

EXTERNAL

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Health Concern / Fear of Ill-Treatment / Prisoner of  
Conscience

2 August 1995

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

(South Korea) Park Yong-gil(f), aged 75

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Park Yong-gil was arrested on 31 July 1995 in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) for making an unauthorized visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Amnesty International is concerned for her health, given her advanced age, and fears that she may face long interrogation and ill-treatment by South Korea's intelligence agency, the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP).

Park Yong-gil could be imprisoned for up to 10 years under the National Security Law. Amnesty International has adopted her as a prisoner of conscience, held for the non-violent exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association. The organization is calling for her immediate and unconditional release.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Park Yong-gil is the wife of the Reverend Moon Ik-hwan who was imprisoned for four years after making an unauthorized visit to North Korea in 1989. He was adopted as a prisoner of conscience until his release under a presidential amnesty in 1993 and died in 1994. According to reports, Park Yong-gil made the visit in the hope of improving relations between North and South Korea. She also wished to express her condolences on the death of former President Kim Il Sung, since he had offered his condolences on the death of her husband. She is reported to have flown to North Korea on 28 June 1995 via Beijing and to have returned to South Korea on 31 July, across the demilitarized zone which separates the two countries. During her visit she reportedly attended a memorial ceremony for former President Kim Il Sung and met his son, Kim Jong Il. She also visited several tourist sites. Her visit was conducted in an open fashion and it is difficult to see how she can have posed a threat to state security in South Korea.

The National Security Law prohibits unauthorized travel to North Korea or contact with North Koreans and also punishes those who "praise" or "benefit" North Korea. In 1994, dozens of people were arrested under the provisions of this law for attempting to express condolences on the death of the North Korean President. Prisoners currently serving long prison terms for making unauthorized visits to North Korea include writer Hwang Suk-yong and parliamentarian Suh Kyung-won, sentenced to seven and 10 years' imprisonment respectively. They have also been adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

National Security Law suspects are often questioned for up to 20 days by the ANSP and up to 30 days by prosecutors. The ANSP is often reported to have ill-treated political suspects, including the use of sleep deprivation, threats, intimidation, long periods of interrogation and beatings. Amnesty International is concerned for the health of Park Yong-gil, given her advanced age, and is appealing to the authorities to ensure that she is given adequate medical care and is not ill-treated in any way.

The North Korean Government is reported to have said that the arrest of Park Yong-gil would lead to a more "acute phase of confrontation" on the Korean peninsula. Amnesty International is concerned solely with human rights and takes no position on relations between South Korea and North Korea.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- expressing concern about Park Yong-gil's health, bearing in mind her advanced age;
- urging the authorities to ensure that she is given adequate medical care and is not subjected to any form of ill-treatment during interrogation.
- expressing concern about the arrest of 75-year-old Park Yong-gil, in violation of her rights to freedom of expression and association, and calling for her immediate and unconditional release.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President Kim Young-sam

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**Telegrams: President Kim Young-sam, Seoul, Republic of Korea.**

**Salutation: Dear President**

2) Minister of Justice

Mr Ahn Woo-man

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**Telegrams: Justice Minister Ahn, Shihung-gun, Kyongi Province, South Korea**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

3) Director, Agency for National Security Planning

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**Faxes: +822 720 2686 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**

**Telegrams: Director, Agency for National Security Planning, Seoul, South Korea**

**Salutation: Dear Director**

**COPIES TO:**

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Republic of Korea

and to diplomatic representatives of Republic of Korea (South Korea) accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 September 1995.