

DOCUMENT FROM KOREA

(The following document was written by the wife of Mr. Kim Kun Tae, leader of the Youth Alliance for the Democratic Movement, when she visited the National Council of Churches of Korea Human Rights Office following a chance encounter with her husband at the Seoul Prosecutor's Office, September 27.)

September 27, 1985

IN Jae-Keun, wife of Mr. KIM Kun-Tae

MY HUSBAND'S SUFFERING FROM TORTURE AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS

I am the wife of Mr. Kim Kun Tae, who was the first chairperson of the Korean Youth Alliance for the Democratic Movement, and is now a consultant for it.

My husband was kidnapped by the agents of the Anti-Communist Bureau of the National Police Headquarters at 5:30 a.m. on September 4, and was detained on September 7 under the accusation of having violated the National Security Law. After 20 days of extreme anxiety, I became impatient and ran to the Prosecutor's Office. It was at 2:30 p.m. September 26. I was frightened out of my senses when I saw him coming out of an elevator, being assisted by prison guards. He had difficulty in walking.

I asked him, "Are you badly hurt?" My husband just repeated, "It was too much. I was beaten so badly, so badly." He went on to say that from September 4 to 20, he had been tortured about ten times. The torture—including electric shock to his tightly bound body, water torture, being forced to swallow water laced with red pepper and salt, etc.—went on five to seven hours at a time. Furthermore, he was not allowed to sleep at all during this period, and got no food on the days when he was tortured. Because his health became critical toward the end of the period because of the continuous torture, the number of hours of torture each day was reduced to three.

These facts are what I was told by my husband while we were walking down the stairs of the Prosecutor's building. In the waiting room, I had a chance to see the heels of his feet. Those familiar heels were so badly smashed it made my heart weep. Although I could not see his body with my own eyes (because his clothes covered him), I was told that it was full of scars, especially around his elbows. He had received medical treatment between September 20 and 26, so he was probably in much better condition than before when I met him. God knows what he had to go through and how he must have looked in that bloody torture cell!

What made me tremble in fear and rage was the fact that among the clothes that I had managed to deliver to him, no underwear has been returned. [Note: for laundry. Prisoners' families in Korea are responsible for laundering their clothes]. What does this mean? It is certain that my husband's underwear has been stained with blood. Now I understand why my husband was not allowed to change his clothes in the prosecutor's office, but was forced to bring them to jail.

How is it possible for this officially registered brutal group of gangsters to exist in our world? Who on earth is able to give anybody permission to practice this monstrous crime of torturing? Whom, from this time on, is going to refer to "The Republic of Korea" as a nation under law? Those investigative agencies which manipulate innocent people and create crimes through torture are the ones who should be punished. The suffering faced by my husband is not just the suffering of all the people participating in the democratization movement but is intended as a serious threat and challenge to all the Korean people longing for democracy.

I appeal to everyone who loves freedom. What are we going to do with this violence we face now? How am I going to explain this fearful world to my seven-year-old son?