

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 25/20/91
Distrib: PG/SC

Date: 17 July 1991

MEDICAL CONCERN

**@Pang Yang-kyun
£SOUTH KOREA (REPUBLIC OF KOREA)**

Amnesty International is concerned by reports of the ill-health of Pang Yang-kyun, a 36-year-old adopted prisoner of conscience sentenced in 1989 to seven years' imprisonment. Pang Yang-kyun was the principal political aide to an opposition member of the National Assembly, Suh Kyung-won, who is also adopted as a prisoner of conscience. Their imprisonment is connected to an illegal visit made by Suh Kyung-won to North Korea in 1988 and with a visit made by Pang Yang-kyun to West Germany in the same year.

Background

Pang Yang-kyun was arrested on 2 July 1989 and was charged with having failed to report an illegal visit to North Korea made by Suh Kyung-won; he was also charged with having passed state secrets to a North Korean agent in Frankfurt during a visit he himself made to Germany in December 1988.

Since the end of World War II Korea has been divided into two states. On various occasions the two governments have made proposals for reunification but on different terms. Official contacts between North Korea and South Korea remain limited and in past years attempts by other South Koreans to make unofficial visits to North Korea have been prevented or, when they took place, have led to their arrest. In August 1990 the South-North Exchange and Cooperation Law came into force. Under this new law, the South Korean Government can authorize its citizens to visit North Korea, invite North Koreans to the south and trade and engage in joint ventures with them. However, South Korean authorities have refused some citizens who have applied to visit North Korea, and unauthorized contacts continue to result in arrests.

During his trial, Pang Yang-kyun admitted having travelled to West Germany on business for Suh Kyung-won and having collected money for him while there. However, he rejected the prosecution's claim that the person with whom he met in Germany was a North Korean agent and also denied that he had known of Suh Kyung-won's visit to North Korea in 1988. He was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in December 1989.

Pang Yang-kyun alleges that he was ill-treated during interrogation following his arrest. He was visited by a lawyer for the Party for Peace and Democracy, the main parliamentary opposition group, some seven weeks after his detention. The lawyer reported that Pang Yang-kyun's left eye was swollen and the right side of his face bruised. Pang Yang-kyun stated

during his trial that while in the custody of the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP) he had been beaten, deprived of sleep and subjected to death threats. He further alleged that he had been forced under duress to sign a statement agreeing not to disclose his ill-treatment during questioning by the ANSP and the prosecution. During his sentencing, the court conceded "that in Pang Yang-kyun's case the court cannot rule out the possibility that he was tortured while being interrogated at the Agency for National Security Planning. But it cannot be viewed that such duress continued while he confessed to prosecutors."

Pang Yang-kyun is currently held in Chonju prison and reports received over the last few months indicate that he is in ill-health. He is said to have lost the hearing in one ear, to have difficulty breathing and to be suffering from back pain which prevents him sleeping. Some reports attribute this to his ill-treatment and the circumstances of his detention. Pang Yang-kyun is believed to have been taken to the infirmary of Chonju prison but according to reports he has not been receiving any medication or other form of medical treatment.

According to some sources more than 60 people were questioned by the authorities about Suh Kyung-won's visit to the north; most were his close aides, members of his family, leading members of the Catholic Farmers' Association, Catholic priests and politicians. All were tried with Pang Yung-kyun and Suh Kyung-won and subsequently released on probation or given suspended sentences. Amnesty International is not aware of any evidence to support charges that Pang Yang-kyun was involved in espionage. It believes that he is imprisoned for his peaceful political activities, his views on the reunification of North and South Korea and because, as Suh Kyung-won's principal aide, he is assumed to have known of the latter's clandestine visit to North Korea. Amnesty International has adopted him as a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his release from prison.

INTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 25/20/91
Distrib: PG/SC

To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Asia
Date: 17 July 1991

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Pang Yang-kyun
SOUTH KOREA (REPUBLIC OF KOREA)**

Keywords

Theme: POC/ill-health

Summary

Pang Yang-kyun is an adopted prisoner of conscience who was arrested in July 1989 and has been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. He is reported to have been tortured during his interrogation and is now reported to have lost hearing in one ear and to be suffering other medical problems. Please see the attached external details.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical groups to the Minister of Justice. Letters should:

- express concern that Pang Yang-kyun is reported to have lost the hearing in one ear and to be suffering from other medical problems
- further express concern that he is reported to have been beaten and ill-treated following his arrest in 1989
- ask whether the cause of his loss of hearing has been investigated and whether his other medical problems have been properly assessed; ask what medical care and treatment he is receiving
- express concern that he appears to have been imprisoned because of his links with Suh Kyung-won and that there does not appear to be evidence to support the charges that either were involved in any form of espionage
- urge that Pang Yang-kyun is assured access to adequate medical attention and treatment for the problems he is suffering and urge the Korean authorities to release him from prison on the grounds that he was detained not for any violent activity but solely as a result of his political opinion

Address

Mr Kim Ki-choon
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
1 Chungang-dong
Kwachon-myon
Shihung-gun
Kyonggi Province
Republic of Korea

