
£SOUTH KOREA

@Update on *Pomminnyon* Arrests

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Amnesty International is calling for the release of 12 prisoners who are imprisoned under the National Security Law for their real or alleged involvement with the dissident organization *Pomminnyon* (Pan-National Alliance for the Reunification of Korea). Amnesty International believes that these people have been imprisoned for their peaceful political activities. It considers them to be prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release. (This document updates and supplements *South Korea: Detention of Pomminnyon Members*, ASA 25/21/91 issued in July 1991)

The Korean peninsula was divided into two states after World War II. Talks between the two governments about reunification have been intermittent and contacts between citizens of the two countries are not normally allowed. In recent years dissident groups in South Korea have openly sought to meet North Koreans to discuss reunification issues, leading in most cases to their imprisonment. At its inauguration meeting in January 1989, leaders of the dissident organization *Chonminnyon* (National Democratic Alliance of Korea) proposed a "Pan-National Conference for Peace and Reunification of Korea" to be attended by representatives of all walks of life from both countries. In the following months, several members of *Chonminnyon* were briefly detained for seeking to meet North Koreans at Panmunjom in the de-militarized border zone to discuss the proposed Pan-National Conference.

In November 1990 the South Korean Government refused to allow South Korean dissidents to meet representatives from North Korea at Panmunjom in the demilitarized zone separating North and South Korea. The South Korean National Unification Board, a government agency, is reported to have rejected the request saying: "The dissident body's plan to contact North Korean authorities will only fan confusion and will be of no help in the improvement of Seoul-Pyongyang relationships". The Board also rejected a subsequent request

for dissidents to attend a conference in Berlin in November 1990, warning that those who attended the Berlin meeting would be punished according to pertinent laws.

Three staff members of *Chonminnyon*, **Cho Song-woo**, **Lee Hae-hak** and Reverend **Cho Yong-sul**, travelled to the inaugural meeting of *Pomminnyon* in Berlin. Participants at the meeting included a North Korean official, Chon Kum-chol, Vice-Chairman of the Committee for Peaceful Unification of the Fatherland, and also representatives of Koreans living in other countries. At the meeting, *Pomminnyon* made a declaration stating as its main objectives the achievement of peaceful national reunification by 1995, independence and national unity. It also announced that it aimed to establish a headquarters for the organization in North and South Korea in 1991, replace the current armistice (signed in 1953 at the end of the Korean War) by a peace agreement, secure the withdrawal of foreign (US) troops from South Korea, the abolition of the National Security Law and free travel between North and South Korea.

Cho Song-woo, Lee Hae-hak and Reverend Cho Yong-sul were arrested at Seoul's Kimpo International Airport on 30 November 1990 as they returned from Berlin and were charged under the National Security Law with making unauthorized contact with North Korean officials. During their trial at Seoul District Court in April 1991, defence counsel for Cho Song-woo, Lee Hae-hak and Cho Yong-sul sought permission from the court to call North Korean Chon Kum-chol to testify at the trial. Chon Kum-chol agreed to testify but the South Korean authorities would not grant him a safe conduct to attend the trial. At a press conference held on 14 April in North Korea Chon Kum-chol denied that *Pomminnyon* was an organization which was controlled by North Korea. He also denied that the three men had made statements praising the North Korean Government and North Korean *Juche* ideology. In May 1991 Cho Song-woo and Lee Hae-hak were sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. Reverend Cho Yong-sul was given a suspended sentence of one year's imprisonment and released.

On 25 January 1991 the North Korean headquarters of *Pomminnyon* was established. In South Korea a preparatory committee was organized on 23 January 1991 at Hyang Rin church in Seoul. Over 80 committee members attended this meeting which decided to form the South Korean headquarters of *Pomminnyon* and to organize a pan-national rally in August 1991 in Seoul. On 24 January two of the preparatory committee's leading members, **Lee Chang-bok** and **Kim Hi-taek**, were arrested and charged under the National Security Law with forming an anti-state organization and making illegal contact with North Koreans. In July 1991 Lee Chang-bok and Kim Hi-taek were each sentenced to two-and-a-half years' imprisonment. **Kwon Hyong-taek**, also a member of *Pomminnyon's* preparatory committee, was arrested on 19 April 1991 on the same charges. He was later sentenced to one-and-a-half years' imprisonment.

In February 1991 **Reverend Hong Keun-soo**, pastor of Hyang Rin Presbyterian Church in Seoul, was arrested. He was charged with praising North Korea in his sermons, for the publication of a collection of writings about reunification, for his comments on a television debate in 1988 on the issue of reunification and for his involvement in the organization of the South Korean headquarters of *Pomminnyon*. In

August 1991 Reverend Hong Keun-soo was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

The Chairperson of *Pomminnyon's* preparatory committee, **Reverend Moon Ik-hwan**, was re-arrested on 6 June 1991. Moon Ik-hwan, a 72-year-old Presbyterian Minister, had been arrested in April 1989 for making an unauthorized visit to North Korea and meeting North Korean government officials. He was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment but was released in October 1990 on grounds of ill-health.

The authorities are reported to have re-arrested Reverend Moon Ik-hwan because he violated the terms of his parole by again becoming involved in political activities. This included his role in the anti-government protests which took place in April and May 1991 and his involvement in the organization of *Pomminnyon*.

From 29 to 30 June 1991 a second *Pomminnyon* meeting was held in Berlin. Topics of discussion at this meeting included the organization of a pan-national conference to be held in Seoul around 15 August (National Liberation Day). Two student delegates belonging to *Chondaehyop* (National Council of Student Representatives) made an unauthorized visit to Berlin to attend this meeting. On the evening of 30 June the *Pomminnyon* headquarters in Berlin are reported to have sent a facsimile message to *Chonminnyon* with the request that it be forwarded to *Chondaehyop*. The message was intercepted by the authorities and two staff members of *Chonminnyon*, **Kim Hyong-min** and **Chung Yoon-so**, who were working in the office were arrested and charged under the National Security Law for being in communication with an anti-state organization. On 8 July 1991 two other members of *Pomminnyon's* preparatory committee, **Kim Kwe-sang** and **Lee Kwan-bok**, were arrested on the grounds that they had been involved in the organization of the planned pan-national conference. These four prisoners are currently on trial.

Park Soon-kyung, a 68-year-old theologian was arrested on 13 August 1991 for involvement in the formation of the South Korean headquarters of *Pomminnyon*. She was also accused of delivering a lecture at a Christian meeting in Japan in which she is reported to have made a comparison between the *Juche* ideology of North Korea and Christian theology and to have said that it is necessary for South Koreans to understand the *Juche* ideology in order to bring about reunification between the two countries.

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