

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Republic of Korea (South Korea): AI condemns secret deportations of senior Migrant Trade Union officials

Amnesty International condemns the forced return - in secret and without due process - by the Government of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) of three senior officials of the Migrant Trade Union (MTU) in the morning of 13 December 2007.

MTU President Kajiman Khapung, Vice President Raju Kumar Gurung (Raj) and General Secretary Abul Basher M. Moniruzzaman (Masum) were reportedly taken out of Cheongju Detention Center (Northern Chuncheong Province, south of Seoul), where they had been detained since their arrest in a targeted crackdown on November 27, in the early hours of 13 December and sent to Incheon International Airport from where they were deported to the countries of their origin (Nepal and Bangladesh). In forcibly returning the three men, the South Korean Government appears to have not conducted a full and individual assessment of their circumstances.

Amnesty International expresses serious concern that the deportations represent a serious violation of the right to freedom of association and represent an assault on the human rights of migrant workers.

This action is a repressive measure undertaken by the Government authorities to stop the MTU from conducting its rightful union activities independently. It also represents a serious assault at depriving migrant workers from exercising their basic labour rights which are protected in the South Korean constitution, including the right to freedom of association.

By this action, the government authorities, especially officials of the Ministry of Justice, have reportedly broken its promise not to carry out deportations until the National Human Rights Commission had completed its investigation of the case and given their recommendations.

This step of forcibly returning migrant trade union officials appears to be a continuation of crackdowns that have been conducted against irregular migrant workers in South Korea since August 2007.

Background

In a public statement issued on 3 December (AI Index: ASA 25/007/2007), Amnesty International had while expressing serious concern at the arrest of President Kajiman, Vice President Raj and General Secretary Masum, raised concern that they may be arbitrarily returned to their countries of origin without due process.

President Kajiman and General Secretary Masum were arrested in front of their houses as they were leaving to participate in a protest in front of the Seoul Immigration Office. Vice President Raj was arrested in front of the factory where he works.

They were detained for being in an irregular or undocumented situation.

Amnesty International had stated that it considered Kajiman Khapung, Raju Kumar Gurung and Abul Basher M Moniruzzaman to be prisoners of conscience and urged the South Korean Government to release the three men immediately and unconditionally. The organisation had

called on the South Korean Government not to return the men to their countries of origin without a full and individual assessment of their circumstances, including due process safeguards and the right to appeal the decision to an independent authority.

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