

## News and Current Events :: Activist: US missionary crosses border into NKorea

**Activist: US missionary crosses border into NKorea - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/12/26 3:45**

### **Activist: US missionary crosses border into NKorea**

*By Associated Press Writer Kwang-tae Kim*

SEOUL, South Korea — A Christian missionary from the U.S. has entered North Korea in order to highlight the plight of tens of thousands of political prisoners estimated to be held in the communist state, a human rights activist said Saturday.

Robert Park crossed the frozen Tumen River into North Korea from China on Christmas Day to call on North Korean leader Kim Jong Il to release political prisoners and shut down the "concentration camps" where they are held, said the activist, who spoke on condition of anonymity, citing the issue's sensitivity.

North Korea holds some 154,000 political prisoners in six large camps across the country, according South Korean government estimates.

The North has long been regarded as having one of the world's worst human rights records, but rejects outside criticism and denies the existence of prison camps.

The activist would only say he is with Pax Koreana, a conservative Seoul-based group that calls for North Korea to improve its human rights record. He said Park was last seen by another activist who videotaped him entering North Korea on Friday, adding the footage would be released Sunday. It was unclear if he was in custody.

North Korean state media did not mention the reputed crossing.

"We are aware of Robert Park," said Susan Stevenson, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. She said a charitable organization she did not identify notified the State Department in Washington. The embassy is looking into the case but had no details.

"His fate to us is unknown," she said.

Park was carrying a letter to North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, according to the activist.

"Please open your borders so that we may bring food, provisions, medicine, necessities, and assistance to those who are struggling to survive," said the letter, according to a copy posted on Pax Koreana's Web site. "Please close down all concentration camps and release all political prisoners today."

The activist identified Park as a 28-year-old Korean-American missionary from Tucson, Arizona. He said Park came to South Korea in July where he stayed until leaving for China earlier this week to enter the North.

He said Pax Koreana is affiliated with another organization called Freedom and Life For All North Koreans, which is a coalition of North Korean human rights advocacy groups. Park is a member of the broader group, he said.

In August, North Korea released two U.S. journalists it sentenced to 12 years of hard labor for trespassing and "hostile acts." Their release came amid a trip to Pyongyang by former President Bill Clinton aimed at winning their freedom.

Journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee were captured by North Korean guards near the Tumen River in March while reporting a story on North Korean defectors.

Park's reported entry comes weeks after North Korea held one-on-one talks with the United States and signaled its willingness to return to international negotiations on ending its nuclear weapons programs. Pyongyang said earlier this month it would try to resolve remaining differences with Washington.

In the message Park is carrying, he also demanded Kim Jong Il and other leaders immediately step down, noting alleged

d starvation of North Koreans and deaths in political prison camps.

Kim wields absolute power in the communist state of 24 million people and allegedly inmates cannot be executed without his knowledge or direction, activists say.

Associated Press writer Cara Anna in Beijing contributed to this report.

([http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20091226/ap\\_on\\_re\\_as/as\\_nkorea\\_us\\_missionary](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20091226/ap_on_re_as/as_nkorea_us_missionary)) Source

**Re: Activist: US missionary crosses border into NKorea - posted by DBen (), on: 2009/12/26 23:56**

Definitely praying that God will use this.

**Re: - posted by nizero, on: 2009/12/28 14:36**

I have had the honor to work with Robert Park in Tucson. This brother truly has a desire to see the freedom of North Koreans and is loved by many here. He had a vision and trust in God that was unmatched.

Please pray for this brother and pray for North Korea

his website is

(<http://www.globaljusticeprayernetwork.com>) GlobalJusticePrayerNetwork

**Re: - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/12/28 22:49**

**NKorea says it detains American man**

*By Associated Press Writer Hyung-jin Kim*

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Tuesday it has detained an American man who illegally entered the country last week, following reports that a 28-year-old missionary from Arizona went to the communist nation on a mission to improve its human rights record.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said in a brief dispatch that the American was detained and under investigation after illegally entering through the North Korea-China border last Thursday. It didn't identify the American man.

However, the report comes as South Korean activists say American missionary Robert Park, 28, slipped across the frozen Tumen River into North Korea from China last week with letters calling for a change in North Korea's leadership and an end to political prison camps.

The Rev. John Benson, the pastor of Life in Christ Community Church in Park's hometown of Tucson, Arizona, said he was happy to hear Park was alive.

"To hear it confirmed is great," Benson said. "I pray he comes back in one piece. That would be the best case scenario."

"He did this to bring awareness to the situation in North Korea, alert the churches around the world to the atrocities and human rights violations. Not pay lip service and do something about it," Benson said. "Drastic situations call for drastic measures."

Jo Sung-rae of the Seoul-based activist group Pax Koreana said Tuesday that North Korean border guards apparently detained the missionary as soon as he walked into the communist nation.

Park was carrying letters calling on North Korean leader Kim Jong Il to shut down the country's political prison camps and step down from power, Jo said.

The activist quoted one of two people who guided Park as saying he heard people who apparently were border guards

peaking loudly as soon as Park crossed the border and that he believed the missionary was taken into custody immediately.

Park's crossing comes just months after North Korea freed two U.S. journalists who had been arrested in March and sentenced to 12 years of hard labor for trespassing and "hostile acts."

North Korea holds some 154,000 political prisoners in six large camps across the country, according to South Korean government estimates. Pyongyang has long been regarded as having one of the world's worst human rights records, but it denies the existence of prison camps.

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Associated Press Writer Walter Berry in Phoenix contributed to this report

([http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20091229/ap\\_on\\_re\\_as/as\\_nkorea\\_us\\_missionary](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20091229/ap_on_re_as/as_nkorea_us_missionary)) Source

**Re: Activist: US missionary crosses border into NKorea - posted by MattSmith, on: 2009/12/30 9:16**

There is also a good article on this at a website called "Worthy News". It offers a few more insights that the AP article leaves out.