
£SOUTH KOREA

@Prisoner of Conscience: Reverend Hong Keun-soo

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Reverend Hong Keun-soo was arrested on 20 February 1991 by members of the Agency for National Security Planning. His office was searched and several items were confiscated including eight tape recordings of his lectures, a computer manuscript of his sermons and his 1990 church diary. Reverend Hong Keun-soo remains in detention and faces charges under Articles 7 and 3 of the National Security Law. Article 7 prohibits the production of material "benefitting an "anti-state" organization by praising it, encouraging it, siding with it or through other means". Article 3 prohibits membership of an "anti-state" organization.

Amnesty International is concerned that Reverend Hong Keun-soo is being held for the peaceful exercise of his freedom of expression and association. It regards him as a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his immediate release.

Reverend Hong Keun-soo lived in the USA from 1978 to 1986 and was at that time an American citizen. He was pastor of the Korean Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn and a member of the Boston Presbytery. While in the USA he obtained a Master's degree in Divinity from the Eden Seminary in St Louis and a PhD from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Chicago. He gave up his American citizenship when he returned to South Korea in 1986. He is currently pastor of the Hyang Rin Presbyterian Church in Seoul, which has about 500 members. He is known to be an advocate of reunification between

North and South Korea and also maintained links with members of the Presbyterian church in America.

The Agency for National Security Planning is reported to have accused Reverend Hong Keun-soo in connection with:

- Delivering sermons praising North Korea. In one of his sermons he is reported to have said "There are some positive aspects to North Korea . . . In order to bring about national reunification, we must get to know the society that the people in North Korea have built, and what they are saying".

- His comments during a television debate on KBS (Korea Broadcasting System) in September 1988. The debate was entitled "Communism is humanitarian. What does Ideology have to do with reunification?" He is alleged to have spoken in favour of reunification during this debate.

- His participation in the formation of the South Korean headquarters of the Pan-National Alliance for the Reunification of Korea and attendance at its inaugural meeting, and his plans to travel to Panmunjom. The Pan-National Alliance for Reunification of Korea was established in late 1990 and three men, Reverend Cho Yong-sol, Lee Hae-hak and Cho Song-woo, were arrested as they returned from its inaugural meeting in Berlin. Two more men, Lee Chang-bok and Kim Hi-taek, were arrested in January 1991 for attempting to form the Alliance's South Korean headquarters. The Alliance's main aim is the reunification of North and South Korea. It is also seeking the abolition of the National Security Law and the withdrawal of foreign troops from South Korea.

- Publication in 1989 of a collection of his writings entitled "Now is the time to Realize National Reunification". This included an article about Reverend Hong Dong-keun, who is a lecturer in Christianity at Kim Il Sung University in North Korea. It also included a dissertation written by pastors in America. He is also reported to have recently received a series of lectures from Hong Dong-keun which were published in a South Korean newspaper several days before his arrest.

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