
amnesty international

£SOUTH KOREA

@Death of Kim Il Sung leads to Arrests in South Korea

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Amnesty International is concerned that dozens of people, including students and dissidents, have been arrested in South Korea under the National Security Law following the death on 9 July of North Korean leader Kim Il Sung. They are accused of holding or preparing mourning ceremonies; of expressing sympathy for the late North Korean leader or of attempting to travel to North Korea to attend his funeral. Amnesty International considers that South Koreans detained for attempting to visit North Korea or expressing sympathy for its late leader, without use or advocacy of violence, are imprisoned for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association or movement and that they should be released. It also urges the authorities to refrain from ordering further arrests on these grounds.

Over 50 students were detained on 13 July in Seoul and some 30 on 16 July in Kwangju for allegedly preparing mourning ceremonies for Kim Il Sung. The arrests led to violent student protests, but many of those initially arrested do not appear to have used violence. Leaders of the student federation *Hanchongnyon* (Federation of Student Councils) said on 14 July that they would send a message of condolence to North Korea, an action which may lead to their arrest. On 19 July, the day of Kim Il Sung's funeral, over 100 students were reportedly detained to prevent them from mourning.

Two leaders of the dissident organization *Pomminnyon* (pan-national alliance for the reunification of Korea) were arrested on 16 July as they attempted to visit North Korea through the border village of Panmunjom to attend Kim Il Sung's funeral. They are 72-year-old former Prisoner of Conscience Reverend Kang Hee-nam and his assistant 29-year-old Ahn Hee-chan. Several other members of *Pomminnyon* were questioned about their involvement in the visit. Others facing arrest include Park Bo-hee, President of a daily newspaper *Segye Times*, who is reported to have travelled to North Korea. The South

Korean authorities stated that Park Bo-hee may be arrested on his return to South Korea for holding unauthorized meetings with North Korean leaders.

The North Korean authorities issued a public invitation to South Koreans who wished to attend Kim Il Sung's funeral on 19 July but South Korea's National Security Law prohibits unauthorized contact with North Koreans on penalty of imprisonment. The law also punishes actions which may be interpreted as siding with, encouraging or praising North Korea, a provision which has recently led to the arrest of prisoners of conscience including students, dissidents, writers, publishers and others.

Amnesty International has urged the South Korean government to amend the National Security Law to bring it into line with international human rights standards relating to freedom of expression and association.

On 20 July Amnesty International also published a statement calling on the North Korean authorities to commit themselves to respecting all internationally recognized human rights. In particular, the organization urged North Korea to release all prisoners of conscience, to review legislation which allows the imprisonment of people for exercising their fundamental rights, and to account for the whereabouts and legal status of all political prisoners.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Please send letters and faxes to the South Korean Government:

- ◆ *expressing concern about dozens of recent arrests in South Korea under the National Security Law;*
- ◆ *calling for the immediate and unconditional release of those detained solely for expressing sympathy about the death of Kim Il Sung, without use or advocacy of violence, and of those who attempted to visit North Korea to attend the funeral;*
- ◆ *urging the authorities to refrain from making arrests on these grounds.*

Appeals to:

◆ President Kim Young-sam
The Blue House
1 Sejong-no
Chongno-gu, Seoul
Republic of Korea
Fax: +822 770 0253

◆ Mr Kim Doo-hee, Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
1 Chungang-dong
Kwachon-myon, Shihung-gun
Kyonggi Province
Republic of Korea
Fax: +822 504 3337

- ◆ *and to diplomatic representatives of South Korea in your country.*

This appeal has been sent to all KOTARAN coordinators for action.

KEYWORDS: PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / BANNING / STUDENTS / POLITICAL ACTIVISTS /
RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS - PROTESTANT / AGED / EDITORS /

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