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£SOUTH KOREA

@Appeal for the Release of Korea Labour Party Members

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Amnesty International is calling for the release of five members of the preparatory committee of the Korea Labour Party who were arrested on 9 April 1992. It believes that Ku In-hoe, Chong Kwang-pil, Im Young-taek, Lee Sang-min, and Choi Chong-sik are held for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. Four other party members, arrested in January, have been given suspended prison sentences and released.

The five men have been charged under Article 7 of the National Security Law for attempting to form an anti-state organization which praises and benefits North Korea. Under the terms of the National Security Law the North Korean Government is defined as an anti-state body. Over the years this law has been used to imprison many people who either expressed support for North Korea or whose positions were similar to those of the North Korean Government.

In July 1991 over 1000 labour activists formed a preparatory committee for an underground socialist party with the ultimate aim of establishing a socialist government. However, following the collapse of communism in many Eastern European countries, the party members voted to discard the theories of Marxism-Leninism and to engage in legal political activities. In December 1991 their preparatory committee was disbanded and its members decided to establish a legal political party called the Korea Labour Party. In January 1992 a preparatory committee for the Korea Labour Party was established.

The Korea Labour Party's main aims included the dismantling of *Chaebols* (large business monopolies), the nationalisation of land held by the *Chaebols* and large landowners, cuts in military spending, full political freedom and labour rights, the protection of agricultural markets and reunification between North and South Korea. To Amnesty International's knowledge the party did not advocate the use of violence to achieve these aims. On 19 January 1992 the Korea Labour Party's preparatory committee held a meeting at the Korea Exhibition Centre in Seoul and some 3000 supporters are reported to have attended. Two days before this meeting was held, three of the party's organizers, Chu Dae-hwan, Lee Yong-son and Chun Song, were arrested and charged under the National Security Law for attempting to organize an anti-state group. A fourth member, Min Yong-chang, was arrested on 11 January. Other members of the party protested against the arrests, saying that the authorities were denying workers the right to establish a political party.

Following the arrests of its leaders, members of the preparatory committee for the Korea Labour Party voted to join forces with the already established *Minjung* (People's) Party in order to field candidates for the National Assembly elections which were held on 24 March 1992. The *Minjung* Party did not secure enough votes in the election and consequently lost its status as a political party. Former members of the Korea Labour Party decided to continue with their aim to form a political party and formed another preparatory committee in April. On 9 April five of its leaders were arrested.

Chu Dae-hwan, Lee Yong-son, Chun Song and Min Yong-chang were tried, given suspended prison sentences and released. Ku In-hoe, Chong Kwang-pil, Im Young-taek, Lee Sang-min and Choi Chong-sik are awaiting trial in Seoul Prison.

In May 1992 a group of social and religious leaders, including Cardinal Kim Sou-hwan, appealed for the release of imprisoned members of the Korea Labour Party. In a petition submitted to the authorities they said it was inappropriate to arrest people who had declared their intention to engage in legal political activities. Over 80 university professors issued a similar statement calling for the prisoners' release. Their statement is reported to have said: "It is meaningless for the government to take issue with the progressive party formation because the party members professed to stop underground radicalism and engage in legal political activities".

ACTION REQUESTED

- Please send appeals to the South Korean Minister of Justice seeking the immediate and unconditional release of Ku In-hoe, Chong Kwang-pil, Im Young-taek, Lee Sang-min and Choi Chong-sik.

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

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