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International Protest Letter

In Protest against the Arrests of Seok-woon PARK and Je-jun JU

Friday 26 October 2007, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: October 2007).

To: President Roh Moo-Hyun, South Korea

International Protest Letter

In Protest against the Arrests of Seok-woon PARK and Je-jun JU

We Demand their Immediate Release!

We Demand an Immediate End to the Suppression of the Korean Alliance!

We are seriously troubled by the police brutality and government suppression of the Korean Alliance Against the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. We urge you to immediately release Mr. Seok-Woon Park and Mr. Je-Jun Ju, two officers of the Korean Alliance and immediately halt police repression against the organization. Your actions against these political dissenters signify South Korea's deteriorating state of civil liberties and return to an authoritarian state.

On Monday, October 9, Mr. Je-jun Ju and Mr. Seok-woon Park were arrested in Seoul on two charges. The first charge was for organizing public vigils and demonstrations after two Korean farmers were brutally beaten and killed by the police during a protest in December 2005. The second charge was for organizing and carrying out "illegal" and "non-permitted" protests against the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

The Korean Alliance is a coalition group of over 300 civil society organizations ranging from peasants, trade unionists and filmmakers to doctors. Since its formation in March 2006, the Korean Alliance has organized dozens of peaceful and legal demonstrations throughout the country. But since November 2006, your administration unilaterally declared all Korean Alliance public rallies illegal—in direct violation of Article 21 of the Republic of Korea Constitution. Article 21 does not recognize a permit system for rallies; only a notice needs to be given, which they did without fail. Their arrests are in direct violation of their democratic and constitutional right to assemble and express their political views.

These arrests follow in the heels of the July 2007 arrests of Mr. Jong-ryul Oh and Mr. Gwang-hoon Jung, the Korean Alliance Co-Chairs, also on charges of carrying out "illegal" and "non-permitted" protests against the FTA. Your administration has also issued arrest warrants for 27 leaders of the Korean Metal Workers Union for their involvement in the June 2007 general strike to oppose the FTA.

Citizens and civil society organizations must be allowed to give meaningful input into legislation and agreements that will have profound and wide-reaching consequences for their lives and livelihoods. Because the process by which the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement was negotiated was deeply flawed, non-transparent, and allowed for no citizen input, these South Korean citizens used the

limited legal means available to them to organize visible protest to both the process and the content of the agreement. This act of political participation should be valued in a democracy, not silenced or suppressed.

South Korea has made important democratic strides since the 1980s. We have witnessed this transformation. But the arrests of these political dissidents are in direct violation of the country's basic democratic principles and constitutional rights. South Korea is a democratic nation that guarantees under its constitution the rights to assemble and freedom of speech. As a member of the United Nations, South Korea has signed on to international conventions that protect and promote the advancement of human rights. These rights are fundamental to any democratic nation, and we strongly feel that these arrests signal South Korea's return to an authoritarian state.

The global community is watching South Korea and if this trend of violence and repression continues, we can promise your Administration that the international community will not sit still. We urge the Administration to correct its mistakes and restore basic constitutional rights to these individuals and the Korean Alliance.

We urge you President Roh Moo-Hyun to 1.) Release the two political prisoners; and 2.) Take swift and substantive steps to end police and government repression against human rights advocates and trade union leaders speaking out against the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned

See: <http://www.petitiononline.com/NoFTA...>

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