

**Please follow these basic guidelines to knit for North Korean Refugees:**

Most of the refugees for whom ARC knits are hiding in safe-houses along “underground railroad” routes in China and Laos. Chinese authorities financially reward local populations for turning in refugees, and penalize citizens for giving food or shelter to any North Korean defectors. For obvious reasons, we send only non-descript knitted items in plain, dark colors to refugees in the gravest danger of detection. However, refugees who pass through to safer grounds in South Korea, Japan, Russia, or Mongolia are free to wear more cheerful, inspiring colors.

ARC prioritizes the safety and security of North Korean refugees traversing hostile territories, but recognizes the emotionally positive influence of vibrant colors. We therefore encourage you to knit with these subgroups in mind.

Materials:

**WHY MATERIALS MATTER:**

Winters in China can be bitterly cold, particularly in the north, where many North Korean refugees eke out an existence, albeit temporarily. With winter temperatures averaging between –30 and 21°F, survival necessitates the warmest possible winter garments. Refugees in South Korea, Japan, Russia, and Mongolia also need to stay as warm as possible through the long winters there, where the climate is similarly challenging.

**WHAT MATERIALS TO USE:**

Wool and other animal-based yarns are warmest. Alpaca, mohair, and cashmere are other warm yarns to use, though they can become quite costly. Blended yarns (part animal-based, part synthetic) are more economical. Acrylic is perfectly acceptable, provided that the final product is warm enough to wear in winter.

The Underground Railroad Refugees:

**WHY COLORS AND STYLES MATTER:**

The Chinese government does not recognize North Korean defectors as refugees, despite having signed a 1995 treaty with the UNHCR agreeing to do so. As a result, refugees must try to blend in with native Chinese citizens. Refugees wearing knitted items which look foreign, too prosperous, or atypical of local style could face discovery and deportation. Upon repatriation, refugees are executed. Therefore, avoiding detection by China’s authorities is an extremely serious concern for these refugees of North Korea.

**WHAT COLORS AND STYLES TO USE:**

Ordinary, inconspicuous colors such as black, brown, dark green, navy blue, or maroon. Socks are the exception, and may be white. Styles should be simple and plain; avoid stripes, polka dots, etc. ARC is sending items in all sizes (from newborn to adult).

- *Hats:* Beanies are best. Earflaps are ok, but no pom-poms please, as they make it easier to identify the wearer in a crowd.
- *Scarves:* Straightforward garter stitch or ribbing is preferred. Various designs should not be too distinctive or uncommon; no tassels please.
- *Gloves & Mittens:* Unadorned but made to keep warm.
- *Sweaters, socks, and other garments:* Sweaters are great for layering; thin or thick knitted sweaters are very much appreciated. Socks with longer cuffs are preferred. Headbands, hooded jackets, and leg-warmers also qualify if they are discreet. Please email us if you have any questions.

ARC refrains from sending any two knitted items that are exactly alike, to prevent noticeable trends. Given limitations on style and color, adding minor details such as ribbing or a simple border can help make knits similar, but not identical.



The Liberated Refugees:

**WHY COLORS AND STYLES MATTER:**

After years of being forbidden to express themselves, North Korean refugees of all ages rejoice in unique, cheery garments. While they do not flaunt their status as escapees of a brutal dictatorship, these refugees are now free to speak, have their pictures taken, and take pride in their warm, donated knits.

Refugees who make it out of North Korea and China have endured immense hardship and unthinkable cruelty to be emancipated. Some have been born and raised in gulags (Soviet-style forced-labor camps) because of North Korea’s three-generation rule: if the government deems you a threat, three-generations of your family are sent to the camps. Survival rates are extremely low; those who do not starve are beaten to death for such offenses as having a kernel of corn in their pockets. What this means is that refugees who escape torture and probable execution experience a joy that is beyond measure.

**WHAT COLORS AND STYLES TO USE:**

In the interest of nourishing refugees’ newfound sense of personhood in humane society, ARC is pleased to send emotionally uplifting colors and styles of knitted goods in all sizes (from newborn to adult). Let’s welcome our freed brothers and sisters to a world of art, individuality, and beauty with creative knits!

- *Hats:* Beanies, berets, and caps are all great. Pompoms, tassels, earflaps, stripes, polka-dots, cables, buttons and crocheted flowers make it a fun project to make and a charming hat to wear.
- *Scarves:* All kinds of ribbing, cables, and colors are acceptable. If you like, add tassels to the ends for some extra pizzazz!
- *Gloves & Mittens:* Like scarves, all styles and colors are embraced and appreciated.
- *Sweaters, socks, and other garments:* Sweaters are great for layering; thin or thick knitted sweaters are very much appreciated. Socks with longer cuffs are preferred. Headbands, hooded jackets, and leg-warmers also qualify. Please email us with questions.

On behalf of the refugees, Thank You!



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