
amnesty international

£SOUTH KOREA @Appeal to President-Elect

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Amnesty International is urging Kim Young-sam, President-elect of the Republic of Korea, to release all prisoners held for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association and to commute all death sentences.

Kim Young-sam of the Democratic Liberal Party was elected President of the Republic of Korea on 18 December 1992. In October 1992 he made a campaign pledge to release prisoners of conscience if he was elected President. He is reported to have told foreign journalists: "I will carry out a bold and far-reaching amnesty for prisoners of conscience". After his election, in early January, officials of the Ministry of Justice announced that thousands of political prisoners and criminals would be released under an amnesty to mark Kim Young-sam's inauguration as president on 25 February 1993.

According to human rights groups in South Korea, there are currently some 950 political prisoners in South Korea, held under several laws which restrict the rights of freedom of expression and association. They include prisoners of conscience, held for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association.

Many political prisoners are held under the National Security Law (NSL) which bans "anti-state" activities and contacts with "anti-state" organizations. They include prisoners convicted of "espionage" after they visited North Korea or made unauthorized contacts with North Koreans or alleged North Korean agents in third countries and prisoners who expressed support for North Korea or held socialist views.

Amnesty International is urging the President-elect to include all prisoners of conscience in his proposed amnesty. Government officials are reported to have said that people imprisoned for trying to overthrow the government and North Korean sympathizers will not be included in the amnesty. Amnesty International is concerned that certain categories of prisoners, such as those accused of "espionage", may therefore be excluded. Some have been adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience; others were convicted on the basis of confessions they said they made under torture. Several of these prisoners have refused to renounce their real or alleged communist beliefs and have consequently been excluded from previous amnesties.

Amnesty International is also urging Kim Young-sam to commute all death sentences. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, considering it to be a violation of the right to life and of the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Some 50 prisoners are currently under sentence of death for criminal offences. The last executions, of nine convicted murderers, took place in December 1992.

Please write appeals to Mr Kim Young-sam, President-elect of the Republic of Korea:

- Urging the release of all prisoners of conscience and the commutation of all death sentences in the proposed amnesty to mark the inauguration of Kim Young-sam as President of the Republic of Korea.

- Send appeals to:

Mr Kim Young-sam
President-Elect of the Republic of Korea
c/o Democratic Liberal Party
14-8 Yoido-dong, Youngdungpo-gu
Seoul
Republic of Korea
(fax: +82 2 780 2159)