

# **KCTU Press Statement for the kidnapped Koreans by Taliban in Afghanistan**

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**Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU)**

**Monthly Newsletter**

**July, 2007**

**[Press Statement] We urge the Korean Government and the International Community to call upon the US to take adequate measures for kidnapped Koreans by Taliban in Afghanistan**

Another of the Koreans being held by the Taliban in Afghanistan has been killed. The man has been confirmed to be Shim Sung-min. The KCTU offers condolences to his family, who had pleaded for his safe return and now must be agonizing over his death, and also wish for the safe return of the remaining hostages. If there are to be no more deaths, the utmost efforts on the part of the Korean government that puts priority on the lives of the kidnapped Koreans are needed, as well as adequate measures from the US government and the international community.

Faced with the feeling of helplessness that all Koreans must have felt, we cannot but point out the responsibility of the Roh Moo-hyun government. We have already criticized the irresponsible comments by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Song Min-soon that “withdrawal of forces would take place according to plan (late in the year)” as being a prelude to tragedy. The government’s approach has resulted in another life being taken away, and its incompetence has been revealed to all. The government must now openly and assertively do whatever needs to be done to protect its citizens. If need be, it needs to actively seek cooperation from the international community and to also unreservedly demand from the US, controlling much of Afghanistan, what needs to be done.

As the international community is aware, the current government in Kabul is one which the US set up after it attacked the country and toppled the Taliban regime. This is the reason a presidential envoy to Afghanistan cannot bring substantial results. The Taliban is currently demanding an exchange between the kidnapped Koreans and Taliban prisoners. The US holds the key to resolving the issue and the efforts of the Korean government needs to head toward that direction. The Bush government’s comments that the kidnapped need to returned safely rings hollow. It has evaded the issue by saying that it is not something that the US can resolve, and has shown the ‘recklessness’ of stating that there will be no negotiations and no exchange of prisoners. Furthermore, it has stepped up the attacks on the Taliban in such a situation. We are angered once again at the disregard the US government has shown for the people of this country. This needs to change and the Bush government needs to change. For this to happen, the Korean government’s efforts and pressure from the international community will be needed.

It is unacceptable to kidnap and kill civilians for military purposes, and the Taliban needs to release the remaining Koreans being held. It is also not too late for the Korean government to withdraw its

troops from the minefield that the U.S. attack has created in Afghanistan. We will then be able to sever ourselves from the imperialist alliance with the US and become a country that does its part for peace and solidarity in the world. Only then will we be able to call for the solidarity of the international community and evade tragic situations like the one we face. Kim Sun-il has been sacrificed in Iraq, and staff sergeant Yoon Jang-ho has returned as a corpse from Afghanistan. Now pastor Bae and Mr. Shim have died. We need no more additions to the list. We urge the Korean government and the international community to act for the safe return of the remaining hostages.

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Korean Confederation of Trade Unions