



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on September 3, 2009

Reporters Dragged Into North Korea

The American television reporters who were imprisoned in North Korea, Euna Lee and Laura Ling, say they were “violently dragged” from Chinese soil into North Korea by North Korean soldiers. They now suspect their Korean-Chinese guide may have deliberately led them into a trap, AP reported on September 2.



Their guide ushered them across a frozen river and into North Korea, ostensibly to show them a village in the distance where North Koreans were waiting in safe houses to be smuggled into China. Lee and Ling wrote in an article posted on September 1 at the website for their station, Current TV, that they “didn’t spend more than a minute on North Korean soil before turning back.” Though there were no signs marking the border, they maintain that they were across the river and “firmly back” on Chinese soil when North Korean border guards caught them.

“We tried with all our might to cling to bushes, ground, anything that would keep us on Chinese soil, but we were no match for the determined soldiers,” the journalists wrote. “They violently dragged us back across the ice to North Korea and marched us to a nearby army base, where we were detained.”

Lee and Ling were subsequently convicted of trespassing and “hostile acts” against North Korea. They were sentenced to 12 years of hard labor, but were moved to a Pyongyang guesthouse and confined there until former President Bill Clinton paid a visit to the North. After Clinton’s visit, Lee and Ling were pardoned and released in early August.

When the two journalists were captured, they were working on a story about North Korean women being forced into the sex trade or arranged marriages after they defected to China. While in detention, Lee and Ling made every effort to keep their story sources from being discovered, including swallowing their notes and damaging their videos. They are sorry if their border crossing and arrest has led to any activists being placed under greater scrutiny.

The journalists’ release did lead to a decrease in tension between North and South Korea. Unfortunately for Lee and Ling though, they stated: “We continue to cope with tremendous mental and emotional anguish, but we feel incredibly fortunate to be free and reunited with our families.”

While they both said some aspects of their involuntary stay in North Korea were too painful to talk about, they declared that their sufferings “pale when compared to the hardship facing so many people living in North Korea or as illegal immigrants in China.” Thankfully, Lee and Ling have escaped the communist tyrannies of both China and North Korea. If only all the citizens of these two blighted



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nations would be so fortunate.

— Photo of Laura Ling with Bill Clinton: AP Images



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