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# *amnesty international*

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## £SOUTH KOREA

### @Appeal for the release of Kim Song-man

**APRIL 1992**

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Amnesty International is calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Kim Song-man who is serving a term of life imprisonment on charges under the National Security Law. Amnesty International believes that Kim Song-man is a prisoner of conscience detained for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

Kim Song-man was arrested in June 1985 and accused of conducting espionage activities on behalf of North Korea. He was initially sentenced to death, but this sentence was reduced to life imprisonment under a presidential amnesty in December 1988. Kim Song-man is among over 40 political prisoners in Taejon Prison who have refused to sign a statement of "conversion" renouncing their alleged communist beliefs. His family and supporters claim that he has received poor medical treatment during his imprisonment and that he is not normally permitted to receive letters and greetings cards from supporters outside the country. Kim Song-man is a Christian but Amnesty International has been told that he is not permitted to attend the Sunday service at the prison. He is reported to suffer from poor concentration as a result of the stress he experienced while under sentence of

death. In 1992 a collection of Kim Song-man's letters was published. In one letter he describes the time he spent under sentence of death:

"Never knowing when his sentence will be carried out, a condemned prisoner dies several times a day. Whenever the warden opens the door of his cell, or if the other inmates are not given any exercise in spite of the clear weather, he thinks 'this must be the moment of my death', and his heart jumps. Or if a warden who was formerly cold or cruel to him suddenly changes his demeanour, he thinks of his death. It might be an exaggeration to say several times a day, but certainly once or twice a month, he smells his own death, and he must always be prepared for it.

"Not only the condemned prisoner himself, but his family too undergo the same emotional pain. And if there is an incident in the cell area where the prisoner lives, his family cannot visit him; and every time a prison official puts an unusual stamp on to their visitation paper, the same dreadful thoughts begin again."

Kim Song-man was born in 1957 and studied physics at Yonsei University in Seoul where he was also active in the Christian Student Association. In 1982 he enrolled at the Western Illinois University in the USA where he studied political science and is said to have read widely about the political system in North Korea. In 1983 and 1984 he visited Europe and met North Korean Embassy staff in Budapest and East Berlin. In 1983 he returned to South Korea where he is said to have renewed contact with the student movement and to have written pamphlets calling for the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. Kim Song-man was arrested in June 1985 and interrogated by the Agency for National Security Planning where he claims he was "tortured mercilessly". According to the indictment he was encouraged by the North Koreans he met to engage in anti-government activities.

Amnesty International has adopted Kim Song-man as a prisoner of conscience as it believes that he is detailed solely for his political beliefs and that there is no evidence of his having carried out espionage activities or having used or advocated the use of violence. It is also concerned about reports that he was tortured during his interrogation by the Agency for National Security Planning.

## **ACTION REQUESTED**

*Please send appeals to the South Korean Minister of Justice seeking the immediate and unconditional release of Kim Song-man:*

### **Address:**

Mr Kim Ki-choon  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
1 Chungang-dong  
Kwachon-myon

Shihung-gun  
Kyonggi Province  
Republic of Korea

**KEYWORDS:** PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT / PRISON CONDITIONS  
/ MENTAL HEALTH / RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION / ESPIONAGE / PHOTOGRAPHS /

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