

Write for Rights
Make a difference

3-17 December 2011

Yodok Political Prison (Camp)
North Korea



ACT NOW

Write to the North Korean authorities:

- Calling on them to immediately close Yodok and all political prison camps and immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience held in the camps, including relatives held on the basis of “guilt-by-association”.
- Calling on them to immediately end all executions and abusive forced labour, torture and other ill-treatment of detainees.

Send appeals to:

Kim Jong-il
Chairman, National Defence Commission
Pyongyang
Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

Send copies to:

UN Ambassador of the Democratic
People’s Republic of Korea to the United
Nations in Geneva
H.E. Mr So-Se Pyong

And to:

c/o Yodok Action
Amnesty International
22 rue du Cendrier – 4th floor
1201, Geneva
Switzerland

Email: Geneva-Yodoc@amnesty.org

Please do not mention the Amnesty
International office in letters or emails
to Ambassador So-Se Pyong.

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



September 2011
Index: ASA 24/002/2011
English

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
Peter Benenson House
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

www.amnesty.org/individuals-at-risk

ACT NOW FOR Yodok political prison camp



An estimated 50,000 men, women and children are currently held in Yodok political prison camp in North Korea. Yodok is one of six known camps in the country, in which an estimated 200,000 political prisoners and their families are imprisoned without trial or following grossly unfair trials. Inmates, including children, are tortured and forced to work in dangerous conditions. The combination of hazardous forced labour, lack of food, beatings, inadequate medical care and unhygienic living conditions result in chronic illness, and many prisoners die in detention or soon after release.

The North Korean government denies the existence of any political prison camps, including Yodok, even though their existence is confirmed by satellite photographs and testimonies collected by Amnesty International from former guards, relatives of prisoners and former inmates. Those sent to the camps include officials perceived to have performed their job inadequately, critics of the regime or the ruling family and people suspected of engaging in “anti-government” activities, including listening to TV or radio broadcasts from South Korea.

All the camps have “total control zones”, from which inmates are never released, except in very rare circumstances. Amnesty International is aware of only three people who have escaped or been released from a total control zone. Infants born in total control zones are imprisoned there for life. Yodok and Bukchang-ri camps also have “revolutionary zones” for people perceived to

have committed less serious offences. Inmates in the revolutionary zones are released after serving sentences of up to 10 years.

Executions take place in Yodok both in public and in secret, and are typically carried out by firing squad or hanging. Inmates can be executed for breaking prison camp rules, such as stealing food.

Family members of those suspected of crimes are also sent to Yodok. This system of “guilt by association” is used to silence dissent and control the population through fear. When North Korean national Oh Kil-nam requested political asylum in Denmark in 1986, he was forced to leave his wife and two daughters (depicted above) in North Korea. Oh’s family were sent to Yodok in 1987 as a result of his failing to return to North Korea. He received letters from them in 1988 and 1989, and photographs in 1991. He is the only person known to have received this kind of information from inmates in the camps. A former inmate claims that Oh’s wife and daughters were later moved to Yodok’s total control zone. Oh has received no further information about them.

3-17 December 2011

Write for Rights
Make a difference