
amnesty international

SOUTH KOREA

Appeal for the release of Kang Ki-hun

JUNE 1993

AI INDEX: ASA 25/22/93

DISTR: SC/CO/GR

Amnesty International is calling for the release of Kang Ki-hun, a 27-year-old political activist who is serving a three-year prison term on charges of aiding and abetting the protest suicide of a colleague. Amnesty International believes that Kang Ki-hun is a prisoner of conscience, arrested on account of his peaceful political activities and wrongly convicted after an unfair trial which failed to prove him guilty.

Prior to his arrest, in June 1991, Kang Ki-hun worked for the dissident group *Chonminnyon*. It was a time of civil unrest, sparked off by the death of a student at the hands of riot police. In the ensuing demonstrations, nine young people committed self-immolation as an extreme form of protest. *Chonminnyon* was at the centre of the protests and Kang Ki-hun's arrest was seen by many as a means of curbing the group's activities and discrediting it in the public eye. His arrest, and that of other dissident leaders, certainly had the effect of halting the street demonstrations.

Kang Ki-hun was charged under the Criminal Code with aiding and abetting the suicide of his colleague Kim Ki-sol, who committed self-immolation during one of the demonstrations. The prosecution alleged that he had written a suicide note found close to the body. There was no evidence of the time or place when Kang Ki-hun allegedly wrote the note, nor of any actions whereby he incited or helped Kim Ki-sol to commit suicide. In

spite of this, he was found guilty in December 1991 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. The court based its judgment on a handwriting analysis carried out by the National Institute for Scientific Investigation - an analysis which was disputed by a second, independent analysis and discredited in court.

The judges themselves seem to have doubted Kang Ki-hun's guilt and to have thereby neglected the principle of justice that defendants should be proved guilty beyond reasonable doubt or acquitted. When delivering his verdict the presiding judge is reported to have said that "we do not believe that our judgment is in accordance with the objective and absolute truth".

Kang Ki-hun's arrest and conviction appears to have been politically motivated. Many people commented to Amnesty International that the verdict was of immense importance to the authorities who were unwilling to accept the political implications of a verdict of innocence.

In February 1993 a new president, Kim Young-sam, took office and promised that justice would "flow like a river" in a freer and more democratic Korea. His government announced two prisoner amnesties in February and May 1993 but Kang Ki-hun and other prisoners of conscience were not included. Amnesty International is now appealing to the new government to demonstrate its commitment to the protection of human rights by accepting that Kang Ki-hun is innocent and releasing him.

Please send appeals to the South Korean Government seeking the immediate and unconditional release of Kang Ki-hun.

Appeals to:

Mr Kim Doo-hee, Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
1 Chungang-dong
Kwachon-myon, Shihung-gun
Kyonggi Province,
Republic of Korea.
Fax: +82 2 504 3337.

President Kim Young-sam
The Blue House
1 Sejong-no
Chongno-gu
Seoul
Republic of Korea
Fax: c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs: +82 2 720 2686

Copies to:

Diplomatic representatives of South Korea in your country

KEYWORDS: PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / POLITICAL ACTIVISTS / TRIALS / INDEPENDENCE
OF JUDICIARY / POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRIMINAL CHARGES / CIVIL UNREST /
DEMONSTRATIONS / PHOTOGRAPHS /

**INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED
KINGDOM**
