

**On October 18, 2002, the following letter was sent by the  
Lawyers Committee for Human Rights to Senators Patrick Leahy and Orin  
Hatch in support of the North Korean Refugee Relief Act of 2002.**

[Read LCHR June 21, 2002 Congressional Testimony:](#)  
North Koreans Fleeing to an Unwelcoming China

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October 18, 2002

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
224 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Orin Hatch  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
224 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

I am writing to express the strong support of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for the “North Korean Refugee Relief Act of 2002” (S.3122). This bill, introduced by Senator Brownback, would remove a barrier to refugee and asylum eligibility for refugees from North Korea that is created by the fact that the United States does not recognize the government of North Korea and ordinarily imputes South Korean nationality to citizens of North Korea.

The Lawyers Committee greatly appreciates the Judiciary Committee's work in putting the issue of North Korean refugees on the Senate's agenda, and we particularly applaud the leadership and tireless efforts of Senator Brownback in moving towards concrete solutions to this refugee crisis. This effort demonstrates once again that the principle of refugee protection, and the view of America as a safe haven for the oppressed, is a fundamental value of our society and one that unifies us.

Last June we testified at a Judiciary Committee hearing on the plight of North Korean refugees. At that hearing there was dramatic and heart-breaking testimony about the persecution that propels people to flee the human rights disaster area that is North Korea and the mistreatment, including forced repatriation, they often face in China. This

bill represents a concrete step towards eliminating barriers to the United States doing its part to provide refugee and asylum protection for this vulnerable group. We look forward to working with members of the Committee in support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Elisa Massimino  
Director, Washington office