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Russia Grants North Korean Refugee Asylum After Fourth Request

By The Moscow Times

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Federal Migration Service office in central Moscow

Russia has agreed to give temporary asylum to a refugee from North Korea after he submitted his request for a fourth time, Russian NGO the Civic Assistance Committee reported Thursday.

The refugee, who has only been identified as "Kim," was only given permission to remain in the country for a year on May 26 following a deluge of media coverage.

Kim's story is an dramatic one. He first tried to escape from North Korea as a teenager in 1997, the Civic Assistance Committee said. He worked illegally in China for more than decade, but decided to try his luck and travel to Russia following police intimidation. Unfortunately, the maps Kim used to make his journey were outdated and he ended up in Kazakhstan. He was deported back to North Korea and sentenced to 10 years hard labor.

Amazingly, Kim managed to escape the labour camp, and once again made a daring journey to

China. From there, he headed for Russia, where requested asylum on arrival in late 2014.

Russian immigration officials turned his asylum request down on three separate occasions, arguing that the risk to Kim's life was “not sufficiently proven.”

A bilateral extradition agreement signed by Russia and North Korea in February this year has caused a number of legal difficulties in the case.

Lawyers argued that the refusal violated Russia's duty as a signatory to the Geneva Convention on Refugees. The convention states that “any North Korean refugee has the right to asylum given that, having voluntarily left the country, a refugee is automatically considered a criminal,” the Civic Assistance Committee said.

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