

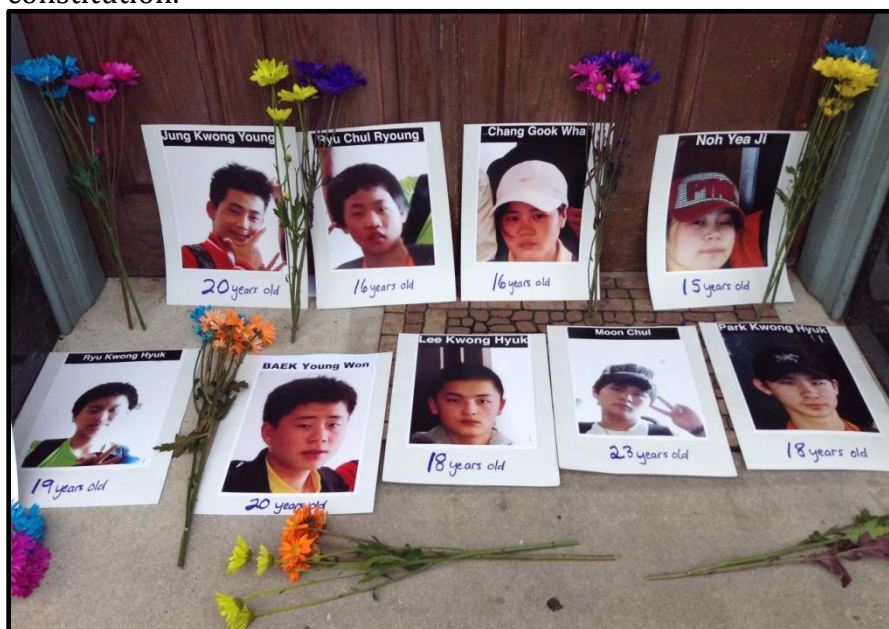
# NORTH KOREA FREEDOM COALITION APPEALS TO THE LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT NINE NORTH KOREAN ORPHANS FORCED BACK TO NORTH KOREA JUNE 5, 2013

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On June 5, 2013, representatives of the North Korean Freedom Coalition (NKFC) gathered in front of the Embassy of the Laos People's Democratic Republic in Washington, D.C., after requesting to meet with Seng Soukahathivon, Ambassador to the United States concerning the safety of the nine North Korean refugees ranging from age 15 to 23 years old. The Coalition's request also voiced its dismay at, and vehement objection to, the decision of the government of Laos to consent to the repatriation of the nine North Korean orphans from Laotian custody to the government of North Korea during the week of May 12, 2013. It is well documented that North Korean refugees who are repatriated face arbitrary imprisonment, torture, and even execution, facts that the Laotian government is fully aware of.

In its letter sent on June 3, 2013 to President Lt. Gen. Choummali Saignason, NKFC wrote, "Because the lives of the nine young people rests in your hands because of the decision that was made, we make this simple request: that the Laos People's Democratic Republic perform regular visits to these nine children in North Korea, so that you can guarantee they have been welcomed on their return, treated properly, and their rights have been protected and that you share that information with the Republic of Korea who had requested to care for these nine young people."

The NKFC further requested that the Laotian Government "never again put the lives of North Korean men, women and children at risk by forcing them back to North Korea and that you instead return to your previous policy to work on their resettlement to the Republic of Korea, where they have automatic citizenship under the Republic of Korea's constitution."



(Left) Photographs of the 9 orphans forcibly repatriated to North Korea were placed on the front doorstep of the Embassy of Laos in Washington, D.C., along with 18 daisies which represent the love and patience poured out to these young individuals by two missionaries who cared for and risked their lives to guide them to freedom and safety. Daisies also represent innocence for the childhood innocence of these 9 orphans.

In the past, Laotian authorities have allowed North Korean refugees safe passage through their country to resettle in the Republic of Korea, and even in the United States. In this case, the nine young North Koreans were seeking resettlement in the Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Korea had made it clear to the Laotian authorities that they were willing to accept all nine orphans for resettlement.

Coalition representatives assembled one block west of the Laotian Embassy to organize a march and deliver a letter of appeal. Nine representatives carried one photograph of each of the nine children, along with two daisies representing the missionary and his wife who risked their lives to provide care for the children, and guide them to freedom, safety, and citizenship in the Republic of Korea. Two daisies were placed with each of the photographs representing the love and patience that the two missionaries poured out to the nine orphans. Daisies also represent innocence, for the childhood innocence of the nine young people who were seeking a life of freedom in the Republic of Korea. After a brief prayer for the well-being and safety of the nine orphans who are now inside North Korea, the participants began making their way to the Laotian Embassy.

Although members of the Coalition had requested a meeting with the Laotian Ambassador to the U.S., the Embassy responded by stating that the Ambassador was unavailable. The Embassy remained silent to a further request that the Coalition members be permitted to meet with another representative of the Laotian government. Despite this, NKFC's written appeal was hand-delivered to the Embassy by Dr. Suzanne Scholte.

Upon arriving in front of the Embassy, Coalition marchers were greeted by members of the press. Standing in front of the Embassy, Dr. Scholte made a brief statement describing the horrific consequences of the Laotian government's decision to cooperate with the North Korean government to forcibly repatriate the nine orphans as it is well-known that repatriation leads to a certain fate of imprisonment, torture, interrogation, and sometimes execution in North Korea.

