
amnesty international

£SOUTH KOREA

@Appeal for the Release of Kim Sun-myung: Held for 42 Years

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Amnesty International is appealing for the release of 69-year-old Kim Sun-myung, a former textile worker who fought for North Korea during the Korean War (1951 - 1953). Kim Sun-myung has been in prison in conditions of extreme isolation since October 1951, making him one of the world's longest serving prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International believes that he continues to be held solely on grounds of conscience, because of his refusal to renounce communism.

Kim Sun-myung was arrested in 1951 as he crossed the border separating North and South Korea. He was accused of espionage and was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment by a military court. In 1953 he was tried again by a military court and was sentenced to death, later commuted to life imprisonment. According to available information about Kim Sun-myung, he was tortured during interrogation and convicted unfairly. He has consistently refused to sign a statement of "conversion" renouncing his alleged communist views. Amnesty International believes this is the reason why he has been refused the possibility of release on parole and also accounts for the poor conditions in which he is held.

For most of his 42-year imprisonment in Taejon Prison Kim Sun-myung has been held in isolation from other prisoners and has received no visitors. His family stopped visiting him many years ago and human rights groups have been denied access. In May and June 1994 human rights lawyers who are trying to secure Kim Sun-myung's release were refused access. As a result of his isolation, prolonged imprisonment and old age, Kim Sun-myung is said to be in poor physical and mental health.

No other political prisoner in South Korea has been held in such conditions for so long. In spite of his old age, ill-health and lack of contact with the outside world, the South Korean Government appears to regard Kim Sun-myung as an ideological threat because of his alleged communist views. Amnesty International believes that the prolonged imprisonment of Kim Sun-myung for his political views amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. It calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Please send letters and faxes to the South Korean Government:

- ◆ *expressing concern that the prolonged imprisonment of Kim Sun-myung, a prisoner of conscience, amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;*
- ◆ *calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Kim Sun-myung;*
- ◆ *urging the authorities to allow human rights groups and lawyers to visit Kim Sun-myung in prison.*

Appeals to:

◆ *President Kim Young-sam*
The Blue House
1 Sejong-no
Chongno-gu, Seoul
Republic of Korea
Fax: +822 770 0253

◆ *Mr Kim Doo-hee, Minister of Justice*
Ministry of Justice
1 Chungang-dong
Kwachon-myon, Shihung-gun
Kyonggi Province
Republic of Korea
Fax: +822 504 3337

- ◆ *and to diplomatic representatives of South Korea in your country.*

KEYWORDS: PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE1 / LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT1 / AGED /

ILL-HEALTH / MENTAL HEALTH / SOLITARY CONFINEMENT / CONFESSIONS /
TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / ESPIONAGE / PHOTOGRAPHS /

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