



THE BROKEN RIFLE

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1 December 2003: Prisoners for Peace Day

Special Focus on Conscientious Objection in South Korea

Jung-min Choi

Only early in 2001 the concept of "objection to military service" became known to the Korean public. A current affairs magazine reported on a forum on the military service system, including the right to conscientious objection. It especially reported on the history of Jehovah's Witnesses CO. Since the formation of the Korean army, over 10,000 objectors (mostly Jehovah's Witnesses) have spent time behind bars. The public has treated them as nonexistent.

Korea has long history of military dictatorships. Under the slogan "the richer the country, the better the living conditions of the people", governments made great efforts to boost economic growth, interested in nothing but the GNP. The military confrontation with North Korea was used to create obedience and unity. The core of Korean militarism was and is compulsory military service. Obviously, conscientious objection could not be accepted, and COs have been treated harshly.

The first stage of a CO movement

Back in 2001 it was a taboo to talk about issues such as the military system, soldiers' human rights, and conscientious objection. Frankly speaking, we too had doubts about our ability to work on such a controversial issue. As expected, one week after our forum Seoul

Police started to investigate three antimilitarist websites which also provided information on evading military service. In response to this, several peace and human rights groups organised a symposium, and published a report to dismantle the taboo, to bring into the open the issue of 50 years of imprisonment of conscientious objectors, and the right to conscientious objection.

Public sympathy has grown since. Increased awareness of the painful history of objectors and their families has played a role in this. In a poll conducted by a newspaper, more than 50% accepted the right to conscientious objection.

The idea that it is possible to object to military service provoked a very important momentum in Korea, especially among university students and young activists who still have to serve in the military. With the spread of the idea, we received an increasing number of phone calls and emails requesting information on CO. In December 2001, a pacifist and Buddhist, Oh Tae-yang, declared his conscientious objection, and turned CO into a political issue, linked to the relations between North and South Korea, and national security.

COs – a threat to national security?

In 2002 several human rights groups formed "Korea Solidarity for Conscientious Objection" (KSCO), and a judge appealed to the Constitutional Court because he had doubts about the constitutionality of the present Military Service Law. Since Oh Tae-yang's CO declaration, political CO has increased. So far, a total of eight people have declared their conscientious objection. When the university student Na Dong-hyuk declared his CO, 20 more students pledged to object to military service when they receive their call-up orders.

KSCO receives an increasing number of requests from people con-

Editorial

Prisoners for Peace Day 2003 focuses on the young movement of conscientious objectors in South Korea. Although conscientious objection is young in terms of a movement, the history of imprisonment of conscientious objectors – of Jehovah's Witnesses – goes back a long while. More than 10,000 Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned in the last 50 years for their conscientious objection, mostly to three years imprisonment, and until recently often several times. Although the situation has improved, and sentences are now shorter, there are still more than 750 Jehovah's Witnesses in prison in South Korea.

This issue of The Broken Rifle focuses on their fate, and on the younger political struggle of the South Korean conscientious objectors' movement. It is evident that this movement needs our support, to change the attitude towards militarism on the highly militarised Korean peninsula.

Andreas Speck

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Public declaration of conscientious objectors in front of the Military Manpower Administration in Seoul, September 12, 2002

Photo: Ohmynews

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CONCODOC

WRI, as part of a coalition of CO support organisations, is hosting CONCODOC (CONscription and Conscientious Objection DOCUMENTATION), a worldwide documentation on the situation of conscription and conscientious objection. It is the only one of its kind in the world. You can register for online viewing of all 180 CONCODOC country reports at wri-irg.org/co/form.htm; some reports are also available in Spanish. The CONCODOC project depends on information which it receives from groups all over the world.

Conscription and Conscientious Objection Documentation (CONCODOC)

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The Broken Rifle

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If you want extra copies of this issue of *The Broken Rifle*, please contact the WRI office, or download it from our website.

