

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 25/01/98

9 January 1998

**Further information on UA 344/97 (ASA 25/38/97, 4 November 1997) - Prisoner of conscience / Fear of ill-treatment**

**REPUBLIC OF KOREA (SOUTH KOREA) Suh Jun-sik, aged 49, human rights activist**

Suh Jun-sik is currently held in Youngdungpo Detention Centre and his trial, which could last weeks or months, opens before Seoul District Court on 15 January 1998. Amnesty International believes that Suh Jun-sik is on trial for his peaceful human rights activities and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release. It is concerned that this prosecution increases the pressures on other human rights activists and may serve to stifle the growth of human rights activism in South Korea.

The main charges against Suh Jun-sik relate to a human rights film festival organized by Sarangbang human rights group, of which he is the director. The organization had refused to allow government censorship of the films shown and the authorities declared that the screening of one film, "Red Hunt", constituted a violation of the National Security Law. This documentary film, about mass killings on Cheju Island in 1948, had been shown to at least one other festival without the organizers facing prosecution. Other charges against Suh Jun-sik include the possession of poetry books alleged to "benefit" North Korea and failing to report to the police about his overseas trips, including a visit to the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in May 1997.

Suh Jun-sik, aged 49, has already spent 17 years in prison as a prisoner of conscience. Since his release, in 1988, he has become one of South Korea's most prominent human rights activists. Many civic, religious and human rights groups have campaigned for his release and he will be defended in court by a team of human rights lawyers. In December 1997 Suh Jun-sik was awarded a human rights prize by the Korean National Council of Churches.

Before his arrest, Suh Jun-sik spoke to Amnesty International about his earlier imprisonment. He said: "The mere thought of having such huge support from abroad would keep us [prisoners] going. In a way we chose to suffer for a cause we believe in and we were delighted at the international solidarity poured onto us. You let us now that we are not as lonely and isolated as the authorities tried to show. . . An important thing is to maintain a level of pressure for a very long time. You must be prepared to be very patient and please never give up".

Suh Jun-sik has not been ill-treated in prison. However, his reading material has been censored. He has not been permitted to read his organization's bulletin *Daily Human Rights News* or newspapers reports about his own case.

Amnesty International is appealing to President Kim Young-sam to release Suh Jun-sik. It is also sending appeals to President-elect Kim Dae-jung who takes office on 25 February.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Korean or in your own language:**

- expressing concern that Suh Jun-sik is held on account of his peaceful human rights activities and his political views;

- calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- calling for the National Security Law to be amended in accordance with international standards and calling for the release of all prisoners held for non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President Kim Young-sam

The Blue House

1 Sejong-no, Chongno-gu

Seoul, Republic of Korea

**Faxes: +82 2 770 0253**

**Telegrams: President, Seoul, South Korea**

**Salutation: Dear President**

2) President-elect Kim Dae-jung

President-elect Kim Dae-jung

National Congress for New Politics

Hanyang Building 4th Floor

14-31 Yoido-dong, Youngdungpo-gu

Seoul, Republic of Korea

**Faxes: +82 2 784 6070 or 784 6690**

**Salutation: Dear President-elect**

**COPIES TO:**

1) Judge Kim Kil-jong

Seoul District Court, Western Branch

105-1 Kongduck-dong, Mapo-ku

121-713 Seoul

Republic of Korea

**Faxes: +82 2 704 4065**

2) Sarangbang human rights group

4th Floor, 8-29, Myungryun 2-ka

Jongro-ku, Seoul 110-522

Republic of Korea

**Faxes: +82 2 741 5364**

**E-mail: [rights@interpia.net](mailto:rights@interpia.net)**

and to diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 February 1998.