

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal concern/fear of torture/fear of ill-treatment

SOUTH KOREA:

Mass Arrests: at least 60 people

including:

HWANG In-oh, aged 37

SONG Hae-suk, aged 34, female

KIM Nak-jung, aged 58, former politician, writer

HWANG Ik-uk, aged 27, student

LEE Sol-woo, aged 32, former politician

CHUN Hee-shik, aged 34

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of scores of people arrested since late August 1992 on national security charges. It has received reports that some of these prisoners have been held incommunicado and tortured during interrogation by officials of the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP) and it fears that further abuses may take place.

A series of arrests have taken place since late August 1992, including politicians, workers, students and dissidents. On 30 September 1992 the ANSP announced that it had uncovered the biggest espionage case since the Korean War (1950-53).

According to South Korean human rights groups and lawyers, many of these prisoners have been denied access to lawyers and relatives for days or weeks and some have claimed that they were tortured. Kim Nak-jung was held incommunicado for 10 days after his arrest in late August. He is said to have been beaten and deprived of sleep during interrogation. Chun Hee-shik reported that he had been beaten for over an hour soon after his arrest in early September. He was later released. Hwang In-oh, his wife Song Hae-suk and their three-year old son were arrested without warrants in mid-September and held incommunicado for over a week. Song Hae-suk was reportedly threatened with sexual abuse and beaten in the presence of her child.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prisoners arrested under the National Security Law (NSL) may be interrogated for up to 50 days by the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP) and the prosecution. Access to lawyers is sometimes restricted or denied, particularly during the first 20 days of interrogation by the ANSP. During this time, some prisoners have complained that they were subject to beatings and sleep deprivation.

The National Security Law (NSL) prohibits unauthorized contact with

"anti-state" organizations, including the North Korean Government. Over the years it has been widely used to imprison people who visited North Korea without government authorization, people who met North Koreans or alleged North Korean agents abroad and people who expressed support for North Korea or whose views were similar to positions also taken by the North. In past years the courts have ruled that any information which could be useful to North Korea, even if it were publicly available, qualified as a "state secret". Amnesty International believes that some prisoners convicted of espionage activities are in fact held for the peaceful exercise of their political views.

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

- expressing concern at reports that many prisoners arrested since late August 1992 on national security charges have been held incommunicado, beaten and deprived of sleep during interrogation by the Agency for National Security Planning;
- urging the authorities to ensure that all prisoners have prompt and regular access to relatives and lawyers and are not ill-treated;
- asking the authorities to conduct an immediate and independent investigation into all reports of torture and ill-treatment;
- urging the government to respect its obligations to its citizens under international standards, including relevant provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which it has ratified.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Justice

Mr Kim Ki-choon

Ministry of Justice

1 Chungang-dong

Kwachon-myon

Shihung-gun

Kyonggi Province

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Republic of Korea

Telexes: 24757 MOJUST K

Faxes: +82 2 504 3337

Salutation: Dear Minister

2) Director

Mr Lee Sahng-yeon

Agency for National Security Planning

Presidential Office

The Blue House

1 Sejong-no, Chongno-gu

Seoul

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Telegrams: Director, ANSP, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Telexes: 24651/24652 WOIMUBU K (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Faxes: +82 2 720 2686 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS 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 17 November 1992.