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# £SOUTH KOREA

## @Six Researchers Arrested

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On 27 June 1991 six researchers belonging to the Seoul Social Science Institute were arrested under the National Security Law. The six men have reportedly been accused of benefitting North Korea through the publication and dissemination of articles and books advocating a socialist revolution. Amnesty International is concerned that the six researchers may be prisoners of conscience, detained for the peaceful exercise of their right of freedom of expression. It is seeking further information about the circumstances of their arrest and the charges against them.

The arrested men include Shin Hyun-joon, Kwon Hyun-jong, Son Ju-myong and Lee Chang-hui, graduate students of Seoul University, and two others whose names are not known to Amnesty International. Shortly after the arrests a police spokesman is reported to have said that Shin Hyun-joon had written an article for the magazine *Reality and Science* in which he praised and encouraged a socialist revolution in South Korea. He also said that the six researchers had advocated a socialist revolution in two recently published books: *Socialism - It's Theory, History and Reality*, and *Development of Korean Capitalism*.

The Seoul Social Science Institute, which consists of some 70 scholars and students of political science, sociology and economics, views the arrests as a serious encroachment upon academic freedom. Professors at the institute are reported to have issued a statement saying that the institute has consistently disagreed with the North Korean interpretation of *Perestroika* and its analysis of South Korean society. Some sociology professors are reported to have said that the books and articles in question "merely reintroduce the lively debate of 1987 and 1988" and that the ideas and theories they discuss have already been published in

other journals. Several professors are reported to have said that: "academic issues should be criticized or overcome through academic debates and it is absurd for government authorities to intervene in it." A coalition of 25 academic groups have come together to oppose the arrests saying that they constitute a "serious threat to the freedom of thoughts and learning."

In May 1991 several articles of the National Security Law were amended. Under the new Law the act of "praising" or "benefitting" North Korea is a punishable offence only if done in the knowledge that it will endanger state security. Several lawyers are reported to have commented that the recent arrests had been carried out without taking into account the spirit of the recent revision of the National Security Law.