

## ***Life Funds for North Korean Refugees***

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### **Join the *SAVE CHOI YONG-HUN* Postcard Campaign**

Since 1998, when this NGO, Life Funds for North Korean Refugees, was founded in Japan, we have assisted North Korean refugees. We supply food, clothing and other aid through local networks developed by us independently. During this time, we have continually urged UNHCR to grant formal refugee status to North Koreans in need.

The Special Rapporteur on human rights in North Korea appointed by the UN Human Rights Committee this year has been actively investigating in related countries. Meanwhile, the United States last month enacted the North Korean Human Rights Act. It is increasingly obvious that international society agrees: qualified North Korean people should be certified as refugees under relevant international law. Arresting and repatriating them is disgraceful and disregards their basic human rights. Further, humanitarian aid workers who attempt to help them are also being arrested and imprisoned.

In the boatpeople incident in Yantai, China about two years ago, more than 60 North Koreans hiding in China reportedly tried to escape on two fishing boats in January 2003. One boat was to try to reach South Korea, and the other, Japan. Just before departure, most of the members were arrested by Chinese police and repatriated to North Korea. At that time, Choi Yong-hun, a South Korean humanitarian aid worker, involved in helping them, was also arrested. He is still serving out a 5 year sentence in China.

Prison life is difficult for even the strongest. But Choi Yong-hun, who suffers from chronic hypertension, diabetes, and asthma, displays visibly worsening health according to his wife, who visited him in prison. Recently, mail from his family and supporters abroad has been withheld from him, and we all are concerned for his health as winter descends.

Ever since the Yantai boatpeople story first broke, our group, Life Funds for North Korean Refugees (LFNKR), has continued, both in Japan and abroad, to demand the immediate release of the North Korean refugees as well as Choi Yong-hun. Awareness and support have gradually grown among European and American NGOs and parliamentary members. Despite this, we have not seen the release of either Choi Yong-hun or Park Yong-chol, the North Korean refugee arrested with Choi Yong-hun and held in the same prison.

We ask your help in saving these two. Join our postcard campaign and help us return Choi Yong-hun to his family, who are suffering deep emotional and financial difficulties. In addition, Park Yong-chol must be moved to a place of safety. Park Yong-chol greatly fears being returned to North Korea upon release in January, when his 2-year term ends.

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<http://www.northkoreanrefugees.com>