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# *amnesty international*

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## **SOUTH KOREA**

### **Appeal on Behalf of Chong Yong**

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Amnesty International is urging the South Korean authorities to review the case of Chong Yong who is serving a life-term on national security charges. It is concerned about reports that he was tortured and believes he may have been convicted after an unfair trial.

Chong Yong was born in 1941 on Mibop Island, off the northwest coast of South Korea. He earned his living as a farmer but found it difficult to support his wife and four children. In the early 1960s he and other people from his village started to fish in the waters around Mibop Island to earn some extra money. However on one of these fishing trips in 1965 Chong Yong was allegedly kidnapped and taken to North Korea where he claims to have been held for some 20 days before being handed back to the South Korean authorities.

When his children grew older Chong Yong and his wife sold their land and moved to Inchon where the educational facilities were better. He took several jobs on building sites and eventually obtained employment with the Inchon Steel Company.

On 13 September 1983 Chong Yong was arrested under the National Security Law and convicted of spying for North Korea. He was accused of receiving espionage training during his brief stay in North Korea in 1965 and contacting an uncle who had gone to live in North Korea during the Korean War (1950-53).

Chong Yong claims that he was tortured for 40 days after his arrest and forced to confess to being a North Korean spy. His wife was also questioned for 10 days about her

husband's activities and claims that she too was tortured and forced to give false information about her husband's activities. Later, Chong Yong retracted his confession and denied the charges of espionage. In a letter from prison he explained: "Being so illiterate, I had no idea of what communism was like".

Chong Yong was sentenced to life imprisonment and is currently held in Taegu Prison. Since his imprisonment he has become a Christian.

Both international and South Korean law forbid the use of testimony obtained under torture. Article 15 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment prohibits the use in legal proceedings of a statement made under torture. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by South Korea in April 1990, prohibits torture and also states that a defendant should not be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt. Article 12(2) of the South Korean Constitution states that "No citizen shall be tortured or compelled to testify against himself in criminal cases".

The National Security Law imposes long sentences of imprisonment or the death penalty for anti-state activities and contacts with anti-state organizations, including the North Korean Government. Amnesty International has written to the South Korean authorities about the cases of some 25 political prisoners who were arrested under previous governments and are serving lengthy prison terms on charges of espionage after visiting North Korea, meeting members of pro-North Korean groups in Japan or contacting relatives in North Korea. Many of these prisoners claim to have been held incommunicado and forced to make a confession under torture.

### **ACTION**

Please write appeals to Mr Lee Jung-woo, Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, 1 Chungang-dong, Kwachon-myon, Shihung-gun, Kyonggi Province, Republic of Korea (fax: +82 2 504 3337).

- Urging the authorities to conduct an inquiry into claims that Chong Yong was tortured during interrogation and to make its findings public.
- Expressing concern that Chong Yong may have been convicted on the basis of a conviction obtained under torture and urging the authorities to review his case.
- Urging the South Korean Government to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information about long-term political prisoners in South Korea, see the following Amnesty International documents: *South Korea, Prisoners Held for National Security Offences* (ASA 25/25/91); *South Korea, Amnesty International's Concerns* (ASA 25/14/92).

**KEYWORDS:** LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT / ESPIONAGE / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / CONFESSIONS / INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION / WOMEN / FAMILIES / CONSTRUCTION WORKERS / FISHERMEN

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