
Amnesty International

REPUBLIC OF KOREA (SOUTH KOREA) @Publishers On Trial under the National Security Law

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Amnesty International is calling for the release of two publishers charged with publishing North Korean books. Yu Dok-ryol and Kim Chon-hee of *Han* Publishing Company were arrested in July 1995 and charged under Article 7 of the National Security Law with publishing and disseminating information which "praises" and "encourages" the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea). Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, held for the non-violent exercise of their right to freedom of expression. It is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

Yu Dok-ryol and Kim Chon-hee were arrested on 17 July 1995 by the Security Division of the National Police Administration in Seoul. They were held and questioned by the police until 25 July when they were transferred to Seoul Detention centre for further questioning by the prosecution. On 3 August they were formally charged. Their trial is expected to open soon. If they are found guilty they could be imprisoned for up to seven years.

Han Publishing Company was established by Yu Dok-ryol and Kim Chon-hee in 1989 in the city of Kwangju. Since then the company has published a variety of social science and North Korean books, including the autobiography of former North Korean President Kim Il Sung. It has also published books on the subject of *Juche* (North Korea's "self reliance" ideology). After their arrest the two men said that they had published these books so that ordinary people in South Korea could gain an understanding of North Korea and its ideology. They felt this to be important if there is to be progress towards reunification, saying: "*In particular, the introduction of literary works from North Korea has made a considerable impact in restoring a sense of common identity to the people*".

Article 7 of the National Security Law provides up to seven years' imprisonment for those who "praise", "encourage" and "side with" North Korea "with the knowledge"

that he or she might damage state security. This provision is unclear and has been applied arbitrarily to restrict freedom of expression in South Korea . During 1994 and 1995 alone several hundreds of people, including students, political activists, publishers and academics, have been arrested under this provision of the law on charges of forming leftist groups with North Korean sympathies and with distributing pamphlets, books, leaflets etc containing ideas deemed to be similar or identical to those of the North Korean Government. Many had not used or advocated violence and were considered by Amnesty International to be prisoners of conscience.

Yu Dok-ryol, aged 30, studied literature at South Cholla University and started work at *Han* Publishing Company 1989. Kim Chun-hee, aged 29, studied political science at South Cholla University and also started work at *Han* Publishing Company in 1989.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send letters and faxes:

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Yu Dok-ryol and Kim Chon-hee, imprisoned for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression;
- calling for the amendment of Article 7 of the National Security Law, so that the right to freedom of expression is fully protected, in accordance with international standards.

Appeals to:

◆ President Kim Young-sam,

The Blue House
1 Sejong-no, Chongno-gu,
Seoul, Republic of Korea
Fax: +822 770 0253

◆ Mr Ahn Woo-man, Minister of Justice,

Ministry of Justice
1 Chungang-dong, Kwachon-myon,
Shihung-gun, Kyonggi Province
Republic of Korea
Fax: +822 504 3337

◆ Mr Choo Don-sik, Minister of Culture and Sports,

Ministry of Culture and Sports
82-1 Sejong-no, Chongno-gu,
Seoul, Republic of Korea
Fax: +82 2 736 8513

- ◆ and to diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in your country.

This is a quick KOTARAN action, sent to selected KOTARAN groups for action

KEYWORDS: PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / LEGISLATION / PUBLISHERS

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM

KEYWORDS: