

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of ill-treatment/Legal concern

15 July 1993

Republic of Korea (South Korea): NOH Tae-hun: human rights activist

Human rights activist Noh Tae-hun was arrested by officers of the Security Division of the National Police Administration at around 6.30pm on 15 July while he was visiting the office of his lawyer Cho Yong-whan to seek legal advice. He had already been detained for interrogation from the morning of 14 July until the morning of 15 July, during which time he was subjected to sleep deprivation and long hours of interrogation.

Lawyers Cho Yong-whan and Baik Seung-hun noted that the warrant of arrest used by the police on 15 July was incorrectly filled in and failed to show the summary of charges against Noh Tae-hun or his place of detention, as required under South Korean law. They urged the police officers to follow the correct legal procedures and were then threatened and beaten by a group of officers. Noh Tae-hun was eventually dragged out of the lawyer's office and taken away.

Amnesty International is very concerned that Noh Tae-hun may be ill-treated and that his arrest was carried out illegally. The organization is further concerned at the assault carried out on the two human rights lawyers, Cho Yong-whan and Baik Seung-hun, in the course of their professional work.

Noh Tae-hun is held under the National Security Law and apparently accused of having had contacts with North Korea. However he appears to have merely tried to help former political prisoners, many of whom are elderly and have no family in South Korea. Although the charges are not clear, Amnesty International believes that Noh Tae-hun is probably a prisoner of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Noh Tae-hun is a long-standing and respected human rights activist who is associated with a number of domestic human rights groups. He has worked with Minkahyop (Association of families of political prisoners), STIK (Stop Torture in Korea) and most recently for KONUCH, an umbrella organization of major human rights groups which was established prior to the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June this year.

Amnesty International is campaigning for an amendment to the National Security Law which has often been used to detain prisoners for the non-violent exercise of their political activities. It has also expressed concern at reports that political prisoners are subjected to beatings, threats and sleep deprivation during interrogation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters

either in English or in your own language:

- urging the authorities to ensure that Noh Tae-hun is not ill-treated while in detention;
- expressing concern that Noh Tae-hun was arrested on 15 July without a proper warrant of arrest and that he may be a prisoner of conscience;
- expressing concern that lawyers who protested at the illegalities of his arrest were themselves threatened and beaten;
- urging the authorities to release Noh Tae-hun immediately if he is held for the peaceful exercise of his rights of freedom of expression and association.

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APPEALS TO

1) President Kim Young-sam

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Salutation: Dear Sir

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and to diplomatic representatives of South Korea accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 August 1993.