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# **£SOUTH KOREA**

## **@Prisoner of Conscience**

### **Reverend Moon Ik-hwan**

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Reverend Moon Ik-hwan, a 73-year-old Presbyterian minister, is serving a seven year prison term for his non-violent political activities. Reverend Moon Ik-hwan was arrested in April 1989 for making an unauthorized visit to North Korea. He was released on parole in October 1990 on grounds of ill-health but was rearrested in June 1991 for violating the terms of his parole by taking part in political activities. Amnesty International considers that the mere fact of travelling to North Korea without evidence either of espionage activities or the use or advocacy of violence cannot justify imprisonment. It considers Reverend Moon Ik-hwan to be a prisoner of conscience, held for his peaceful political activities. It is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Reverend Moon Ik-hwan and Yu Won-ho, a 69-year-old businessman, visited North Korea from 25 March to 3 April 1989. Reverend Moon Ik-hwan was the first person to take up an invitation from President Kim Il-sung, the North Korean leader, extended in his New Year message to seven South Korean public figures to visit the North Korean capital Pyongyang to discuss reunification. In North Korea Reverend Moon Ik-hwan had several meetings with government officials and reportedly held discussions with Kim Il-sung for seven hours. He issued a joint statement with Ho Dam, then Chairman of the North Korean Committee on Reunification of the Fatherland, on the basic principles that should govern Korean reunification. He also attended church services and visited some of his relatives. Reverend Moon Ik-hwan said that he hoped his visit would give a fresh impetus to dialogue between the North and the South and would open the way for contacts between non-government people.

Reverend Moon Ik-hwan and Yu Won-ho were arrested on 13 April 1989 at Seoul's Gimpo International Airport as they returned to South Korea. Both men were charged under the National Security Law. Reverend Moon Ik-hwan was charged under Article 6(2) with "escaping to an enemy area under enemy instructions", under Article 7(1) with praising North Korea and under Article 8(1) with meeting and communicating with the enemy. Yu Won-ho was charged with organizing Reverend Moon Ik-hwan's visit to North Korea and accepting money from a pro-North Korean group in Japan. On 5 October 1989 both men were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. The presiding judge acquitted them on the charge of praising and sympathizing with North Korean leaders. He accepted that their visit had been motivated by their commitment to reunification of the country but said that they had fallen victims to a North Korean propaganda ploy and in so doing had harmed the interests of the South. Reverend Moon Ik-hwan and Yu Won-ho's prison sentences were reduced to seven years' imprisonment at a High Court appeal hearing in February 1990.

During 1989 four other people were arrested for making unauthorized visits to North Korea. Suh Kyung-won, an opposition member of the National Assembly, and his secretary Pang Yang-kyun were arrested in June and July 1989 for an illegal visit made by Suh Kyung-won in 1988. Ms Im Su-kyong and Father Moon Kyu-hyun were arrested in August 1989 as they crossed from North to South Korea at the armistice village of Panmunjom. Im Su-kyong, a student, had taken part in the July 1989 World Festival of Youth and Students, held in Pyongyang. These four prisoners have been adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

On 20 October 1990 Reverend Moon Ik-hwan's prison sentence was suspended and he was released from prison. The authorities said that he had been released because of his recent ill-health (he had been suffering from heart disease and hypertension) and on account of his old age.

Since his release, Reverend Moon Ik-hwan is reported to have delivered speeches at at least 100 meetings of students and dissidents and to have participated in other political activities. State prosecutors are reported to have warned Reverend Moon Ik-hwan on several occasions that he might be reimprisoned if he did not curtail his activities. In late December 1990 the Seoul Pukpu district police are reported to have warned him to stop speaking to gatherings of students and dissidents about his visit to North Korea and about North Korean ideology. In late January 1991 he was placed under house arrest to prevent him from attending the inauguration meeting for the preparatory committee of the South Korean headquarters of *Pomminnyon* (Pan-National Alliance for Reunification of Korea). He later became chairperson of the preparatory committee. The South Korean authorities regard *Pomminnyon* as an anti-state organization and many of its leaders have been arrested (see *South Korea: Update on Pomminnyon Arrests, ASA 25/29/91*).

On 26 April 1991 student Kang Kyung-dae was beaten to death by riot police during an anti-government demonstration. His death provoked violent demonstrations throughout South Korea by students, workers and dissident groups and led to the arrests of five riot policemen on charges of murder. Students and dissident leaders established a "funeral

committee" to protest the death of Kang Kyung-dae and make arrangements for his funeral. Moon Ik-hwan was said to have been elected chairman of this committee. During the following weeks many protests and demonstrations were organized by the funeral committee and other student bodies to protest against the death. Some of the protests became violent and a number of students and workers committed self-immolation.

On 18 May 1991 state prosecutors once again warned Reverend Moon Ik-hwan that he faced possible reimprisonment. A state prosecution spokesman is reported to have said that there was no firm evidence to suggest that Reverend Moon Ik-hwan had broken the law in connection with his activities as chairperson of the funeral committee for Kang Kyung-dae, but added that a number of his recent speeches violated the National Security Law. On 6 June Reverend Moon Ik-hwan was rearrested on the grounds that he had violated the terms of his parole by engaging in political activities and that his health had improved.

Reverend Moon Ik-hwan is now serving the remainder of his seven year prison term. To Amnesty International's knowledge no new charges have been brought against him. The organization has readopted him as a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Reverend Moon Ik-hwan is a Presbyterian minister and an Old Testament scholar. He has written 10 books of poetry and essays and is a proponent of "*Minjung* (People's) Theology". He became involved in activities critical of the government in the mid-1970s and has previously been imprisoned from March 1976 to December 1977, from October 1978 to December 1979, from May 1980 to December 1982 and from May 1986 to July 1987.

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