

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Mass arrests / Fear of ill-treatment

17 June 1994

SOUTH KOREA Ahn Jae-ku, aged 61, mathematics lecturer at

Kyonghee University

Ahn Young-min, aged 26, son of above

Ryu Nak-jin, aged 66

Kim Sung-hwan, aged 28, member of Korean Council of

Youth Organizations (Hanchonghyop) in Pohang

city

Kim Jin-bae, aged 26, worker

Jong Hwa-ryo, aged 30

Jong Chang-soo, aged 30

Hong Jong-hee, aged 37

Park Rae-koon, aged 32

and at least 16 others

On 14 June at least 25 people, including those named above, were arrested in South Korea by the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP) and the police for alleged pro-North Korean activities. They are currently held for interrogation under the National Security Law (NSL). Amnesty International fears that the prisoners may be ill-treated during interrogation and that they may be held for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association.

According to the ANSP, some of the prisoners, including Ahn Jae-ku, are accused of forming an underground branch of the (North Korean) Workers' Party of Korea (WPK). They are said to have established, in January 1993, a pro-North Korean group called the National Front for Salvation of the Fatherland. Some of the other prisoners are accused of forming a pro-North Korean group called the Korean Democratic Nationalistic Front.

Since early 1994 dozens of people have been arrested under the NSL for alleged pro-North Korean activities, many of whom are prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International is concerned that the South Korean Government appears to be using the state of tension with North Korea to arrest people for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are some 300 political prisoners in South Korea, the majority of whom are held under the NSL. This law prescribes long prison terms for pro-North Korean activities, including the vaguely-defined crime of "espionage". It has been used to imprison many people who were merely exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association.

Political detainees in South Korea are routinely subjected to sleep deprivation during interrogation, which may last for up to 50 days. At least two prisoners detained by the ANSP in 1993 are known to have been subjected to beatings, threats and intimidation. In past cases of a similar nature prisoners said that during questioning by the ANSP and the police they were coerced into making false confessions which were then used to convict them to long prison terms.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail

letters either in English, Korean or in your own language:

- expressing concern that at least 25 people were arrested on 14 June 1994 under the National Security Law and urging the authorities to ensure that they are protected from torture and ill-treatment during interrogation;
- urging the authorities to release the prisoners unless they are promptly charged with recognizably criminal offences, in accordance with international standards;
- expressing concern that in the past the National Security Law has been used to detain people for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association and that these latest arrests may fall into this category;
- expressing concern that the authorities should not use the current state of tension on the Korean peninsula in order to restrict the fundamental rights which are guaranteed under international human rights standards.

APPEALS TO

1) President Kim Young-sam

The Blue House

1 Sejong-no

Chongno-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Telegrams: President Kim, Seoul, Republic of Korea

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Salutation: Dear President Kim

2) Mr KIM Doo-hee

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Salutation: Dear Minister Kim

3) Mr Kim Deok, Director

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Presidential Office

The Blue House

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Faxes: +82 2 720 2686 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

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and to diplomatic representatives of South Korea accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 July 1994.