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Jehovah's Witnesses and conscientious objection in Korea

Young-il Hong

The history of conscientious objection on the Korean Peninsula dates back to 1939. On June 21 Japanese Jehovah's Witnesses who had refused military service were arrested. The wave of arrests then swept through Taiwan on 22 June and Korea on 29 June. In Korea alone, 33 Jehovah's Witnesses were indicted. From 1939 until the end of the Second World War most Jehovah's Witnesses living in Korea were imprisoned on account of conscientious objection.

Shortly after the Korean Peninsula was divided into North and South, after the end of World War II, the Korean War began on 25 June, 1950, and lasted for three years. Again, Jehovah's Witnesses refused military service by both North Korea and South Korea as conscientious objectors (COs).

During the 1950s and 60s, COs used to be imprisoned from several months up to one year. One imprisonment could usually free them from being conscripted again. However, because of their criminal record they had to endure social discrimination when finding a job.

The military government, which came to power on 16 May, 1961, put pressure on the

Korean society. The Regional Reserve Forces, established on 27 December, 1961, were intensified. Ex-soldiers who had joined the Jehovah's Witnesses and became COs therefore received corporal punishment and fines. Heavy fines and repeated trials made it impossible for COs to live normal lives and even to earn a living.

The Supreme Court of South Korea ruled on conscientious objection on 22 July, 1969: "The so-called conscientious objection does not fall into the category of freedom of conscience guaranteed under the Constitution Article 17"

With the beginning of the 1970s, the military government began to oppress COs in various ways. Jehovah's Witness youths were taken to military training camps in various illegal ways.

Military training began at high schools in 1970. Jehovah's Witnesses, young students, refused the military training at school and were badly beaten and punished. They were forced to leave school. With the formation of social discrimination and increasingly brutal oppression in the 1970s, even partial objection to military service, accepting non-combatant service but refusing military service on Sabbath days, as practiced by some religions, came to a complete end.

Since the 1960s the Supreme Court has not

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considering conscientious objection, so we set up a regular meeting for young people who are worried about their situation. In winter 2002, we organised a "CO School", where we offered information and gave the opportunity to deepen the understanding of the CO issue.

With the spread of the CO movement in Korea, especially among young people affected by military service, the Korean government started to respond. The Ministry of Education served each university and college with guiding principles that block the spread of the CO movement, and the Ministry of Defense released a statement opposing the right to CO. Also, then-president Kim Dae-jung gave an address that he can't accept CO rights.

US attacks on Iraq, and...

The US attacks on Iraq had a huge impact on the Korean society. For the first time many people raised their voice against a war and for peace, in relation to a country other than Korea. Many peace activists went to Iraq to try to stop the war and to be a witness. When the issue of deployment of Korean troops came up, the anti-war movement got broader.

Towards the end of the war, another CO, Kim Do-hyung, declared his objection. In a press conference he said that he feels sorrow when he sees the US attacks on Iraq. He said that

the deployment of Korean troops made him determined to refuse military service, as he did not want to join an army involved in an unjust war.

Problems to be solved

Earlier this year, the group "People Sharing Conscience", which supports COs, changed its name to "World Without War". Some CO activists participated in the International CO Day training in Israel. In Korea we organised a peace camp for COs and antimilitarist activists. Though more or less inexperienced, this was the first time such a camp took place in Korea. A new documentary on conscientious objection was finally completed, and shown for the first time in public. We now expect it to tour Korea, and to be widely used. We plan the CO peace campaign on Korea's streets and prepare for "Prisoners for Peace Day" on December 1st.

It is a paradox that Korea, a country that has a long history of struggle for democracy, has only three years history of struggling for COs. There are only a few COs yet, and it may need a lot of time to generate public support. But it is obvious that the CO movement provides a new perspective for another world, and although it moves forward slowly, it does so with a lot of power.

Jung-min Choi works with Korea Solidarity for Conscientious Objection (KSCO)



Chun-Guk Jeong

(aged 55, Geumsan-gun, Chungcheongnam-do Province)

Chun-Guk Jeong, a Jehovah's Witness, refused military service in 1969 at the age of 21. He was sentenced to 10 months. He again objected in 1976 at the age of 26. He



was then sentenced to one year and six months in prison, though the prosecutor demanded three years. The appeal court increased the sentence to three years.

