

Reports: American Pastor Detained in North Korea

A Korean-American man who says he is being held in North Korea was a Christian pastor who had worked in China and the United States, a North Korean defector who met him and traveled with him in 2007 told *Reuters*.

CNN reported on Monday from North Korea that it had been given access to a man claiming to be an American, who identified himself as Kim Dong Chul, and who said he had been arrested in North Korea on spying charges.

He appealed for help from the United States or South Korea to rescue him.

A U.S. State Department official declined to comment on the report about Kim, saying that speaking publicly about specific cases of detained Americans can complicate efforts to get them released.

If confirmed, Kim, who *CNN* said was 60 and formerly of Fairfax, Virginia, would be the second Western citizen known to be held in North Korea. The other is Korean-Canadian.

CNN was given access to both men this week, just days after isolated North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test.

The test angered its main ally, China, as well as the United States. Kim would be the first American to be held by the North since it released three U.S. citizens in 2014.

A North Korean defector, Ma Young-ae, told *Reuters* on Tuesday that she had met Kim in the United States and he had told church gatherings he was a missionary helping North Koreans.

“He told the churches that he was a missionary working on

North Korea and sending stuff from China into the North to help poor North Koreans,” Ma told Reuters by telephone, recalling Kim making speeches around California and Virginia in 2007 and seeking donations.

‘Shocked’

Ma, who is working as a missionary based in the New York area under what she said was security protection, described Kim as a Korean-American.

“I was shocked to see his face on TV,” said Ma.

Kim had told her he was sending medical aid into North Korea and going in and out of Rason, a North Korean special economic zone bordering China, she said.

A photograph from a small Korean-American online publication showed a man it said was Kim talking at an unidentified church in the Washington, D.C., area, although *Reuters* cannot independently verify the picture.

Ma said Kim had once asked her and her husband to come to China to work with him but she had declined.

Another pastor named Park Simon, who also accompanied Ma and Kim to several church gatherings in the United States, told Voice of America that Kim frequented North Korea and called him from Pyongyang about four years ago.

Kim told *CNN* he had spied on behalf of “South Korean conservative elements” and had been arrested in October.

The other foreigner known to be in detention in North Korea, and who *CNN* was also given access to, is Hyeon Soo Lim, a South Korean-born Canadian who was the head pastor at one of Canada’s largest churches.

Lim has been held by the North since February. Lim, who was 60 at the time of his arrest, was sentenced to hard labor for

life in December for attempting to overthrow the North's regime.

North Korea, which is under heavy U.N. sanctions related to its nuclear and missile programs, has in the past used detained U.S. citizens to extract high-profile visits from the United States, with which it has no formal diplomatic relations. {eoas}

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