

The Observatory

# An Urgent Appeal

Government repression against the KGEU

Tuesday 28 June 2005, by [FIDH](#), [OMCT](#) (Date first published: 28 June 2005).

\*New information

KOR 001 / 0405 / OBS 027.2\*

Sentencing / Release / Harassment /

Arbitrary arrests

**South Korea**

**June 28, 2005\*\***

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in \*South Korea\*.

**\* New information: \***

The Observatory has been informed by the Korean Government Employees' Union (KGEU) that Mr. \*Kim Young Gil\*, KGEU President, was released on June 24, 2005 after 75 days of imprisonment.

According to the information received, Mr. Kim Young Gil was released following his trial on June 24, 2005. He was sentenced to one year imprisonment and two year suspension of the sentence under probation.

Mr. Kim Young Gil had been detained from April 8, 2005, when he was arrested after about 150 days of police hunt. On April 28, 2005, Mr. Kim had been charged with violation of Local Public Officials Act. Article 58 of the Act prescribes that "no public official shall do any collective action for any labour campaign, or activities other than public services, except for those who are actually engaged in labour" (See background information).

The Observatory welcomes the release of Mr. Kim Young Gil. However, the Observatory would like to point out that the crackdown on KGEU continues: on June 22, 2005, 126 KGEU members were arrested during a peaceful rally and subsequently released on June 24.

According to the information received, on June 21 and 22, 2005, KGEU held rallies calling on the government to stop the repression against the trade union and to come out to talks with the union in Wonju City, Gangwon-Do (province).

The rally was legally reported in advance to the police. However, hundreds of riot cops surrounded the rally and violently pulled participants out of the rally one by one. Two women fainted. The riot cops just left one of them without medical assistance for more than 40 minutes in spite of colleagues' demand of urgent care. One member who had recently had an operation on his back also notified his situation, but riot cops just ignored it. It turned out he now needs six weeks treatment.

**\*Background information:\***

The Observatory has been informed by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) that on March 17, 2005, Mr. Ahn Byeong-Soon, KGEU General Secretary, was arrested, and on March 17, 2005, the courts allowed for his continued detention. The police also arrested Mr. Kim Young-Gil, on April 8, 2005. Their arrest took place in the context of a general crackdown on KGEU, which is considered as an illegal union, as it is illegal to organise for civil servants in South Korea.

Mr. Ahn Byeong-Soon and Mr. Kim Young-Gil were arrested after an arrest warrant was issued against them on November 9, 2004, in relation with a general strike in opposition to the Bill on the Public Officials' Trade Union Act that took place in November 2004. At the time, the government of Korea attempted to prevent nation-wide rallies organised by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) and KGEU in protest of this Bill, which contains provisions restricting trade unions' rights. Riot police have surrounded and monitored the KGEU office building since November 2004 and have prevented almost every event of KGEU. The arrests warrants against Mr. Ahn Byeong-Soon and Mr. Kim Young-Gil were pending ever since.

Mr. Ahn Byeong-Soon was released on April 28, 2005 after 44 days in prison. He was sentenced to eight month imprisonment with two years suspension of the sentence. On the same day, Mr. Kim Young-Gil\* was prosecuted under charges of violation of the Public Officials Act.

**\* Action requested:\***

Please write to the authorities in South Korea urging them to:

- i. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of all human rights defenders in the country, including trade unionists;
- ii. put an end to all forms of harassment, legal action, and ill-treatment of human rights defenders in South Korea, including trade unionists, as well as any obstacles to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- iii. revise the Bill on the Establishment and Operation of Public Officials' Trade Unions, so as to put Korean Law in accordance with international standards, including ILO standards;
- iv. ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, in particular article 1, which states that "everyone has the right, individually or collectively, to promote the protection and fulfilment of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels", article 5.b which stipulates that everyone has the right "to form, join and participate in non-governmental organisations, associations or groups, as well as article 12.2, which provides that "the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually or in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, /de facto /or /de jure/ adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration";
- v. guarantee the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international human rights instruments ratified by South Korea.

**\*Addresses:\***

Mr. Roh Moo-Hyun, President of the Republic, 1 Sejong-no, Jongno-gu Seoul 110-820, Republic of

Korea. Tel: +822 770-0018; Fax: + 82 2 770-03 47 or 770-0001 / + 82 2 770-25 79.

E-mail: president cwd.go.kr or president president.go.kr

["http://www.alrc.net/phplist/lists/admin/president@president.go.kr"](http://www.alrc.net/phplist/lists/admin/president@president.go.kr)

Mr. Kim Seong-Kyu, Minister of Justice, 88 Gwanmon-ro, Gwachon-si, Gyonggi Province, 427-760 Republic of Korea. Fax: +82 2 21 10 20 79 / +82 2 503 70 46 (HR Department)

E-mail: jk.kim moj.go.kr or kskang7 moj.go.kr

["http://www.alrc.net/phplist/lists/admin/kskang7@moj.go.kr"](http://www.alrc.net/phplist/lists/admin/kskang7@moj.go.kr)

Mr. Kim Dae Hwan, Minister of Labour, 1 Jungang-ro, Gwacheon-si, Gyonggi Province, 427-760 Republic of Korea. Fax: +82 2 503 66 23

Mr. Young-Hoang Cho, President, National Human Rights Commission of Korea, 16 Euljiro 1-ga, Jung-gu Seoul 100 842 Republic of Korea. Tel: +82 2 2125 97 00; Fax: +82 2 2 125 98 11 / 96 66

E-mail: nhrc humanrights.go.kr

["http://www.alrc.net/phplist/lists/admin/nhrc@humanrights.go.kr"](http://www.alrc.net/phplist/lists/admin/nhrc@humanrights.go.kr)

Mr. Oh Yong-Gyo, Minister of Government Administration and Home Affairs, Central Government Complex, 55 Sejong-ro (77-6 Sejong-ro lga), Jongno-go, Seoul 110-760, Republic of Korea, Fax: +82 2 37 03 55 01 and +822 37 03 55 26

Please also write to the embassies of South Korea in your respective country.

\*\*\*

Paris - Geneva, June 28, 2005

Kindly inform the Observatory of any action undertaken quoting the code number of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

Tel and fax: FIDH : +33 1 43 55 20 11 / + 33 1 43 55 18 80

Tel and fax: OMCT : + 41 22 809 49 39 / + 41 22 809 49 29

E-mail : observatoire iprolink.ch

["mailto:observatoire iprolink.ch"](mailto:observatoire.iprolink.ch)

==

Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme  
International Federation for Human Rights - FIDH

17, passage de la Main d'Or

75011 Paris - France

tel : ++ 33 1 43 55 25 18 / fax : ++ 33 1 43 55 18 80

[www.fidh.org](http://www.fidh.org)