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# *amnesty international*

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## £SOUTH KOREA

### @Appeal on behalf of Baik Tae-ung

DECEMBER 1992

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Amnesty International is concerned about Baik Tae-ung, 31-year-old former student of law and alleged leader of *Sanomaeng* (Socialist Workers League) who has been sentenced to life imprisonment under the National Security Law. It believes that he may be a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned for the peaceful expression of his political views. It is also concerned about claims that he was tortured during interrogation.

Baik Tae-ung is one of the key leaders of *Sanomaeng*, an organization which has been defined by the authorities as "anti-state". The National Security Law (NSL) imposes long sentences of imprisonment or the death penalty for "anti-state" activities and contacts with "anti-state" organizations. The law has frequently been used to imprison those with socialist or communist political views and those who expressed support for North Korea or whose ideas were similar to those of North Korea.

Baik Tae-ung was arrested on 29 April 1992 by the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP). He was interrogated for 22 days by the ANSP and exercised his right to remain silent for 15 of these days. He testified in court that he had been severely tortured during this time and also claimed that a drug had been introduced into his food in order to weaken him before interrogation. He said:

"During the 22 days of ANSP investigation I was subjected to various types of torture such as sleep deprivation, drug injection and mob beating. Going through these rounds of torture I prepared myself for death three times... Five days before my [being sent to the prosecution], interrogators had this look on their faces that they had had enough of it, taking me to a special torture chamber. In the middle of the night investigators beat me for hours. They took turns in beating. Their demand was that complete silence was unacceptable."

Baik Tae-ung was charged under the NSL for the establishment and membership of *Sanomaeng*, for meeting and communicating with members of an "anti-state" organization and for producing material benefitting the enemy (North Korea). Amnesty International is seeking further information about these charges and the evidence used to convict him.

*Sanomaeng* was established in November 1989 and the first arrests of its members took place in late 1990. Since then some 180 members of the group have been arrested under the NSL for alleged "anti-state" activities and some 100 remain in prison today. Shortly after the arrest of Baik Tae-ung, in May 1992, the ANSP announced that *Sanomaeng* was the second largest revolutionary organization in the country's history with a membership of some 3,500. It claimed that *Sanomaeng* members had worked on university campuses and in factories in order to prepare for an armed uprising to overthrow the government. It has also accused *Sanomaeng* members of having links with the North Korean Workers Party.

*Sanomaeng* members and supporters claim that *Sanomaeng* is a political organization with a socialist orientation and that its aims include the establishment of a socialist society in South Korea through the implementation of a mixed economy, electoral reform, and the establishment of a legal socialist political party. They say that *Sanomaeng* does not seek to emulate the North Korean socialist system but to establish a new and unique South Korean socialism. To achieve its goals *Sanomaeng* organized mass rallies, distributed leaflets, and published magazines. It also sent its members to work with farmers and manual workers, to educate them about their political rights.

Baik Tae-ung's trial opened at Seoul District Court in July 1992 and he made a lengthy statement defending *Sanomaeng* and his own personal role in the organization. He stressed that *Sanomaeng* wished to be a legal and peaceful organization. He said:

"*Sanomaeng* has never assumed the title of government. It has never purported to disturb or overthrow the state. . . *Sanomaeng* is not an organization of armed struggle. *Sanomaeng* has a vision to transform our society, thoroughly, democratically, peacefully and in the manner guaranteed by the democratic institutions of our society. . . We have learned from history that we cannot achieve socialism by an armed coup d'etat of small minorities. . . Socialism is a future which will blossom only when an overwhelming majority of citizens voluntarily want and choose it. . . As long as legal and institutional improvement provides us with the legal right to engage ourselves in socialist activities, we will promote our socialism by expressing our ideas peacefully through legally-sanctioned democratic channels such as laws, institutions, parliament and social associations."

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 immediate and impartial inquiry into claims that Baik Tae-ung was tortured during interrogation and to make its findings public.

- Expressing concern that Baik Tae-ung may be a prisoner of conscience and urging the authorities to release him if he is held for the peaceful exercise of his political views;

- Asking for detailed information about the evidence that Baik Tae-ung advocated the use of violence.

**KEYWORDS: LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT / POLITICAL PRISONERS / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT /  
INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION / BANNING / POLITICAL GROUPS /**

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