mr. Seok was, and continues to be, in bad health.

It was announced yesterday that the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees has recognized North Korean refugees in China as people of concern under the UNHCR mandate. It is my sincere hope that you recognize the significance of this mandate and understand that its protection should also be extended to those who have aided North Koreans in their plight for freedom.

In light of these deep concerns, we request the immediate release and safe passage of Rev. Choi, Mr. Kim, Mr. Choi, and Mr. Seok to their home country, the Republic of Korea. Pending this result, we look forward to receiving information regarding their present health and welfare.

I appreciate your consideration in this important matter and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Brownback". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sam Brownback  
United States Senate

cc:

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