A brief biography was read for each of the nine orphans by members of the NKFC as follows:



Dr. Ok Cha Soh: **CHANG, Gook Wha** – 16 years old. Like all of these children, she was in very poor condition when MJ began to shelter her. Her hands were severely chapped from her life as a 'Kotjebi.' Her life under MJ and his wife's care transformed her so that she looked so much better that she is hardly recognizable from when she first came to the shelter.



James Gore: **MOON, Cheol** – 23 years old. Even though he is the oldest of all the children, he looks very young for his age due to living on the streets for most of his young life. When MJ brought him in for care, one of his toes was missing because it had to be cut off due to severe frostbite. He wanted very much to live a normal life and worked hard to adjust to life “off the streets.”



Thomas Barker: **PARK, Kwong-Hyuk** – 18 years old. He is the child who has stayed with MJ the longest. He has freckles. He always had lots of questions, and a great passion to learn, and was a “model student.”



Heather Grime: **NOH, Ae-ji** - 15 years old. She is friendly and followed instructions well. She is the youngest, but she is very outgoing and was never afraid to express her opinion.



Greg Forman: **BAEK, Young-Won** – 20 years old. He was the newest child to come into the shelter. But MJ reported, even though he was new to their routine, he got along well with all the other children.



Ann Buwalda: **RYU, Cheol-Ryong** – 16 years old. He is very small for his age as you can see in this photo. He was easy going and quiet.



Maria Kim: **LEE, Kwong-Hyuk** – 18 years old. He is a good student who worked hard to learn and answered questions well during class. Like a brother sibling, he would get in small arguments with the girls.



Nancy Purcell: **JUNG, Kwong-Young** – 20 years old. He is a very bright young man. He likes to be stylish and you can tell he has a wonderful smile.



Orson Maazel: **RYU, Kwong-Hyuk** - 19 years old. He is very quiet and likes to stay in the background.

After reading the biographies of each of the nine orphans, Coalition members then approached the front door of the Embassy, rang the doorbell, knocked on the door, and placed the nine photographs and eighteen daisies on the front doorstep of the Embassy. Dr. Scholte then took questions from the reporters who were present. In addition, Ms. Ann Buwalda of Jubilee Campaign responded to a question by rejecting the notion that the missionaries protecting the children had been engaged in human trafficking, as alleged by the Laotian government.

The event was very powerful as NKFC participants recognized each young North Korean refugee who risked his or her safety to escape the tyranny in North Korea and seek freedom, democracy, and a better life for themselves in South Korea. These brave young individuals and their sacrifices will not go unforgotten. NKFC plans to continue its appeals both internationally and to national governments calling for the protection of North Korean refugees and assistance for their safe passage to South Korea and other countries that welcome their resettlement, as well as continue to focus attention on these nine to ensure they continue to receive international attention, which is the only way to ensure their safety.



**Dr. Scholte delivering the written appeal to the Laotian Embassy in Washington, D.C.**





**Participants calling upon the Laotian government for the protection of the North Korean refugees who were repatriated to North Korea in May 2013.**

Weblinks to press coverage of the event available below:

**KOREAN:**

Dong-A Ilbo (article):

<http://news.donga.com/Main/3/all/20130607/55689501/1>

JTBC News (video):

<http://news.itbc.co.kr/html/002/NB10289002.html>

[http://article.joinsmsn.com/news/article/article.asp?total\\_id=11732026&ctg=1300](http://article.joinsmsn.com/news/article/article.asp?total_id=11732026&ctg=1300)

KBS (article):

[http://world.kbs.co.kr/korean/news/news\\_in\\_detail.htm?No=194148](http://world.kbs.co.kr/korean/news/news_in_detail.htm?No=194148)

KBS (article):

[http://news.kbs.co.kr/news/NewsView.do?SEARCH\\_NEWS\\_CODE=2670818](http://news.kbs.co.kr/news/NewsView.do?SEARCH_NEWS_CODE=2670818)

MBC News (video):

[http://imnews.imbc.com/replay/nwtoday/article/3292756\\_5782.html](http://imnews.imbc.com/replay/nwtoday/article/3292756_5782.html)

YTN News (video):

[http://www.ytn.co.kr/ln/0104\\_201306060743133459](http://www.ytn.co.kr/ln/0104_201306060743133459)

Link to the Korean United Methodist Church website:

<http://www.koreanumc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=kqLSlYOxGnF&b=8372941&ct=13169343>

**ENGLISH:**

Christian Post:

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/human-rights-group-calls-on-laos-to-ensure-safety-of-n-korean-orphan-refugees-97374/>

No Cut News:

<http://www.nocutnews.co.kr/Show.asp?IDX=2515070>

**GENERAL NEWS ARTICLES ABOUT REPATRIATION OF THE NINE ORPHANS:**

CNN:

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/31/world/asia/laos-north-korea-refugees>

The Washington Post:

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/for-those-fleeing-north-korea-laos-poses-new-problems/2013/06/14/ff5aa790-d27f-11e2-a73e-826d299ff459\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/for-those-fleeing-north-korea-laos-poses-new-problems/2013/06/14/ff5aa790-d27f-11e2-a73e-826d299ff459_story.html)