In 1977, on the very day he was released, officials of the Military Manpower Administration waited for him at the gate of the prison. At the age of 29, Chun-Guk Jeong was taken to a military camp, where he was told that 'the criminal record for objection to military service is not counted as a criminal record (a criminal record could free him from military service).' Chun-Guk Jeong was considered a university graduate (and therefore could be conscripted up to the age of 30) even though he had dropped out of university in the first year. In addition, the court martial gave him a heavier sentence because of his previous criminal record, which had not been counted at the time of conscription. He was thus sentenced to four years in prison.

While being in military jail, he was mistreated, for example by being forced to kneel down, being kicked with military boots on his chest, and hitting his head on the cement floor. They even poured water on his face from a pitcher.

After all, Chun-Guk Jeong lived for seven years and ten months in prison. His imprisonment began when he was 21 and continued until he was 33. Now Chun-Guk Jeong, who was studying to become a doctor, is living as a farmer, having abandoned his cherished hope to study medicine.



Performance to oppose the deployment of South Korean troops in Iraq, Seoul, October 1, 2003

Photo: Ohmynews

recognized conscientious objection of Jehovah's Witnesses. On 23 July, 1985, and 14 September, 1992, the court ruled against COs and the decisions repeat the phrase of 22 July, 1969. What is perplexing is that those decisions do not state why conscientious objection does not fall into the category of freedom of religion and conscience.

In 1994, when the cold war eased and military service was reduced from 30 months to 26 months, Article 44 of the Military Criminal Law, the basis for the punishment of conscientious objection, increased the maximum penalty from two years to three years. Despite brutal treatment and increased sentences under military governments, the number of Jehovah's Witness COs is increasing (see graphic).

With progressing democratisation, Koreans are developing more tolerant views of COs. In 2002 the illegal compulsory conscription practices of the Military Manpower Administration came to an end, and COs who now are being tried in civilian courts get shorter sentences. Additionally, on 29 January, 2002, one incumbent judge appealed a case of conscientious objection to the Constitutional Court for review, upholding the claim of a defendant that the present military service law, which does not recognize conscientious objection, could be against the Constitution.

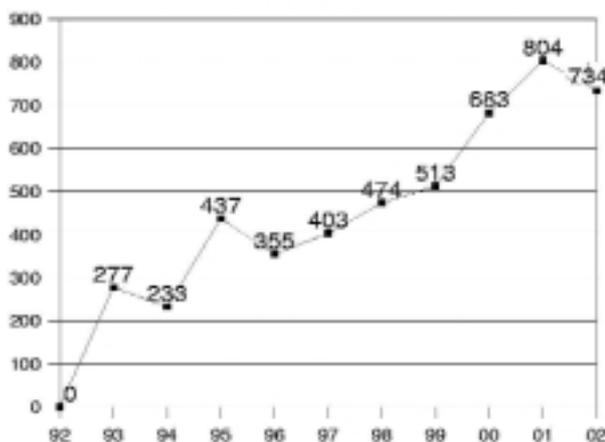
More than 10,000 Jehovah's Witnesses have been punished because of conscientious objection. The number of Jehovah's Witness COs in prison is 767, as of 15 September, 2003.

As South Korea has been implementing a strict military service law, conscientious objection has become the brand mark of Jehovah's Witnesses in Korea, since COs have hardly been found in other religious organisations.

Young-il Hong is a Jehovah's Witness and lives in South Korea

Graphic: development of the number of Jehovah's Witness COs since 1992. Graphic by WRI, based on data by Young-il Hong

Jehovah's Witness COs in Korea



South Korean peace groups

Solidarity for Peace and Human Rights

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Prisoners for Peace Honour Roll 2003

How the list works

♦ First are **prisoners' names** (in bold), followed by their sentence, then their place of imprisonment with  and, finally the reason for their detention

♦ Information about countries where prisoners have had their sentences suspended, or where sentences have been served or completed during the year are in *italics*.

