

SOUTH KOREA: Timeline of the persecution of JW conscientious objectors

JW.ORG (04.03.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2PHJrqw> – E.H. Jeong and K.S. Cha are the last two Jehovah's Witnesses that remained in prison after hundreds of their brothers were released last year. They should respectively be released on 20 August 2019 and 23 January 2020 if they serve their whole sentence (18 months).

1. January 18, 2019

Total of two of Jehovah's Witnesses serving prison terms for conscientious objection to military service.

2. December 24, 2018

Six Witness conscientious objectors who have served at least one third of their sentence released.

3. November 30, 2018

57 Witness conscientious objectors who have served at least one third of their sentence released.

4. November 1, 2018

Supreme Court acknowledges the right to conscientious objection based on genuinely held religious beliefs as "justifiable grounds" for refusing military service.

5. August 20, 2018

UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention renders a decision that the imprisonment of two Jehovah's Witness conscientious objectors is arbitrary since it is in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

6. June 28, 2018

Constitutional Court rules that Article 5, paragraph 1,

of the Military Service Act is unconstitutional, since it fails to provide alternative service.

7. November 3, 2015

CCPR adopts concluding observations, urging South Korea to provide an alternative civilian service program.

8. July 9, 2015

Constitutional Court considers whether certain provisions of the Military Service Act are constitutional.

9. January 14, 2015

CCPR adopts Views finding that South Korea violated Article 18 (right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and Article 9 (prohibiting arbitrary detention) of the ICCPR by denying 50 Witnesses the right to conscientious objection to military service and imprisoning them.

10. June 30, 2014

Twenty-eight cases pending with Constitutional Court on issue of conscientious objection to military service; 618 men imprisoned.

11. January 28, 2014

President grants a special amnesty and release on parole that shortens by a month or two the prison terms of about 100 Witness men incarcerated for conscientious objection to military service; 513 are imprisoned as of January 31.

12. November 2013

Total of 599 Witnesses detained for conscientious objection to military service.

13. April 2013

Seventy percent of Witness inmates are separated from the general prison population and placed in cells with fellow Witnesses.

14. October 25, 2012

CCPR adopts Views finding that South Korea violated Article 18 (right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion) of the ICCPR by denying 388 Witnesses the

right to conscientious objection to military service.

15. August 30, 2011

Constitutional Court decision finds that the laws that penalize conscientious objectors who refuse military service do not violate Korea's Constitution.

16. March 24, 2011

CCPR adopts Views finding that South Korea violated Article 18 of the ICCPR by denying 100 Witnesses the right to conscientious objection to military service.

17. January 15, 2009

Presidential Commission on Suspicious Deaths in the Military releases a report confirming the South Korean government was responsible for the death of five young Witnesses from 1975 to 1985 who were imprisoned for conscientious objection.

18. December 2008

South Korea overturns plan to introduce alternative service for conscientious objectors.

19. September 18, 2007

South Korea's Ministry of Defense announces plan to allow conscientious objectors who refuse military service on religious grounds to perform alternative service, promising to revise the military service law and army reserve law.

20. November 3, 2006

CCPR adopts Views finding that South Korea violated Article 18 of the ICCPR by denying two Witnesses the right to conscientious objection to military service.

21. August 26, 2004

Constitutional Court upholds the constitutionality of the law that punishes conscientious objectors.

22. 2001

Office of Military Manpower Administration discontinues forced enrollment, and prison sentences are reduced from a mandatory three-year sentence to a year and a half.

23. December 1, 1985

Kim, Young-geun dies as a result of the inhuman acts of

violence by the military during his imprisonment for conscientious objection.

24. August 17, 1981

Kim, Sun-tae dies as a result of the inhuman acts of violence by the military during his imprisonment for conscientious objection to military service.

25. March 28, 1976

Jeong, Sang-bok dies after severe beatings and harsh treatment by the military in response to his conscientious objection to military service.

26. March 19, 1976

Lee, Choon-gil dies after severe beatings by military policemen resulted in a ruptured spleen during his imprisonment for conscientious objection.

27. November 14, 1975

Kim, Jong-sik dies after severe blows and torture by military officers in response to his conscientious objection to military service.

28. 1975

President Park Jeong-hee institutes coercive military conscription, demanding 100 percent participation. Witness men are forcibly taken to military recruitment centers.

29. January 30, 1973

Enforcement of Special Act on Criminal Punishment for Violation of Military Service Act, increasing maximum length of imprisonment for conscientious objectors from three years to ten years. Subjects some to repeated conscription.

30. 1953

Imprisonment of conscientious objectors to military service by South Korea begins.

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