

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **ROK: Amnesty International calls for thorough investigation into death in custody**

Amnesty International expressed concern today over the death in custody of a 32-year old man, Cho Cheon-hoon, at the prosecution office in Seoul.

Yesterday the Supreme Prosecutors Office announced it had requested the arrest of the prosecutor, Hong Gyeong-ryeong, for his involvement in the death of the murder suspect during interrogation. According to the National Institute of Scientific Investigation the suspect, Cho, was tortured to death by investigators at the prosecution office on 26 October 2002.

"We are calling for a full, thorough and impartial investigation into this matter. We urge, that all those involved should be tried and brought to justice," Amnesty International said, adding that all findings of the investigation should be disclosed to the public.

"Human rights violations such as torture cannot be tolerated under any circumstances and all those committing such abuses must be punished according to the law," the organization stressed.

"We strongly and unconditionally oppose all acts of violence against those held in custody," Amnesty International added, urging Korea to follow international standards set by the UN Convention against Torture and UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners".

"The interrogation of criminal suspects should take place in the presence of a lawyer and a record of the interview should always be kept and, where possible, tape recordings or video recordings of the interrogation should be made. Detainees' defence lawyers should have access to these records," the organization said.

Amnesty International also called for the Korean government to amend legislation which permits suspects to be held for up to 50 days without charge and to improve conditions of imprisonment, so that they conform to international human rights standards.

### **Background**

The investigation team revealed that Cho Cheon-hoon was arrested last month for his suspected role in two murder cases. He died on 26 October after being questioned and assaulted by a group of investigators. An autopsy showed that he died as a result of severe beatings.

Public prosecutor, Hong Gyeong-ryeong, was reportedly present during the interrogation, and

according to the investigators, he had given tacit approval for the beating.

As a result of the investigation the Minister of Justice, Kim Jeong-kil, the Prosecutor General, Lee Myung-jae, and Seoul Prosecution Chief, Kim Jin-hwan, have offered resignations.

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