Armenia

In spite of Armenia's commitment to introduce legislation on the right to conscientious objection, the country continues to imprison Jehovah's Witnesses for their refusal to perform military service.

Vahan Bayatyan

2½ years – 28/10/02–28/04/05

Artur Grigoryan

2½ years – 26/11/02–26/05/05

Karen Abadzhyan

2½ years – 05/12/02–05/06/05

Set Pogosyan

2 years – 29/12/02–29/12/04

Parkev Khachatryan

1 year – 29/01/03–29/01/04

Ashot Melikyan

2 years – 30/01/03–30/01/05

Anton Tigranyan

2 years – 10/02/03–10/02/05

Gor Mkhitaryan

1½ years – 26/02/03–26/08/04

Abraham Kuzelyan

2 years – 27/02/03–27/02/05

Grigor Oganessian

2 years – 12/03/03–12/03/05

Edgar Oganessian

2 years – 21/03/03–21/03/05

Ambartsum Odabashyan

3 years – 01/04/03–01/04/06

Ayk Bukharatyan

2 years – 02/04/03–02/04/05

Vahan Mosoyan

2 years – 15/04/03–15/04/05

Arsen Akopyan

1½ years – 30/04/03–30/10/04

Arkadii Avetyan

1 year – 02/05/03–02/05/04

Artur Stapanyan

2 years – 12/05/03–12/05/05

Ayk Gareginyan

1½ years – 11/06/03–11/12/04

Ashot Akopyan

2½ years – 12/06/03–12/12/05

Grikor Mkrtychyan

2 years – 13/06/03–13/06/05

 Kosh Corrective Labour Colony, Kosh

Araik Bedzhanyan

1½ years – 02/07/03–02/01/05

 Vanadzor Prison

Avetik Avakyan

1½ years – 25/03/03–25/09/04

Ashot Tsureyan

2 years – 29/04/03–29/04/05

Aram Khechoyan

1 year – 06/07/03–06/07/04

Edgar Saroyan

awaiting trial since 15/05/03

Suren Akobyan

awaiting trial since 03/07/03

Artur Torosyan

awaiting trial since 03/07/03

Artjom Kazaryan

awaiting trial since 04/07/03

 Nubarashen Prison

Belarus

Yuri I Bendazhevsky

01/06/01–01/06/09

 Prison Minsk, ul Kavarijskaya 36, PO Box 36 K, Minsk

Chernobyl researcher and whistleblower fraudulently convicted of corruption.

Belgium

On February 16, 2003, 11 peace activists stopped a train carrying US Army equipment on its way to the Gulf via the harbour in Antwerp. The trial is due Monday 27 October. More information at www.vre-desactie.be

Britain

Hundreds of activists have been arrested during actions against the war. Many have been fined, other saw their charges dropped. A few are awaiting trial.

Ulla Roder disarmed a Tornado ground attack aircraft at RAF Leuchars on March 10, 2003. She is presently not in prison. More information at www.free-ulla.org.

Toby Olditch and Phil Pritchard were arrested at RAF Fairford, aiming to disarm a B52 bomber. They too are not in prison at present. More information at Inspiration2003@yahoo.co.uk.

There are more trials coming up. Information at <http://scotland.motherearth.org/ulla/prisoners.shtml>

Finland

On October 1st, all together 19 total objectors were imprisoned in Finland. However, only four names are known.

Lasse Jansson

25/08/03–12/03/04

 Suomenlinnan työsiirtola, Suomenlinna C 86, 00190 Helsinki

Pano Pietilä

09/08/03–

 Helsingin työsiirtola, PL 36, 01531 Vantaa

Johannes Lilja

24/07/03–10/02/04

 Satakunnan vankila, Köyliön osasto, PL 42, 32701 Huittinen

Väinö Järvelä

14/07/03–29/01/04

 Ylitornion avovankilaosasto, Rajantie 2, 95600 Ylitornio

Germany

More than 1,000 people have been arrested during civil disobedience actions against the war on Iraq, most of them at Rhein-Main Airbase. Many charges have been dropped, but some are still awaiting trial, and are likely to be fined.

