

**Question for written answer E-004269/2017
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**
Rule 130
Urmas Paet (ALDE)

Subject: VP/HR - North Korean refugees in China

China regularly labels North Koreans as illegal economic migrants and forcibly repatriates them to North Korea. As of 22 June 2017, there were five North Korean refugees held in Chinese detention who were destined to be sent back to North Korea in the following days. It is well known that North Koreans who are forcibly repatriated after fleeing their country face a real risk of torture, sexual violence and abuse, incarceration in forced labour camps and even public execution. As such, these are refugees in need of urgent protection under international law, and forcing them to go back to North Korea would amount to refoulement – the sending of persons back to a territory in which they face serious human rights violations. Such a practice is forbidden by international treaties to which China is a party. Instead of returning the refugees to North Korea, China should release them from detention, protect them and let them travel to safety in a third country.

Has the VP/HR addressed the issue of North Korean refugees in China recently? If so, when, and what was the outcome?

What can the EU do to convince China to change its policy of returning the refugees to North Korea?