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Republic of Korea: Amnesty International welcomes the commitment to address discrimination, including discrimination against migrant workers, but regrets the rejection of recommendations to abolish or amend the National Security Law in line with international standards.

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on the Republic of Korea

Amnesty International welcomes the support of the Republic of Korea of recommendations to address discrimination, including discrimination against migrant workers¹ and policies aimed at guaranteeing the full enjoyment of the rights of migrant workers.² Amnesty International notes that similar recommendations were accepted by the Republic of Korea in 2008. We regret their poor implementation and urge the government to take concrete measures as a matter of urgency to respect, protect and promote the rights of all migrant workers, both documented and undocumented and to introduce measures to eliminate restrictions on their labour mobility.³

Amnesty International is disappointed that the Republic of Korea has rejected a number of key recommendations. We regret the rejection of recommendations to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR and establish a moratorium on executions as a step toward full abolition.⁴ We further regret the rejection of recommendations to introduce legislation to provide genuine alternative service to military service for conscientious objectors.⁵

Finally, Amnesty International regrets the Republic of Korea's rejection of recommendations to abolish or amend the National Security Law in line with international standards.⁶ Vaguely worded clauses in the National Security Law are mis-used to target individuals and groups perceived to oppose government policy, particularly in regard to North Korea. For example, Park Jeong-geun, a member of the Socialist Party in South Korea was charged with violating the National Security Law after satirically re-tweeting the message "long live Kim Jong-il" from North Korea's official twitter account. In November 2012 he received a 10 month prison sentence suspended for two years. Kim Myeong-soo, an on-line bookseller, was sentenced to six months in prison suspended for two years for selling books with the "intention of endangering the security of the state", although books he sold are widely available in other bookstores and libraries in the country.

Amnesty International believes that the government's failure to accept these recommendations indicates a worrying lack of commitment to guaranteeing the right to freedom of expression.

¹ Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Republic of Korea, A/HRC/22/10, recommendation 124.31 (Morocco, Spain)..

² A/HRC/22/10, recommendation 124.67 (Viet Nam, Nepal, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Thailand).

³ A/HRC/22/10, recommendation 124.65 (France).

⁴ A/HRC/22/10, recommendation 124.35 (Rwanda, Switzerland, Slovenia, Uruguay, Chile, Germany, United Kingdom, Belgium, Honduras, Uzbekistan Italy, Norway, Slovakia, Turkey, France, Spain, Australia).

⁵ A/HRC/22/10, recommendation 124.53 (France, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, USA, Australia).

⁶ A/HRC/22/10, recommendations 124.55 (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), 124.56 (Australia, France), and 124.57 (Germany, Norway, Spain, USA, Democratic People's Republic of Korea).

Amnesty International therefore urges the Republic of Korea to reconsider its position, and to bring the National Security Law in line with international standards with immediate effect.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Korea on 14 March 2013 during its 22nd session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in the Republic of Korea. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA25/001/2012/en>

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