

# **NORTH KOREA: North Korean defector in Russia unexpectedly repatriated**

By Kim Song II

Daily NK (21.11.2018) – <https://bit.ly/20ZBjRH> – A defector living in Russia who had recently chosen to move to South Korea has been suddenly and unexpectedly repatriated back to North Korea, according to sources close to the matter.

“A defector in Moscow who was waiting to head to South Korea suddenly disappeared two weeks ago, causing an uproar,” a Daily NK source, whose name has been withheld for security purposes, reported on November 16. “The incident was such an issue that rumors spread like wildfire and many officials found out what happened.”

The defector, Ju Kyung Chul (male, 29), was a private in the North Korean military but had been sent to Russia as a laborer approximately one year ago. He decided to defect due to fatigue from the long hours of work and had just completed all the preparations needed to head to South Korea with the help of several people.

He suddenly disappeared, however. There are rumors that the Russian and North Korean authorities worked together to forcibly repatriate him back to North Korea.

“The North Korean authorities appear to have requested help from the Russian authorities to bring him back to North Korea,” said a separate source whose location has also been withheld due to the extreme sensitivity of the issue.

“He was quickly tried in a [Russian] court in Vladivostok on November 7 and then repatriated to North Korea on the same day.”

If the story is true, then harsh punishment likely awaits Ju in North Korea. The regime would view him as a serious criminal because he was trying to head to South Korea, which is still considered an enemy country.

“If he had simply ‘gone astray,’ he would be send to a disciplinary labor center, but he will face serious trouble if the authorities charge him with trying to defect,” a former high-level defector told Daily NK.

“He was sent to Russia as a laborer, but because he’s also a soldier they will treat his attempt to flee as desertion. They also likely know he tried to escape to South Korea, so he will be sent to a political prison camp.”

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