



MEDIA ADVISORY: Human Rights Story with Christmas Shopping Tie-In

For Immediate Release: December 3, 2008

Americans Asked to "Offset" Purchases of Chinese-Made Christmas Presents:

Remember North Korean Refugees Oppressed by Beijing

(Washington, D.C.) Just about everybody ends up buying Chinese-made presents during Christmas, but most American shoppers don't realize the goods are often made by slave laborers and support a regime that is forcibly repatriating entire refugee families to imprisonment and death in North Korea.

That's why the North Korea Freedom Coalition (NKFC) is asking shoppers to "offset" their "Made in China" purchases with donations and prayers to save North Korean refugees. The group -- representing over sixty organizations, including those smuggling refugees out of North Korea -- will hold **rallies at the Chinese Embassy (2300 Connecticut Avenue, NW) at noon on Friday, December 5, 2008, and in front of Union Station at noon on Saturday, December 6, 2008.** The rallies will include media availabilities and visuals explaining the refugee tragedy and "offset" concept.

"It is nearly impossible to avoid buying products made in China, especially during the Holidays," said NKFC Chairman Suzanne Scholte, the 2008 Seoul Peace Prize laureate, "but we ask Americans to offset these purchases by donating for the rescue of North Korean refugees, most of whom are women and children. In defiance of international law and requests by the U.S. and South Korean governments, the Hu Jintao government in China, working with dictator Kim Jong-il of North Korea, continues to hunt down refugees and force them back to North Korea to face torture and death."

Among speakers at the events will be Steve Kim, an American businessman jailed in China for four years for helping refugees and forced to make products as a prison laborer, and Jo Jin Hae, a North Korean refugee whose father was beaten to death when China forced him back to North Korea. Jo's father had gone to China to get rice to feed his starving family in North Korea. Subsequently, four members of Ms. Jo's family starved to death including her baby brother.

At Friday's demonstration, NKFC members will read aloud the names of those seized by Chinese police as they tried to escape North Korea. On Friday and Saturday, the *Youth for Truth* will dramatize the plight of refugees while volunteers will hand out information about the North Korean refugee crisis and how Americans can help save refugees. Both events will include pictures and case histories of human rights abuses against North Koreans, along with the reading of messages of support from Members of Congress and Hwang Jang-Yop, North Korea's highest ranking defector.

There have been over 500,000 border crossings by North Korean refugees over the last ten years, which is a crime punishable by death in North Korea. North Korea has stepped up its public executions for citizens found to have helped refugees cross the border. Over 400,000 North Koreans, including children, are held in political prison camps and over 2 million have starved to death in the past decade.

According to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China's most recent annual report, "Not only are Chinese authorities taking measures to prevent citizens from helping refugees who have crossed the border into China, but they reportedly are now placing restrictions on citizens who attempt to provide food to malnourished relatives and associates in North Korea."

About the NKFC: The North Korea Freedom Coalition represents over 60 American, Asian, and European organizations, including North Korean defectors' organizations. It works closely with the "underground railroad" for North Koreans fleeing to freedom and has also helped finance balloon launches of information into North Korea by Park Sang Hak and the Fighters for a Free North Korea.

Also see flyer describing events.

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