
amnesty international

£SOUTH KOREA

@Appeal for the Release of Chang Ui-gyun

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Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Chang Ui-gyun who is serving an eight year prison term in Taejon Prison. It believes that Chang Ui-gyun is a prisoner of conscience, held for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

Before his arrest in 1987 Chang Ui-gyun ran a publishing company specializing in books on ancient Korean history. Chang Ui-gyun also enjoys writing short stories, poetry and songs. He wrote a song about Korean reunification which was performed at a meeting on this issue held in Japan in May 1986. In 1989 a collection of his letters smuggled out of prison was published. The book, entitled *Where is our Children's Country?*, includes letters to his wife and children, poetry and short stories for children.

Chang Ui-gyun's family and supporters claim that he has received poor medical treatment during his imprisonment and Amnesty International has been told that he is not

permitted to receive letters and greetings cards from supporters outside the country. Chang Ui-gyun is among over 40 political prisoners in Taejon Prison who have refused to sign a statement of "conversion" renouncing their alleged communist beliefs. Amnesty International believes that to require prisoners convicted of national security offences to change their political views is a violation of the rights of freedom of conscience and expression. It is also concerned that prisoners like Chang Ui-gyun who refuse to convert are generally less well treated.

Chang Ui-gyun, aged 40, graduated in journalism at Sogang University in 1980 and went on to establish the *Kaema* publishing company. In 1985 he visited Japan and registered as a part-time student of ancient Korean history at Kyoto University. He used the opportunity of his stay in Japan to learn more about North Korea through attending lectures, reading books not available in South Korea and meeting members of pro-North Korean organizations. Chang Ui-gyun returned to South Korea in March 1987 and was arrested on 5 July. He was accused of passing state secrets to a North Korean agent and of receiving money from North Korea.

It is believed that Chang Ui-gyun was not allowed to sleep for the first ten days after his arrest and was allowed to sleep for only two or three hours for the next 15 days. At his trial in November 1987 Chang Ui-gyun denied the charges of espionage. He admitted reading books on North Korea's *Juche* philosophy and meeting individuals in Japan who supported North Korea but said he had done so in order to understand the division of the Korean peninsula and the political system in North Korea. He is believed to have passed information about political parties and opposition groups to a South Korean dissident in Japan but this information, which was publicly available, was apparently intended for use in the establishment of a research centre in Japan. Chang Ui-gyun said that the money he obtained in Japan was from the sale of calligraphies of the poet Kim Chi-ha and that he was given one million yen from a church group to help the urban poor in Seoul. Amnesty International believes there is no independent evidence of him being involved in espionage or of using or advocating violence.

ACTION REQUESTED:

Please send appeals to the South Korean Minister of Justice seeking the immediate and unconditional release of Chang Ui-gyun.

Address:

Mr Kim Ki-choon
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
1 Chungang-dong
Kwachon-myon
Shihung-gun
Kyonggi Province
Republic of Korea

KEYWORDS: PUBLISHERS / WRITERS / PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / MEDICAL TREATMENT /
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