

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 25/33/91
Distrib: PG/SC

Date: 22 October 1991

MEDICAL CONCERN

**@LEE Hon-chi and PANG Yang-kyun
REPUBLIC OF KOREA (South Korea)**

Amnesty International is concerned for Lee Hon-chi and Pang Yang-kyun, both of whom are held in Chonju Prison and appear to be without adequate medical attention. Lee Hon-chi is serving a sentence of 20 years' imprisonment and Pang Yang-kyun a sentence of seven years.

Lee Hon-chi was arrested in October 1981 and accused of espionage. In the four months between arrest and trial he was permitted no legal counsel and no access to family and he alleges that during this time he was ill-treated and forced to sign confessions under threat.

Amnesty International believes that Lee Hon-chi may have been unfairly charged and convicted and is investigating his case. He is a Korean national who until 1977 had been resident in Japan. In 1977 he moved to Seoul, South Korea, where he worked for a Japanese company. He was arrested together with a Korean student and both were accused of leading an espionage ring said to have incited worker unrest and student demonstrations in an attempt to overthrow the government. Lee Hon-chi was accused of having visited North Korea in 1974 and, since coming to South Korea, of having made frequent visits to Japan to pass industrial and military information to a North Korean agent there. He was originally sentenced to death; this was commuted to life imprisonment and was further reduced to a sentence of 20 years under a presidential amnesty in December 1988.

Lee Hon-chi is reported to be suffering from a persistent urinary tract infection, the cause of which does not appear to have been established. In June 1991 he is said to have had cystitis and to have received some medication. The symptoms, however, persisted and in September 1991 were still reported to be present. It appears that no proper investigation has been made into any possible underlying cause.

Amnesty International has frequently received reports that medical attention in Chonju prison is inadequate to meet prisoners' needs. In many South Korean prisons the infirmaries are reported to be ill-equipped and doctors available only at certain times. Transfer outside prison for medical attention is rare. A prisoner is permitted, through a lawyer, to apply for a visit from an outside doctor, but such visits are probably infrequent and it is not certain what facilities are available to the visiting doctor.

Pang Yang-kyun is an adopted prisoner of conscience about whom AI raised concerns with the authorities in July this year. He was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in 1989 after

being convicted of passing "state secrets" to an alleged North Korean agent during a visit to Germany. The "state secrets" were said to include anti-government leaflets and a report prepared by Suh Kyong-won, a former National Assembly member to whom Pang Yang-kyun was chief political aide. Pang denied that the person was a North Korean agent or that he had passed state secrets to him. He was also charged with having failed to report an illegal visit to North Korea made by Suh Kyong-won.

Pang Yang-kyun is reported to have been ill-treated during his interrogation and stated during his trial that he had been beaten, deprived of sleep and subjected to death threats. He is reported to suffer from some hearing loss in the left ear and from debilitating back pain. Information recently received states that he has now become withdrawn and may be suffering from depression. He has reportedly not been examined by a doctor since his transfer to Chonju prison in April 1991.

Amnesty International is seeking assurances from the Korean authorities that they will provide Lee Hon-chi and Pang Yang-kyun with proper medical attention and treatment, including their referral to specialists if necessary for the proper investigation of their complaints.

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 25/33/91
Distrib: PG/SC

To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Asia
Date: 22 October 1991

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**LEE Hon-chi and PANG Yang-kyun
REPUBLIC OF KOREA (South Korea)**

(See ASA 25/20/91, 17 July 1991 for earlier action on Pang Yang-kyun)

Keywords

Theme: ill-health/medical care/poc

Summary

Amnesty International is concerned by reports that the above-named prisoners are not receiving proper medical attention for problems they are suffering. Lee Hon-chi is serving a sentence of 20 years' imprisonment, and Pang Yang-kyun a sentence of seven years.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses given below:

- expressing concern that Lee Hon-chi and Pang Yang-kyun are reported not to be receiving adequate medical attention and treatment in Chonju prison
- making enquiries about the provision of medical care in Chonju prison and arrangements for the adequate investigation and follow-up of health problems
- asking specifically what medical attention these two prisoners have received
- urging that their problems are properly investigated and seeking assurances that they will receive the necessary care and attention

Letters could also call for the release of Pang Yang-kyun on the grounds that there appears to be no evidence to support the charges of espionage on which he was convicted and express concern about the validity of the charges brought against Lee Hon-chi

Addresses

Correction Bureau
Ministry of Justice
1 Chungang-dong
Kwacho-myon
Shihung-gun
Kyonggi Province
Republic of Korea

Director
Chonju Prison
Pyonghwa-dong 3-99
Chonju-shi
Chonpuk-do
Republic of Korea

Copies to diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Korea in your own country.