Jannes von Bestenbostel

 Trukft Roland-Kaserne 313, Fohrder Landstrasse 33, 14772 Brandenburg

Simon Alexander Lieberg

 Fallschirmjägerbatallion, Frieslandkaserne, 26316 Varel

Both are total objectors, called up for military service on October 1, 2003. They will spend 63 or 84 days in military arrest, before being tried at a civilian court.

Ireland

On February 3, 2003, as part of ongoing resistance at Shannon Airport, the Pitstop Ploughshares disarmed a US warplane.

They are currently out on bail. Their trial has been moved to Dublin and will probably take place early in 2004. More information at www.ploughsharesireland.org.

Israel

Mordechai Vanunu

30/09/86–29/09/04

 Ashkelon Prison, Ashkelon, Israel

Nuclear whistleblower convicted of espionage and treason—kidnapped on 30 September 1986 in Italy

In Israel conscientious objectors are imprisoned regularly. Most of them serve prison term of 28 days, some several such prison terms in a row. At present, six



conscientious objectors are being court martialled: Haggai Matar, Matan Kaminer, Noam Bahat, Adam Maor, Shimri Tzamalet, and Yonathan Ben-Artzi. The trials continue. Check the WRI website (<http://wri-irg.org>) for updates.

Puerto Rico

José Vélez Acosta #23883-069

05/09/03–

José Pérez González #21519-069

05/09/03–

✉ MDC Guaynabo, PO Box 2147, San Juan, PR 00922-2147

Charged with conspiracy and damage to federal property, awaiting sentencing on 4 December 03.

South Korea

In South Korea, more than 750 Jehovah's Witnesses are imprisoned because of their conscientious objection to military service. They usually get prison sentences between 1 1/2 and three years.

More recently non-religious COs started to organize themselves.

A list of imprisoned conscientious objectors is available on WRI's website at <http://wri-irg.org/2003/pfp03-en.htm#southkorea>.

Turkmenistan

Nikolai Shelekhov

02/07/02–01/01/04

✉ Lebap velayat, g. Turkmenabad (Chardhev), Ispravitelnaya trudovaya koloniya, Zaklyuchennomu Shelekhovu Nikolayu, Turkmenistan

Kurban Zakirov

23/04/99–22/04/08

✉ Akhal velayat, g. Bezmein, Ispravitelnaya trudovaya koloniya, Zaklyuchennomu, Zakirovu Kurbanu, Turkmenistan

Both are Jehovah's Witnesses. There are reports that three more Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned for their conscientious objection recently. More information is not yet available.

USA

More than 7,500 people have been arrested all over the USA during civil disobedience actions against the war on Iraq. Many charges have been dropped, others have been fined or were sentenced to prison. Unfortunately, we don't know if anyone is in prison right now.

Stephen Funk

six month – out March 04

✉ Building 1041, PSC 20140, Camp Lejeune NC 28542

Turned himself in to the US Marines on 1 April 2003, and applied for discharge as conscientious objector. Sentenced on 6 September to six months imprisonment.

Civil disobedience actions at the „School of the Americas“ in Ft Benning in November 2002 lead to a 86 arrests. Most have been released by now, but some are still in prison. From November 21-23, 2003 a new round of actions will take place. Check the website for updates.

Jeremiah Matthew John #91324-020

out January 18, 2004

✉ Federal Prison Camp, PO Box 33, Terre Haute, IN 47808

Patrick Lincoln #91400-020

out December 8, 2003

✉ FCI, Cumberland, P.O. Box 1000, Cumberland, Md. 21501-1000

Sentenced to six month in prison and

US\$500 fine.

