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Russia Refuses Asylum to North Korean Refugee

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Federal Migration Service office in central Moscow

Russia's Federal Migration Service (FMS) has refused to grant temporary asylum to a North Korean citizen who claims that deportation would mean death or imprisonment in the "death camps," the RBC news agency reported Wednesday.

The Moscow FMS determined that the citizen of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was not a "refugee" as defined by law and was not in danger of persecution if returned to his country of origin, RBC reported.

The escapee — identified only as "Kim" at the request of human rights activists, who fear that publication of an identifying name would endanger the citizen — first left North Korea in 1997 as a 17-year-old, fleeing to China where he resided illegally for about 10 years.

Kim tried to leave China but was detained on the Kazakhstan border by the Chinese military and returned to his homeland, where he was imprisoned. He managed to escape the prison camp with about 30 others and fled across China on foot. In the spring of 2013, he crossed the

Russian border in the Far East Amur region where he requested help from the border guards.

Despite his requests for refugee status, Kim has been imprisoned and fined, RBC said.

The FMS believes that Kim applied for refugee status, not because he fears unlawful punishment, but because he considers Russia a "transit country," RBC reported.

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