



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 7, 2014

Report: North Korea to Execute 33 for Contact With Missionary

A South Korean newspaper reported March 5 that the North Korean government is set to execute 33 individuals who had contact with a South Korean Baptist missionary arrested last year on charges he was trying to establish churches in the North. According to a source cited by South Korea's [Chosun Ilbo](#) newspaper, the North Korean citizens, who allegedly converted to Christianity or were otherwise influenced by South Korean Baptist missionary Kim Jung-wook, "will be executed in a secret cell at the State Security Department on charges of attempting to overthrow the regime by receiving money to set up 500 underground churches."



In late February the North Korean government displayed Kim, who admitted to attempting to set up underground churches in the North and apologized for committing "anti-state" crimes against North Korea. In his February 27 public appearance, the first since his arrest in October, Kim "appealed to North Korean authorities to show him mercy by releasing him, and also claimed he had received assistance from South Korea's intelligence agency," reported the Associated Press.

"I was thinking of turning North Korea into a religious country, and destroying its present government and political system," Kim said in an awkward and scripted confession. "I received money from the intelligence services and followed instructions from them, and arranged North Koreans to act as their spies. And I also set up an underground church in China, in Dandong, and got the members to talk and write, for me to collect details about the reality of life in North Korea, and I provided this to the intelligence services."

South Korea denied any link to Kim, and the AP noted that North Korean authorities have often staged news conferences "where detainees are presented before the media to make statements that they later recant."

Kim is the third foreign visitor to be held in recent months by North Korea. American Christian Kenneth Bae has been imprisoned by the regime since 2012, and 75-year-old [Australian missionary John Short](#) was recently released by North Korea after being arrested February 16, a day after his arrival in Pyongyang. Short was released only after reading a scripted confession in which he apologized "for what I have done by spreading my Bible tracts on February 16th, the birthday of his Excellency Kim Jong Il. I realize that the mass media of the USA and the western countries who say that the DPRK is the closed country and has no religious freedoms is inaccurate and wrong."

Experts on North Korea believe that the alleged executions are the result of present dictator Kim Jong-un's order to increase efforts to stem the influx of Western practices and beliefs. However, reported



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South Korea's *Chosun Ilbo*, some observers believe the northern regime has orchestrated the latest anti-Christian attack "as part of its campaign to ferret out underground churches. A source in China said Kim Jung-wook 'did not enter North Korea voluntarily but was kidnapped by North Korean agents in Dandong.'"

The South Korean newspaper quoted a member of one Korean missionary group as saying that "there are hundreds of underground churches across North Korea," noting that many North Koreans have lost hope in the future and are attracted to various religious traditions as an alternative to the dark ideology of the North Korean regime.

Eric Foley of the U.S.-based missions outreach Seoul USA emphasized that the latest actions by North Korea does not represent "a new war on Christians. This is simply the West being able to see what North Korean underground Christians have always known, which is that the Christian faith is not welcome in any form in North Korea."

He added that the regime has "demonstrated once again that there is no back door for the gospel into North Korea. The only way the gospel can advance is at great personal cost."



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