

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 13, 2026

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump,

As you participate in the U.S.-China Summit, we write to respectfully request that you urge the People's Republic of China's (PRC) leader Xi Jinping to halt the forcible repatriation of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) nationals back to the DPRK, to recommit to upholding the principles of the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and grant refugee status to these individuals to travel to a safe third country.

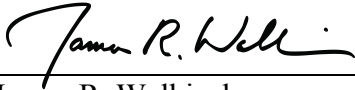
In September 1982, the PRC ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. The 1951 Convention defines the term "refugee" and describes their rights and the international standards and treatment for their protection, which includes non-refoulement and respecting their basic human rights as core principles. The PRC has been party to the United Nations Refugee Convention and Protocol for over four decades yet consistently violates the principles to protect refugees by forcibly returning North Korean refugees to circumstances in which they are vulnerable to torture, forced labor in prison camps, sexual assault, imprisonment, or execution for attempts to flee North Korea.

According to the bipartisan Congressional Executive Commission on China, the PRC forcibly repatriated 600 North Korean refugees on October 9, 2023, which was the largest forcible repatriation of North Korean defectors, and approximately 200 North Korean refugees in April 2024. Chinese authorities are systematically and knowingly forcing hundreds of North Koreans back to a place where they will face mistreatment and retribution, violating its obligations under the Convention.

In November 2025, a bicameral group of Members of Congress wrote to U.S. Ambassador to the PRC, David Perdue, urging him to ask Chinese authorities in Beijing to refrain from forcibly returning North Korean refugees to North Korea. Ambassador Perdue has urged Chinese authorities to provide temporary protection to these individuals, and any other North Koreans with protection concerns, and allow them to travel to a safe third country if they wish, all of which have been repeatedly denied. The PRC classifies most North Koreans as illegal economic migrants to avoid complying with obligations under the Refugee Convention, even though they are aware that those repatriated face hard labor, long arbitrary detentions, and even execution if returned to North Korea, particularly if they are Christians or had contact with South Korean groups in China.

Ambassador Perdue has demonstrated a commitment to holding the PRC accountable on human rights and we kindly request that you exercise all diplomatic levers at your disposal to urge the PRC to halt its systematic and forcible repatriation of North Korean refugees, recommit to the United Nations Refugee Convention to which it is a party, and grant refugee status to these individuals.

Sincerely,



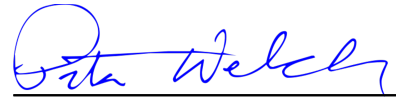
James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress



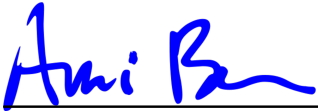
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



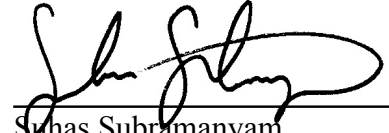
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator