

# Church Makes Strong Intercession for Pastor Held in North Korea

Hundreds of friends, parishioners and Korean-Canadian religious leaders gathered at a suburban Toronto church on Monday to pray for a Canadian pastor detained in February by North Korean authorities while on a humanitarian mission.

Rev. Hyeon Soo Lim, 60, leader of the 3,000-member Light Korean Presbyterian Church, was last heard from on Jan. 31. Church leaders say the Canadian government has told them it is working to secure his release.

Canada has had limited influence in North Korea since it suspended diplomatic ties with Pyongyang in 2010. Last week Sweden, which has an embassy in Pyonyang, said its ambassador is pressing for a meeting with a Canadian citizen detained by the isolated state.

"We have gathered to urge the North Korean, Canadian and the United Nations governments to return Rev. Lim to his family," Rev. Choong Sik Ryu, head of the Council of Korean Churches of Ontario, told Reuters at the prayer service.

South-Korean born Lim has visited North Korea more than 100 times since 1997 and has helped establish an orphanage and a nursing home there. He has lived in Canada since 1986 and is a Canadian citizen, according to church spokeswoman Lisa Pak.

Some 300 religious leaders and church members attended the 90-minute prayer service, where leaders from the Korean-Canadian Christian community read joint statements calling for Lim's release.

"It took 70 years for the Israelites to be freed. This marks

the 70th year for the Koreans to be divided against our will," said Rev. Yo-Hwan Kim of the Toronto Korean Evangelical Church. "We can only pray for a miracle."

Kyung Sup Lee, who traveled to North Korea in 1997 on Lim's first aid mission to the country, said after the service that Lim had said he planned to resign from preaching to devote himself to humanitarian work.

"I believe Rev. Lim has always wanted to work toward the reunification of Koreas and spread the gospel everywhere, specifically North Korea," said Lee, 77.

Rev. Jason Noh said Lim was making a routine visit to an orphanage in the Rajin area with another church elder when an economic export bureaucrat asked him to visit Pyongyang. He has not been heard from since.

North Korea and China have clamped down on Christian groups over the past year, and several American Christians have been detained by North Korea. Last month, China formally detained a Canadian man, Kevin Garratt, on suspicion of stealing state secrets.

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