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South Korea: Deportation of two senior officials of the Migrants' Trade Union

Amnesty International deeply regrets the deportation of Torna Limbu and Abdus Sabur from South Korea today. Mr Limbu, a Nepalese national, and Mr Sabur, a Bangladeshi national, served as president and vice-president respectively at the Seoul-Gyeonggi-Incheon Migrants' Trade Union (MTU). They were both arrested on 2 May 2008.

The two men were deported despite an ongoing investigation by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) into the allegations of abuse during their arrest, including allegations that they had been beaten by immigration officers. They did not have the opportunity to challenge the decision to deport them. Mr Limbu and Mr Sabur were both detained at Cheongju detention centre in Northern Chuncheong Province, south of Seoul.

Amnesty International considers the arrest, detention and deportation of Torna Limbu and Abdus Sabur to be an attempt by the Government to deprive them of their basic labour rights protected in the South Korean constitution, including the right to freedom of association, and to intimidate migrant workers in general from exercising this right. This right is provided inter alia in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 22), to which South Korea is a state party.

“We are gravely concerned at these measures taken by the Government authorities to stop the MTU from conducting its rightful union activities. They appear to be a continuation of targeted crackdowns against its leadership since November 2007 when three senior MTU officials were arrested and subsequently deported,” said Amnesty International.

Amnesty International calls on the South Korean government to respect the right to freedom of association for all migrant workers and to ensure due process in accordance with national and international human rights standards before any deportation proceedings are carried out.