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REPUBLIC OF KOREA (SOUTH KOREA): GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ARE NOT ILL-TREATED IN DETENTION

Following the arrests today of more than 3,000 students at the campus of Yonsei University in Seoul, Amnesty International expressed its concern that riot police beat students as they were being detained.

“The violence at Yonsei University should not be used as a pretext for the government to allow the police to beat up demonstrators,” Amnesty International said. “The South Korean authorities should ensure that all detained students are protected from further ill-treatment. They should also be given access to their families and legal counsel and appropriate medical attention.”

In South Korea detainees are routinely deprived of sleep, sometimes beaten during police interrogation and denied prompt access to families and lawyers. The organization fears that as a result of the violent clashes, the students in detention could be subjected to this pattern of abuse.

Violence between police and students erupted when government authorities banned a student festival at Yonsei University, apparently on the grounds that it was pro-North Korean. On 14 August the authorities sent thousands of riot police to break it up. Several hundred students and policemen were subsequently injured, and police cut off supplies of food and medicine to the students. On 20 August riot police stormed the campus, and the total number of arrests has risen above 5,000.

While Amnesty International does not condone the use of violence by the students, it is concerned that all detainees are protected in accordance with international standards and that those who did not use violence should be released.

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