Charity Ryerson #91335-020

six months – out January 18, 2004

✉ Pekin FCI, PO Box 6000, Pekin, IL 61555-6000

Derrlyn Tom #91362-020

six months – out December 6, 2003

✉ Federal Prison Camp, 5675 8th St. Camp Parks, Dublin, CA 94568

Jackie Hudson O.P. 08808-039

31 months – out July 05

✉ FCI Victorville, P.O. Box 5400, Adelanto, CA 92301

Carol Gilbert O.P. 10856-039

33 months – out October 05

✉ FPC Alderson, Box A, Alderson, WV 24910

Ardeth Platte O.P. 10857-039

41 months – out June 06

✉ FCI Danbury, Route 37, Danbury, CT 06810

All three have been sentenced on July 25, 2003, for disarming the nuclear missile silo N-8 in northeastern Colorado.

Action

- On 1 December, put aside at least one hour and write at least four cards to prisoners;
- Get your peace group or class or meeting place to organise a card-writing session;
- Set up a stall in your town centre, perform a bit of street theatre, or do whatever else it takes to attract attention and interest.

Sending cards and letters

- Always send your card in an envelope;
- Include a return name and address on the envelope;
- Be chatty and creative: send photos from your life, drawings;
- Tell prisoners what you are doing to stop war and war preparations;
- Don't write anything that might get the prisoner into trouble;
- Think about the sort of thing you'd like to receive if you were in prison;
- Don't begin, "You are so brave, I could never do what you have done";
- Don't expect the prisoner to reply;
- Remember—next year it could be you...

Support our future work

For 45 years, War Resisters' International has publicised the names and stories of prisoners of conscience. Help them keep up the tradition:

- Send in a special PfP donation to WRI to help fund next year's research.
- Give a Peace News subscription to a prisoner on our list (or provide us with the name and address of someone not on our list).

Send contributions to: War Resisters' International, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, Britain (tel +44 20 7278 4040; fax 7278 0444; email office@wri-irg.org).

Your outreach to prisoners does make a difference. Show your solidarity!

Online version: <http://wri-irg.org> for all four language versions of the PfP 2003 pack.



Dong Hyuk Na

For 50 years, since the Korean War, about 10,000 COs have been imprisoned. Most of those COs were Jehovah's Witnesses. Not until the 21st century did COs who have ideological, political beliefs appear amid serious reflection on militarism and nationalism. The anti-war movement in Korea, which began after 11 September 2001, exerted a great influence on their conviction against war and for peace. I am one of those and the fourth objector for non-religious reasons.

I have been deeply involved in the student movement, getting together with communists. My experiences as a student activist planted indignation toward the national power into my mind. However, I was not very sensitive about our internal militarism, because of the strong influence of the student movement which emphasizes a collective position.

Exchanges with the three objectors before me changed my thought a lot and led me to decide to object to military service after serious self-examination. I strongly believe that we can achieve peace by peaceful means, and that we have to overturn the war-system for peace. I declared my objection in public on 12 of September last year, and was sentenced to one and a half years' imprisonment at the first trial. Now my case is still pending in court after my release on bail at the second trial.

At present I work for the CO group 'World Without War' (WWW) and join various actions for peace.

The crisis on the Korean peninsula: background and issues

Sang Youl Sohn

Many people think that the crisis on the Korean peninsula started in the wake of North Korea's nuclear development. However, contrary to what is commonly known, it is right to think that the crisis initiated from the aggressive nuclear and military policies made by the US, and military approach to this by North Korea made the crisis more complicated.

It was around October 2002 when the nuclear issue came out in the Korean peninsula. At that time, the US special convoy to North Korea raised a suspicion about the nuclear development program when visiting the state. He announced that the north admitted the suspicion and the current crisis began. However, the US has never shown any solid proof about North Korea's nuclear development so far. Then, why, at this point of time, does the US want to create trouble with North Korea by raising the groundless suspicion?

Background

In order to understand the origin of the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula, above all, a closer look has to be taken at US nuclear policy. The US had established plans to actually use nuclear weapons on the peninsula since the Korean War, and deployed nuclear weapons in and around the peninsula. According to an estimation, it is known that about 700 nuclear weapons were deployed in South Korea during the 1970-80's.

