

North Korea Gives Baptist Missionary Life Sentence

The South Korean government urged North Korea on Sunday to release a South Korean missionary, Kim Jong Uk, who was sentenced to life with hard labor by a North Korean court on Friday.

“It is regrettable that North Korea went ahead with perfunctory trial procedures in a unilateral manner and gave our citizen severe punishment. We strongly urge North Korea to release and repatriate our citizen to South Korea as soon as possible,” South Korea’s Unification Ministry said in a statement.

North Korea sentenced Kim to life with hard labor on Friday after convicting him of espionage and setting up an underground church. North Korea’s official KCNA news agency reported that the missionary had admitted his guilt at the court.

“We have demanded North Korea free and repatriate Kim on several occasions, but it has not responded to our and the international community’s legitimate demand. This clearly violates the international norms as well as universal value of humanitarian spirit,” the statement added.

In an apparent stage-managed confession, Kim admitted in February to spying for the South Korean intelligence agency as well as trying to topple North Korea’s isolated regime.

Pyongyang has rejected calls from Seoul for his release and for his family to visit him.

“We once again urge North Korea to provide him with safety and convenience and allow his family and lawyers to visit him until he is repatriated,” the South Korean statement said.

North Korea is still holding Kenneth Bae, a Korean-American missionary sentenced to 15 years of hard labor on charges of trying to use religion to overthrow its political system.

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