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RENEWED CALL FOR RELEASE OF PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE FOLLOWING FORMER SOUTH KOREAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL'S REVELATIONS

Amnesty International is renewing its calls for the release of a South Korean prisoner of conscience, following allegations that his conviction and sentence were based on false evidence provided by South Korea's intelligence service.

"These allegations reinforce our own findings about the activities of the Agency for National Security Planning," Amnesty International said.

The organization believes that on several occasions in recent years exaggerated or false information provided by the Agency for National Security Planning (ANSP) has led to the conviction under the National Security Law of known dissidents and other government critics.

Kim Sam-sok and his sister Kim Un-ju were arrested in September 1993 for offences under the National Security Law. They were accused of contacting an alleged pro-North Korean group in Japan and leaking "state secrets".

The National Security Law, which forbids any unauthorized contact with North Korea or North Koreans in other countries, defines the crime of "espionage" in broad terms and has often been used to convict people who were exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association.

A former official for the ANSP, claimed last month that in mid-1993 he was told by the Agency about plans to "fabricate" a case against Kim Eun-ju and Kim Sam-sok. He said he was ordered to frame Kim Eun-ju by asking her to deliver a parcel which contained pro-North Korean literature. He also claims that since 1992 he had been told to make incriminating links between alleged pro-North Korean organizations in Japan and several political non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in South Korea, including NGOs working on South Korean human rights issues.

Amnesty International is calling for the South Korean Government to order an independent investigation into the circumstances in which the ANSP allegedly provided false evidence to convict the two activists.

The human rights organization adopted the two as prisoners of conscience on the grounds that the charges against them were unfounded. In February, Kim Eun-ju was given a suspended sentence and released. Kim Sam-sok was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in Youngdungpo prison in Seoul. When Amnesty International delegates tried to visit him in October, they were denied access on the grounds that meeting him would be harmful to his "re-education".

In October, Kim Eun-ju told Amnesty International that during 17 days of questioning by the ANSP she was repeatedly kicked and slapped and forced to do physical exercises. She was also deprived of sleep for four days and threatened with sexual harassment. Her brother Kim Sam-sok said that he had been beaten, stripped naked and sexually assaulted during his interrogation. To Amnesty International's knowledge the South Korean authorities did not carry out any independent inquiry into these allegations of ill-treatment.

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