The end of the cold war in the 90's brought a change on the Korean peninsula. The US-deployed nuclear weapons on the peninsula started to be taken away. In 1991, 'the Declaration of Nuclear-Free Korean Peninsula' was adopted by the agreement of the two Korean governments. In 1992, North Korea concluded the safeguard agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and as a following step, an IAEA's nuclear investigation to North Korea was launched.

However, a serious tensions arose between North Korea and the US over the issue of the scope and level of the nuclear investigation in the Fall of 1992. Under these circumstances, the US carried out the Team Spirit exercise (a joint military operation exercise between South Korea and the US), which had been canceled in the 90's. In protesting the exercise, North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). After the withdrawal the situation became worse and aggravated into a war between the two states. The Agreed Framework (Geneva Agreement) was signed in 1994. There were three major agreements: North Korea would freeze nuclear facilities, both parties would move toward full normalisation of relations, and the US would provide North Korea with two light water reactors to solve electricity problems.



Courtesy of The General Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

However, the US violated the Geneva agreement. Light water reactors were to be completed by 2003, but the construction was intentionally delayed. The promise of normalisation of relations was not kept. Above all, the US was supposed to guarantee North Korea not to use nuclear weapon against Pyongyang, but instead it continued to give military threats to North Korea. After 9/11 the Bush administration took a stronger position on the small country. Bush named North Korea as part of the axis of evil and said a pre-emptive attack against North Korea could possibly be made. The Bush administration even openly mentioned a regime change in North Korea.

In conclusion, the reason that the US raise groundless suspicions to instigate friction with North Korea at this time is the following: by raising a new suspicion on North Korea's nuclear development, the US would not have to deal with the criticism that they put aside the responsibility of fulfilling the Geneva agreements and the US claims that North Korea is responsible for unfulfilled agreements. Another reason is to realise more US interests on the Korean peninsula and East Asia. Mention about nuclear development is on the way, the North Korean administration took strong steps toward the US due to this security threat. However, it is clear that the militaristic approach by North Korea is also very dangerous.

Latest situation

Recently, there are many people who say that the US foreign policy toward North Korea put more emphasis on compromise and multilateralism, than faceoff and unilateralism. What



they probably have in mind is the 6-party talks (South Korea, North Korea, the US, China, Japan and Russia), which opened in Beijing in August.

However, the real reason that the US participates in a multilateral framework such as the 6-party talks is to bring about aid from surrounding countries and put pressure on North Korea. Simultaneous solutions of nuclear issues and a security assurance for the North Korean society - a new and sincere approach to the problem - was presented through the 6-party talks. However, the US made no concession about its position. North Korea must give up its nuclear program first, and then the US will promise security for North Korea. What makes the matter worse is that the US continues to put military pressure on North Korea, which might incite the county. As soon as the 6-party talks ended, the US held the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) conference in

France in early September. 11 participants in the conference decided to have a joint military practice in mid-September. The PSI is a plan to strengthen searching and seizing of boats of the countries labeled as 'Axis of Evil' by the US. It is a well-known fact that North Korea was the target. The US also had the Stryker Brigade field drill, an exercise for faster military deployment, in South Korea over the last few months. A operation plan called 'O-plan' 5030 was recently opened to the public. This is a plot to induce to dismantle the North Korean system by tiring its military power.

Moreover, the US is bolstering up militarism in northeast Asia, finding an excuse in suspicious nuclear development by North Korea. This materialises in the form of a strengthened military alliance among South Korea, Japan and the US. As a result of this, Japan is expanding the scope of its Defence Forces, and trying to amend the peace constitution. South Korea is increasing the military budget by a large margin. Recently it is confirmed through media reports that South Korea is the second biggest military weapon import country. The Missile Defence system in northeast Asia strengthens the status of military alliance among the 3 countries in the region.

People's security

The crisis in the Korean peninsula will intensify unless the US foreign policy toward northeast Asia changes. People in both North and South Korea live in pain because of the crisis. Even if this crisis gets solved through the framework of the 6-party talks, it does not mean that people's security and peace is assured. People's grassroots campaigns and international solidarity to oppose war is the most secure way of making peace in northeast Asia.

