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North Korea - CSW calls for the release of Korean-American missionary believed to be detained

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) today called for the release of a Korean-American missionary believed to have been detained in North Korea.

Robert Park, originally from Tucson, Arizona, crossed illegally into North Korea from China on Christmas Day with a message for the country's ruler, Kim Jong-il. He is believed to have been arrested and detained by North Korean authorities after crossing the Tumen River soon after 5pm local time on 25 December.

Mr. Park, who runs Global Justice Prayer Network, carried with him a letter addressed to the North Korean leadership in which he appealed for an end to the country's notorious prison camps. He wrote: "Please open your borders so that we may bring food, provisions, medicine, necessities, and assistance to those who are struggling to survive. Please close down all concentration camps and release all political prisoners today, and allow care teams to enter to minister healing to those who have been tortured and traumatized. All we are asking is for all North Koreans to be free, safe and have life. With Love, Respect and Goodwill towards All People."

Mervyn Thomas, CSW's Chief Executive, said: "We have known Robert Park for several years and we know him to be a man of deep courage, faith and commitment who has been serving North Korean refugees and campaigning to draw the world's attention to the horrific violations of human rights in North Korea. We believe the international community should take this opportunity not only to appeal for his immediate release, but also to increase political and diplomatic pressure on North Korea to open up its prison camps for international inspection and bring an end to its grotesque abuse of human rights, which is among the very worst in the world. We also urge the international community, including the United States, to ensure that human rights concerns feature in every dialogue with the North Koreans, alongside security issues. We urge Christians around the world to pray for Robert Park and for North Korea, and that his brave act on Christmas Day might not have been in vain".

Notes to Editors:

- The full text of Robert Park's letter reads: "To Mr. Kim Jong Il and North Korea's Leaders: I proclaim Christ's love and forgiveness towards you today. God promises mercy and clemency for those who repent. He promises forgiveness for every sin and re-birth through the Holy Spirit for those who believe Christ died for the atonement of all their sins, as a sacrifice from God, given in love. He is the true and living God. He loves you and wants to save you and all of North Korea today. Please open your borders so that we may bring food, provisions, medicine, necessities, and assistance to those who are struggling to survive. Please close down all concentration camps and release all political prisoners today, and allow care teams to enter to minister healing to those who have been tortured and traumatized. All we are asking is for all North Koreans to be free, safe and have life. With Love, Respect and Goodwill towards All People."

