

Mr. Kwi-nam lee
Minister of Justice
Republic of Korea

Dear Sir,

The BetterAid platform, a global network of more than 700 CSOs around the globe, expresses deep concern over the blacklisting and consequent deportation by the South Korean government of eight Filipino civil society representatives on the 6th, 7th and 8th of November, 2010.

Mr. Paul Quintos, IBON International policy officer, and Mr. Jose Enrique Africa, IBON Philippines research head, were both denied entry to South Korea, despite having valid entry visas issued by the Korean Embassy in Manila, without any explanation from Seoul immigration officials. Aside from IBON officers, six other civil society representatives from other organizations in the Philippines were also deported and over 200 CSO representatives from various countries were banned from entering Korea.

All were scheduled to participate in the G-20 Seoul International People's Conference, the civil society counterpart to the G-20 Summit organized by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) and other legitimate Korean civil society organisations.

Government authorities have the power to arrest any number of individuals, including foreign nationals who engage in unlawful acts. But the South Korean government evidently chose to blacklist, detain and deport individuals not on the basis of any illegal actions they had committed but as part of the government's attempt to pre-empt mass demonstrations during the G20 Summit in Seoul. Civil society groups including Better Aid therefore view this as a repressive measure that muffles civil society voices and violates fundamental human rights including freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom from arbitrary detention, freedom from discrimination and the right of peaceful assembly.

Better Aid views this as contrary to the duty of the South Korean government to recognize, respect and provide an enabling environment for CSOs as stakeholders in development – a central issue taken up by the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness as well as the G20 and the counterpart workshops organized by CSOs in Seoul which the blacklisted and deported individuals were prevented from participating in. It is a blatant violation of the commitments made by governments in the Accra Agenda for Action in paragraph 13 to “broaden country-level policy dialogue on development”.

For BetterAid, this also raises concerns about the commitment of the South Korean Government to respect civil society as full and equal partners in the upcoming High Level Forum 4 (HLF 4) in Busan next year. As we are intent on bringing the voice of civil society to Busan for the HLF 4, we demand assurances from the South Korean government and the Working Party that none of us will not meet the same fate as our CSO colleagues who were arbitrarily blacklisted and deported from Seoul, or in any way marginalized and excluded from the HLF 4 process.

We demand that the Korean government issue an official explanation on the event that transpired and a formal apology for their decision to blacklist and deport CSO representatives last November 6-8, 2010. There should be formal reparatory measures to restore the integrity of the travel records of our colleagues. We also call on the Korean government to provide assurances that international and national CSO participation in the HLF 4 process, both formal and informal, inside and outside, and including preparatory activities shall be respected.

We thank you for your immediate action.

Signed:

BetterAid Coordinating Groupⁱ

ⁱ ***BetterAid Coordinating Group is consists of 31 national and global networks and platforms working on aid and development effectiveness. The BetterAid Co-chairs are Mr. Antonio Tujan of IBON and Ms. Cecilia Alemany of AWID.***