



8.27.2010

NORTH KOREA CSW welcomes release of Aijalon Mahli Gomes

CSW welcomes the release of Aijalon Mahli Gomes, an American Christian detained in North Korea, but strongly urges the international community to intensify pressure on the nation for the release of thousands of prisoners still languishing in North Korea's gulag.

According to news reports, Mr. Gomes was granted amnesty by the North Korean government following a humanitarian mission by former US president Jimmy Carter. They are expected to return to Boston today, where Mr. Gomes will be reunited with his family.

Mr. Gomes had been detained in North Korea since entering the country on 25 January by crossing the border from China. He was arrested by the North Korean authorities and sentenced to eight years in a labor camp. He was also ordered to pay a fine of \$700,000 for illegal entry and unspecified "hostile acts". Mr. Gomes is believed to have travelled to North Korea to protest against the grave violations of human rights perpetrated by the regime.

He was the fourth US citizen to be detained by the North Korean government since January 2009, following Robert Park and the journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee, all of whom were released after several months in North Korean custody.

CSW's National Director Stuart Windsor said, "While CSW welcomes the release of Aijalon Mahli Gomes, we remain deeply concerned about the plight of thousands of other prisoners in North Korea's brutal gulag. CSW is calling for the North Korean regime to open its prison camps to international human rights monitors and strongly urges the United Nations to establish a commission of inquiry into crimes against humanity perpetrated by the regime."