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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
 WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025

November 20, 1987

The Honorable George P. Shultz
 Secretary of State
 Department of State
 2201 C Street, N.W.
 Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We applaud the dramatic developments in South Korea in the last few months during which the government has made significant strides toward democratization, including the release of hundreds of political prisoners. We recognize and commend your efforts as well as those of Assistant Secretary Gaston Sigur in supporting these changes.

We are writing to express our concern about the continued detention in South Korea of many political prisoners who, based on the best available evidence, have not committed any real crime, but rather are the victims of government efforts to suppress peaceful expression of speech and assembly. Amnesty International knows of at least 40 such detainees whom it calls "prisoners of conscience," and believes many more exist among some 900 political prisoners who Korean sources estimate remain in prison.

We wish to encourage the Chun government's recent movement toward respecting the human rights of its citizens by urging the government to release all political detainees who have been unjustly detained for peacefully expressing or pursuing their political views. Many of them were tortured to extract confessions used against them in court, an illegal practice under Korean law and international law. Many of their trials fell short of legal standards required under Korean law and international law. Many were arrested on such vague charges as "caus[ing] social unrest" or "endangering the public," pursuant to the broadly worded language under the National Security Law and other laws.

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We strongly urge you, Mr. Secretary, to press President Chun to carry forward the positive policies implemented in recent months and to release all such political prisoners. Their release will remove any questions regarding the sincerity with which the Korean government has undertaken recent human rights actions. Moreover, a democratic process and sustained progress toward reaching a more equitable political system must be measured by improvements in the human rights and judicial areas as well as in the electoral system.

Attached is a list of 38 political prisoners like those described above. We encourage the Korean government to examine these cases--and others like them--with a view towards their release.

We would appreciate hearing from you within the next two weeks.

Sincerely,

Dennis DeConcini
United States Senator

Pete Wilson
United States Senator

Alan Cranston
United States Senator

Clair F.
United States Senator

Paul D. Wellstone
United States Senator

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