

UA 78/94 Mass Arrests / Fear of Ill-Treatment / Legal Concern 1 March 1994

SOUTH KOREA At least 30 arrests of members or alleged members of *Nohaetoosa* (Socialists for Workers' Liberation), *Heemangsae* (Bird of Hope) singing troupe, and *Minjongryon* (People's Political Union of Korea)

Between 17 and 22 February 1994, at least 30 people were reportedly arrested in South Korea, and face charges under the National Security Law (NSL). Amnesty International is concerned that they are at risk of ill-treatment while undergoing interrogation in police custody. Some appear to have been denied private meetings with their lawyers. Amnesty International is concerned that the prisoners appear to be held for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association.

About 14 of the prisoners, arrested on 21 and 22 February, are accused of belonging to a group called *Nohaetoosa* (Socialists for Workers' Liberation) and of distributing leaflets at a public rally, in work places and in bookstores. However, some of the detainees reportedly said that they had never heard of *Nohaetoosa* before their arrest. Amnesty International understands that the "group" was an informal association of people concerned with social issues, not an organized group.

Those arrested included students and recent graduates **Choi Yong-ik** (27); **Lee Tae-seong** (29); **Im Hyun-suk** (f) (23); **Lee Baek-kyu** (28); **Choi Hyang-suk** (22); and **Park Soh-yon** (24), and workers **Cho Yong-chan** (27); **Ju Tae-bong** (28); **Cho Gae-eun** (24); **Kim chang-hoon** (29); **Park Sang-hyun** (29); **Kim In-sook** (f) (20); **Choi Eun-ha** (f) (25); and **Lee Jong-im** (24).

Six military conscripts, arrested by the military police at the same time, are believed to be held in connection with the *Nohaetoosa* arrests, but no details are available. They appear to be in military custody and it is unclear whether they have any access to a lawyer. They were named as **Jung Jae-young**; **Han Jang-hyun**; **Kim Song-pil**; **Shin Hyun-jae**; **Shin Chang-soo** and **Yang Gi-huk**.

Five other people belonging to *Heemangsae* (Bird of Hope) a singing troupe based in Pusan, were also arrested on 21 and 22 February. They reportedly included troupe director **Kim Tae-il** (30) and members **Lee Chang-eul** (30) and **Cho Jae-hyun**. They are apparently accused of planning to stage a musical based on a book which, according to the South Korean authorities, praises North Korea. Police reportedly confiscated an incomplete script of the musical - which has not yet been performed - on the basis that it contains "anti-state" elements. **Song Hyun-jik**, was arrested on the same charges although he does not belong to *Heemangsae*.

Thirteen members of *Minjongryon* (People's Political Union of Korea, a left-wing political group) were arrested in South Cholla Province on or just before 17 February. They included **Kim Young-ki**, the head of the Suncheon city branch of *Minjongryon*. Dozens of *Minjongryon* members have been arrested in recent months on charges under the NSL, although Amnesty International believes that most of those still held are prisoners of conscience held solely because of their peaceful expression of political views not tolerated by the authorities. Five of those arrested were released on 19 February.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The NSL prescribes prison terms for the offence of "praising" and "encouraging" North Korea and for belonging to organizations deemed to be "anti-state". Amnesty International believes that many prisoners held under these provisions of the NSL are in fact held solely for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Korean or in your own language:

- expressing concern about the large number of recent arrests of activists and urging that all of them be released if not promptly charged with recognizably criminal offences, in accordance with international standards;
- urging the authorities to ensure that all the detainees are protected from torture and ill-treatment in custody, given access to relatives and allowed private meetings with their lawyers.
- expressing concern that in the past the National Security Law has been used to detain people solely for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association, and that the recent arrests seem to fall into this category;
- urging the authorities not to allow the arrest of anyone solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association.

APPEALS TO

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Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

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and to diplomatic representatives of South Korea accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 April 1994.