
amnesty international

£SOUTH KOREA @Nine Prisoners Executed

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Amnesty International has written to the Minister of Justice to express concern about the execution of nine convicted murderers on 29 December 1992. It has also asked President-elect Kim Young-sam to commute all death sentences as part of the large-scale amnesty which he has promised to mark his inauguration as President of the Republic of Korea on 25 February 1993. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, considering it to be a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

The nine executions were carried out at Seoul and Taegu Prisons on the orders of the Minister of Justice. They were the only executions to be carried out in 1992 and the first since December 1991 when those executed were also nine convicted murderers. Some 50 prisoners are currently under sentence of death in South Korea, mostly convicted of murder, rape and robbery. The death penalty may be imposed for a wide range of criminal and political offences, although in practice most death sentences are imposed for crimes involving murder.

Amnesty International is concerned about the increased number of death sentences imposed by the courts since 1990 when the government launched a "war against crime". The government has recently stated its intention to abolish the death penalty for 10 criminal offences involving killings when death is not intended and Amnesty International welcomes such a move. However, it believes that far more should be done to restrict the application of the death penalty. It has urged the government to conduct a thorough study into the deterrent effect of the death penalty and to impose a moratorium on executions until the results of such a study are available.

In 1989 a petition was filed with the Constitutional Court by two convicted murders to contest the constitutionality of the death penalty. There was delay in reviewing the petition and in May 1992 the Constitutional Court asked a panel of legal experts to hold a debate on the subject. Amnesty International believes that the government should impose a moratorium on executions pending the Constitutional Court's decision.

Kim Young-sam of the Democratic Liberal Party was elected President of the Republic of Korea on 18 December 1992. 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. Amnesty International has written to the President-elect asking him to commute all death sentences as part of the proposed amnesty.

Please write letters or faxes to the South Korean authorities:

- Expressing concern about the execution of nine convicts in December 1992.
- Urging the authorities to impose a moratorium on all further executions pending the decision of the Constitutional Court on a petition challenging the constitutionality of the death penalty and pending a thorough study into whether the death penalty is an effective deterrent to crime.
- Urging 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:

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