

February 24, 2010
To: Hon. Michael Ignatieff
Leader of the Official Opposition
House of Commons
Ottawa, Canada

Dear Mr. Ignatieff,

I write to you today as a concerned senior student at Upper Canada College. I am concerned about the dire situations of North Korean refugees in China, and I ask you to lend your voice as a Member of Parliament on behalf of these people.

Through several Canadian advocacy groups such as Hanvoice, I have been informed that anywhere between 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 North Koreans perished in a famine in late 1990's. Almost 300,000 North Koreans have fled their own country to escape hunger or persecution into neighbouring countries such as China. However, many of these countries, despite being signatories of international refugee conventions, do not accept those North Koreans as refugees, instead labeling them as "economic migrants." With this label, North Koreans are actively searched, captured, and repatriated back. Once repatriated, they are subject to torture, imprisonment and even public execution in political prison camps.

I believe that Canada, as one of the most powerful and wealthiest members of the international community, has the responsibility to take action in this situation by not only engaging in a dialogue with China to end this repatriation, but also accepting those refugees into Canada as much as possible. In fact, I was very encouraged that Canada granted refugee status to 66 North Korean defectors last year, which was nearly 10 times higher than in 2008. With the increasing number of refugees every year, however, I believe that our government must continue on granting refugee status to a greater number of North Korean defectors in the years ahead. Therefore, I ask you to become a champion of this cause by advocating Canada's greater acceptance towards these refugees, and by working together with organizations like Hanvoice to ensure their safety, once and for all.

Your reply would be very much appreciated, and you can reach Jack Kim, the executive director of Hanvoice, at jack@hanvoice.org, or (647) 828-8025.

Sincerely,

Ban Lee

The attached sheet is signed by Upper Canada College students and faculty who showed same interest and passion for your support for North Korea human rights.

