

# URGENT ACTION

## TWO FACE JAIL FOR PROTESTS ABOUT FERRY ACCIDENT

**Two human rights defenders in South Korea are at risk of being imprisoned for their role in protests calling for justice for the victims of the Sewol ferry accident and their families. Their trial began on 14 October, with a sentence expected in December.**

Prominent human rights defenders **Park Rae-goon** and **Kim Hye-jin** were detained on 14 July for organizing and participating in demonstrations in April and May which called for justice for the victims of the Sewol ferry accident and their families. Kim Hye-jin was released on 16 July, while Park Rae-goon remained in detention until bail was granted on 2 November.

Since the Sewol ferry accident on 14 April 2014, which led to the deaths of 304 people, many of them students, victims' family members, civil society groups and activists have been organizing rallies and protests to call for an independent and transparent investigation. Park Rae-goon and Kim Hye-jin are co-chairs of the steering committee of the National Coalition on the Sewol Ferry Accident, and played a leading role in organizing the demonstrations.

The marches were overwhelmingly peaceful, but during a vigil walk on 16 April to mark the one-year anniversary of the accident, police blockaded the streets, and used unnecessary force against the participants, resulting in isolated violent clashes between protesters and police. According to their lawyers, there is no evidence that Park Rae-goon and Kim Hye-jin incited or took part in any violent actions during the marches, and their arrest is believed to be an attempt by the government to silence those seeking the truth about the Sewol ferry accident.

Park Rae-goon is one of the most prominent human rights defenders in South Korea, and for over 30 years has been working on issues such as forced eviction, labour rights, migrant rights and freedom of expression. Kim Hye-jin has also worked for many years on labour rights in South Korea.

### **Please write immediately in Korean, English or your own language:**

- Urging the authorities to drop all the charges against Park Rae-goon and Kim Hye-jin;
- Calling on them to ensure the people are able to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- To ensure that all human rights defenders are allowed to carry out their peaceful activities without fear of arbitrary detention, harassment, intimidation or other human rights violations in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 DECEMBER 2015 TO:**

#### Minister of Justice

Kim Hyun-woong  
Gwanmun\_ro 47, Gwacheon-si,  
Kyunggi-do,  
Republic of Korea 13809  
Fax: +82-2-2110-0350  
Twitter: @happymoj  
Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/mojkorea/>

Salutation: Dear Minister

#### Prime Minister

Hwang Kyo-ahn  
Government Complex Sejong,  
261 Dasom-ro,  
Sejong-si,  
Republic of Korea  
Twitter: @PrimeMinisterKR  
Salutation: Your Excellency

### **Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Park Rae-goon and Kim Hye-jin are facing charges of: Organizing Illegal Rallies (Article 6 of the Assembly and Demonstration Act), Refusal to be Dispersed (Article 21 of the Assembly and Demonstration Act), General Obstruction of Traffic (Article 185 of the Criminal Code) and Special Obstruction of Public Duty (Article 144 of the Criminal Code). Park Rae-goon is also facing additional charges of Invalidity of Public Documents, etc. and Destruction of Public Goods (Article 141 of the Criminal Code) and violence during the demonstrations.

Park Rae-goon works for Human Rights Foundation Saram, which monitors the human rights situation in South Korea. He has dedicated his life to human rights issues for over 30 years since his younger brother killed himself to urge the government to bring justice to the victims of the Gwangju uprising in 1980, in which 606 people are estimated to have died. Since then, Park Rae-goon has worked tirelessly on issues such as of forced evictions, labour rights, and freedom of expression.

He was previously arrested and detained in 2006 for peacefully demonstrating for the rights of farmers being evicted from their land to make room for the expansion of US army base Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek, Gyeonggi province, south of Seoul. In 2010, he was again detained for seeking justice and reparations for the families of victims who died in a fire while protesting evictions from their homes and businesses in Seoul's central Yongsan district.

Name: Park Rae-goon (m) and Kim Hye-jin (f)

Gender m/f: Both

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