
£SOUTH KOREA

@TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

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Amnesty International is concerned about reports that some political and other prisoners in South Korea have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment in recent months. Reported abuses include prolonged deprivation of sleep and beatings. Amnesty International is calling on the South Korean Government to conduct an immediate investigation into all reports of torture and ill-treatment and to ensure that such abuses do not recur.

Over the past eight months some 200 members of alleged underground revolutionary socialist or communist groups, composed mainly of students, former students and workers, have been arrested on charges of organizing or participating in "anti-state" organizations. They are accused of planning to overthrow the government and replace it with a socialist or communist government. Several of these prisoners allege that they were ill-treated following their arrest in order to force them to "confess" sympathies towards North Korea and plans for an armed uprising against the government.

Several prisoners among those arrested in the *Sanomaeng* (Socialist Workers League) case claim to have been ill-treated following their arrest in September and October 1990. Families of some of the prisoners and local human rights groups claim that the prisoners were denied visits by family members and lawyers for some time after their arrests. Following protests from the families one visit was permitted after a 20-day period. Lee Song-su, a 27-year-old ex-student of Sung Kyun-kwan University and Hyon Yon-dok, also aged 27, reportedly told their lawyers that they had been ill-treated. On 23 October Lee Song-su told his lawyer that he had been beaten by his interrogators because he refused to answer their questions. On 1 November Hyon Yon-dok reported to his lawyer that he had been kept awake for three consecutive nights, stripped and beaten soon after his arrest.

In March 1991 the alleged leader of *Sanomaeng*, Park Ki-pyong, was arrested and he too claimed that he had been beaten and denied sleep for several nights during his interrogation.

Several other members of *Sanomaeng* are reported to have been ill-treated. They include Chang O-yong, Chon In-kyon, Kim Ok-kyon and Chong Mi-hwa. Amnesty International does not have any details about their claims.

In December 1990 the Agency for National Security Planning announced the arrests of some 30 members of *Chamintong* (Independent National Unification Group). The families of some of these prisoners claim that they were stripped and beaten with wooden bars, kicked and stepped on while made to kneel down on the floor. Kim Yo-sop, a 25-year-old graduate of Hanrim university and another former student, Cho Won-guk, told their lawyers that they had been stripped and beaten. Kim Gi-su, a student at Kyung-hee University, is reported to have written to his family saying that he had been repeatedly slapped and kicked during his interrogation. Kim Dong-kyu, a 24-year-old student, said that he was deprived of sleep for several days after his arrest and was beaten with sticks and kicked. Huh Jung-sook, a 24-year-old female graduate of Kyung-hee University also claimed that she was beaten.

In October 1990 the South Korean Government announced a "War Against Crime". Extra police were mobilized to crack-down on crime and there were several thousand arrests on criminal charges. On 21 October the Korea Herald reported that at least eight criminal suspects claimed to have been ill-treated by police interrogators. Kong Pyong-chin, aged 20, was reportedly beaten by police for two hours at Kangseo Police station. The parents of four middle school girls from Seoul claimed that police had slapped them and pulled their hair following their arrest.

Meanwhile in January 1991, four police officers were convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from two to five years for torturing Kim Keun-tae, a leading dissident, in 1985. The prosecution authorities had at first decided not to initiate a prosecution, but this decision was overturned by a court of appeal in December 1988. The proceedings were delayed when another police officer suspected of involvement in the torture went on the run. The trial started in June 1989. Amnesty International believes that bringing to justice those responsible for torture and ill-treatment could help deter recurrence of such abuses.

In April 1990 the South Korean Government acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its first Optional Protocol. Amnesty International is urging the government to stand by its commitments under the treaty and bring an end to the use of torture and ill-treatment in South Korea.

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