

INDEX: ASA 25/22/96  
27 AUGUST 1996

News Service 153/96

SOUTH KOREA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR FULL INVESTIGATION  
INTO PAST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND FOR CHUN DOO-HWAN'S DEATH  
SENTENCE TO BE COMMUTED

Following the sentencing of former presidents Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo and 13 other former army officers, Amnesty International today urged the South Korean authorities to further investigate human rights violations committed under previous governments.

“The prosecution of two former presidents and a handful of others is a step in the right direction but must be followed by more decisive action. An independent investigation into all reported human rights violations of the past is needed,” the human rights organization said.

Amnesty International is concerned that the investigation into the Kwangju massacre has failed to establish the full truth. According to government figures, some 200 civilians were killed when troops opened fire on unarmed demonstrators but citizens' groups say that more than 1,000 people died in the massacre.

“The prosecution's investigation into the massacre appears to have been limited and does not satisfy the right of all the victims and their families to know the truth and to receive adequate compensation,” the human rights organization said.

In line with its policy of opposing the death penalty in all cases, Amnesty International also called for Chun Doo-hwan's death sentence to be commuted.

**BACKGROUND**

Former Presidents Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo and 14 others were prosecuted after special legislation to enable the prosecutions to take place was passed by the National assembly last December, largely as a result of public pressure.

President Kim Young-sam, the first civilian President for several decades, took office in 1993 but has made little effort to investigate human rights violations committed under past military governments. These include the arrest, unfair trial and torture of thousands of political prisoners, some of whom remain in prison today. The current statute of limitations on prosecutions has enabled many of those responsible for human rights violations to escape prosecution and there is no independent body with a mandate to investigate past violations.

ENDS\