

25/07/99

PUBLIC**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL APPEAL****PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE: KANG YONG-JU**

Kang Yong-ju, aged 36, is a former medical student and student activist from Kwangju in South Korea. He was chair of a student group called "People's Struggle" (*Mintu*) and organized a campaign to boycott presidential elections in early 1985. On 1 July 1985 he was arrested by the Agency for National Security and Planning (ANSP), South Korea's intelligence service. He was interrogated for two months, during which time he says he was beaten, deprived of sleep and forced to "confess" to being part of an alleged "spy-ring". He claims that he was later prevented from withdrawing his "confession" by further threats of torture and violence. His family were intimidated when they tried to employ a lawyer, and his two state-appointed lawyers apparently made little attempt to provide him with an adequate defence. He was charged under the National Security Law and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1986, but this was commuted to 20 years by the President in March 1993. Many other political prisoners were released in an amnesty in August 1998 to mark the 50th anniversary of the South Korean state. However, Kang Yong-ju was not included because he refused to sign an oath pledging respect for the law in South Korea (including the National Security Law), viewing such a demand as a violation of his freedom of conscience. In a letter to his mother, he reportedly wrote: "*I would be able to go out to meet you and end your agony, but I couldn't do it. I couldn't accept that I have to show my inner thoughts to the authorities and be judged. If I refuse to sign, I'll be freer in the court of conscience*".

Please send letters, faxes or e-mails to the South Korean President and Minister of Justice:

- ◆ State that Amnesty International believes Kang Yong-ju to be a prisoner of conscience and call for his immediate and unconditional release.
- ◆ Call for an immediate halt to abuses under the National Security Law.
- ◆ Urge the authorities to amend the National Security Law in line with international human rights standards or abolish it.

Addresses:

President Kim Dae-jung The Blue House 1 Sejong-no, Chongno-gu Seoul Republic of Korea Fax: (82 2) 770 0253/0344 e-mail: webmaster@cwd.go.kr	Mr Park Sang-cheon Minister of Justice Ministry of Justice 1 Chungang-dong Kwachon City Kyonggi Province Republic of Korea Fax: (82 2) 504 3337	<i>Copies to:</i> Mr Hong Sun-yong Minister of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs 77 Sejong-no, Chongno-gu Seoul Republic of Korea Fax: (82 2) 720 2686
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Please remember to copy your letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic representatives of South Korea in your own country

Please also send cards or letters of support to Kang Yong-ju at the following address:

Kang Yong-ju (Prisoner No. 1313) Andong Post Office, Andong-shi
 Andong Prison Kyongbuk-do 760-600
 PO Box 171 Republic of Korea

