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REPUBLIC OF KOREA (SOUTH KOREA)

@Dozens arrested under the National Security Law

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Amnesty International is concerned at dozens of reported arrests under the National Security Law in recent months, including students, former students, publishers, academics and political activists. Most were arrested for "praising" North Korea and forming organizations alleged to be "anti-state" or pro-North Korean under provisions of the law which have often been used to imprison people for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. Arrests have continued in spite of a widely-publicised prisoner amnesty in August which did not benefit many political prisoners.

Between January and 10 June 1995 117 people were arrested under the National Security Law and there have been dozens more arrests since then. On 30 May six former students were arrested on charges of establishing an organization to study North Korea's *Juche* (self-reliance) ideology. The organization, called "Group for National Salvation and Self-Reliance", was allegedly set up in 1993 when the six were students. All have since left university and claim to have no knowledge of the organization. Five other people, arrested on the same day were accused by the authorities of forming an organization called the "Association for the Love of the People" in 1993. This group is alleged to have supported North Korea's ideas on reunification and to have distributed pro-North Korean material.

Seven members of *Minjongryon* (Korean Political Alliance of the People) were arrested on 12 July for attempting to re-establish the organization *Sanomaeng* (Socialist Workers League) which is considered by the authorities to be an "anti-state" organization. Since July 1993 over 60 members of *Minjongryon* have been arrested on similar charges, although there is no indication that its members have used or advocated violence.

On 17 July the publisher, editor and an employee of *Han* Publishing Company were arrested for the publication and distribution of an autobiography of the late North Korean

leader, Kim Il Sung. On the following day bookshop owner, Sim Bom-sok, was arrested on charges of selling the publication in question.

In early August Amnesty International called for the release of 75-year-old Park Yong-gil, arrested on 31 July for making an unauthorized visit to North Korea and meeting North Korean officials. At the time of writing she is awaiting trial in Seoul Prison and is reportedly in very poor health, suffering from diabetes and heart disease.

On 22 August 13 former students were arrested for belonging to the "1st May Group", alleged by the authorities to have links with the North Korean Workers Party. They were reportedly accused of infiltrating factories and businesses where they were working, and of giving financial assistance to the families of a group of prisoners arrested on similar charges in 1992. They are also alleged to have written articles critical of government persecution of these prisoners. On 4 September 18 people, including four military conscripts were arrested on charges of seeking to spread *Juche* ideology by forming a "self reliance coalition" in 1992. One was accused of setting up altars to mourn North Korean leader, Kim Il Sung, after his death in July 1994.

Amnesty International is concerned that some of those arrested may be charged and sentenced to prison terms for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. Some prisoners arrested earlier this year have already been convicted. Ki Seh-moon, aged 60, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on 30 May for publishing and distributing the memoirs of a member of a North Korean guerrilla unit and for organizing the funeral of a former political prisoner and "Partisan" fighter. He himself had not used or advocated violence and was adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. Former student Choi Seong-ki was sentenced to one-and-a-half years' imprisonment on 30 May, apparently for the contents of his writings about Korean reunification and for passing information about the student movement in Korea to a Korean student organization in Japan.

National Security Law prisoners are routinely deprived of sleep and threatened during interrogation and are often forced to make a "confession". Professor Park Chang-hee, aged 63, was arrested on 26 April 1995 for alleged "anti-state" activities and is currently on trial. At his first trial hearing on 12 July, Professor Park told the court that he had been forced to sign a "confession" during interrogation. He said that officials of the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP) had deprived him of sleep, hit him with books and forced him to drink alcohol. He also said that prosecutors had beaten and threatened him. After his arrest Professor Park was held for 44 days without charge with restricted access to his lawyers and relatives.

The National Security Law, last amended in 1991, provides the death sentence or life imprisonment for those convicted of being the leaders of "anti-state" organizations, a definition which includes the North Korean Government and has also been applied to socialist and dissident groups in South Korea. The law provides shorter terms of imprisonment for members and supporters of "anti-state" organizations and those who "praise", "encourage" and "side with" the enemy (North Korea). The South Korean Government has told Amnesty International that retention of the National Security Law in its current form is necessary because of the threat from North Korea. In practice, Amnesty International believes that the law has been used to imprison people for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. It has expressed concern

that the tension between North and South Korea should not be used as justification for curbing these basic rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send letters and faxes:

- Expressing concern about the recent large number of arrests under the National Security Law and that those arrested may be held for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that all detainees are protected from torture and ill-treatment during interrogation and are given early and regular access to lawyers and family;
- Urging the South Korean Government to amend the National Security Law so that the rights to freedom of expression and association are protected, in accordance with international human rights standards.

Appeals to:

◆ President Kim Young-sam

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Chongno-gu, Seoul,
Republic of Korea
Fax: +822 770 0253

◆ Mr Ahn Woo-man, Minister of Justice

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Shihung-gun, Kyonggi Province
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- ◆ and to diplomatic representatives of South Korea in your country.

This is a quick KOTARAN action, sent to selected KOTARAN groups for action

KEYWORDS: CENSORSHIP1 / BANNING1 / LEGISLATION1 / MASS ARREST / PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / ILL-HEALTH / CONFESSIONS / DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL / INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION / POLITICAL ACTIVISTS / PUBLISHERS / EDITORS / SHOP-KEEPERS / STUDENTS / AGED /

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