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Chang-Sik Kim (aged 50)

In 1970 military training began in high schools across the nation under the military government. At that time Chang-Sik Kim, who was a Jehovah's Witness and high school student, refused the military training. He was forced to withdraw from school at the age of 17 in the same year.

Kim refused military service in 1974, and was sentenced to eight months in prison. On the very day he was released after having served the prison term, Kim was taken to the military training camp. He was forced to do 'weonsanpokgyeok' (maintaining one's body in an oval stance with his forehead and legs pushing the ground and with his hands holding each other around his back). He was beaten 50 strokes, sometimes even 150 strokes, a day.

After being brutally treated for 90 days, he was sentenced to three years in prison and he was transferred to the military prison. When he was beaten with his fists pushing the red bricks, the joints of his hands were often all skinned and his hands were bleeding.

Thus, Chang-Sik Kim was one of the many conscientious objectors who suffered brutal treatment and pain from soldiers who were biased toward patriotism.



Candlelight demonstration against war on Iraq in Seoul, 20 March 2003

Photo: Voice of People



Get involved!

Support COs in prison: co-alerts

In many countries, prison is still the fate of conscientious objectors. Thousands of COs are still in prison—in South Korea, Israel, Finland, Spain, and many other countries. Despite many countries having introduced laws on conscientious objection, many COs still face imprisonment, because they either don't fit into the authorities' criteria, or they refuse to perform any alternative service. War Resisters' International supports conscientious objectors who are imprisoned because of their conscientious objection, or face repression by the state or state-like entities.

Co-alerts, sent out by email as soon as the WRI office receives information on the imprisonment or trial of a conscientious objector, are a powerful tool to mobilise support and protest.

Co-alerts are available by email (to subscribe go to <http://wri-irg.org/mailman/listinfo>) or on the internet at wri-irg.org/cgi/news.cgi.

The WRI office also needs more information on imprisoned conscientious objectors from all over the world.

Get in touch with us at:

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Changes in Korea's treatment of conscientious objectors

Jung-min Choi

In January 2002, one year and 8 months ago an adjudication on the constitutionality of the current Military Service Act was filed. No judgement has been made yet. Although President Roh Moo-Hyun responded positively to alternative service when during his election campaign, his new government has not taken any concrete steps. There is a standstill on all levels.

In the past, punishment had been arbitrarily imposed on objectors whenever a new administration took office. However, with the growth of the conscientious objection movement we can witness many changes. The most obvious change has come in the area of punishment. Objectors had been sentenced to the maximum penalty, with no exceptions (The maximum penalty for conscientious objection varied under each administration. Since 1994 it is 3 years). Presently, judges pass sentences of 1 year and 6 months imprisonment. This can be regarded as the least penalty within the law because, according to the current military service act, one is redrafted when the sentence is

less than 1 year and 6 months.

Another big change is that from July this year the objectors were allowed to have religious services inside the correctional facilities. Most South Korean objectors have a religious background. The Seoul government firmly stuck to the position that no religious services should be allowed in the correctional facilities because the reason for their crime lay in their religion.

Presently, more and more cases of reservists refusing reserve duty have been reported. Their situation is worse. If a reserve soldier refuses to be mustered for reserve drills, he either pays a fine of up to 5 million won (about 4,000 USD), or is sentenced to up to 3 years in jail, according to Article 15, Clause 4 of the Establishment of Homeland Reserve Forces Act. Even after this initial punishment, the duty of serving in the reserve forces is imposed repeatedly until he reaches the age limit. This is a serious problem because of the repetition of punishment for the same offence. The accumulated amount of fines can be too much for an objector to pay and thus it can threaten his life.

Support Prisoners for Peace

Support War Resisters' International

Prisoners for Peace need our support. War Resisters' International needs your support to be able to support Prisoners for Peace!

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- Please send me a sample copy of *Peace News*



Please send your donation and this form to:

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Thank you for your solidarity