

3 October 2013

Individual Complaint to

- the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders;
- the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association;
- the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression
- the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Re: Republic of Korea - Suppression on the Villagers who are against Miryang 765kV Power Transmission Tower

We are writing to you today to express our grave concerns over the ongoing human rights violations against environmental defenders and villagers affected by the highly controversial construction of 765kV Power Transmission Tower in Miryang, the Republic of Korea.

Miryang is located at the southeast part of the Republic of Korea and close to Busan which is the second largest city in the country. Nuclear plant is being constructed in Busan and to transmit electricity to Seoul, 69 transmission towers are decided to be constructed in 5 villages of Miryang. Villagers have protested against the construction for eight years to protect their land and environment.

On 30 September 2013, the Korea Electric Power Corporation(KEPCO) reopened the transmission tower construction in Miryang after 126 days of suspension without proper consultation with villagers. As a result, human rights violations against environmental defenders and villagers have continuously reported since 30 September 2013.

Six environmental defenders were arrested between 2 October 2013 and 3 October 2013, while protesting against the construction of Miryang 765kV Power Transmission Tower, under the charge of obstructing official business.

1. Name of Alleged Victims

Environmental defenders including villagers who are against Miryang 765kV Power Transmission Tower are facing human rights violations. Below six environmental defenders were arrested during their peaceful protest on 3 October 2013.

- 1) Hong-chul PYON, Member, Green Party, Daegu Office
- 2) Sang-ok LEE, Member, Green Party, Daegu Office
- 3) Sang-hong LEE, Secretary General, Gyeongju Korean Federation For Environmental Movement
- 4) Soo-hee Jung, Secretary General, Busan Energy Justice Action
- 5) Min-jung KIM, member, Youth Left

6) Dong-ju CHAE, student, Pulmoo high school

2. Alleged violations committed against the victims (since 2 October 2013)

1) Arrested Environmental Defenders

From around 8am on 3 October 2013, around 30 environmental defenders including villagers were protesting against reopening of the construction. As helicopters continue to carry construction materials to the construction site, environmental defenders lay on the street as a form of protest.



Environmental defenders are lying on the ground.

Since the helicopters continue to transport construction materials, environmental defenders tried to enter the open-air storage yard and were arrested by the police. While arresting these environmental defenders, the police did not allow journalists to cover the situation and pushed journalists away.



Villagers tie their bodies with metal chain to prevent construction equipment from going into the construction site.

2) Human Rights Violation during enforced vicarious administrative execution

- As of now(3 October 2013 1pm Seoul time), around 2,300 police officers(25 squadrons) and 300 staffs of the KEPCO are dispatched to stop only around 200 environmental defenders who are against the vicarious administrative execution on the Miryang 765kV transmission tower.
- Environmental defenders and villagers who are staying at the protest site are frequently and easily isolated because the police did not allow bringing food, electricity, mobile or media facilities. Even though it is expected that there must be grave violation of human rights at the protest site, it is hard to document or monitor the situation.
- The police do not allow media activists and journalists from coming in and out of the protest site and therefore, it is difficult to cover the stories and document human rights violations in Miryang.
- Since the police took protest tents and necessary equipment for protest, environmental defenders and villagers(who are mostly in their 70~80s) are suffering from severe cold. As the transmission tower is constructed in the middle of mountain, the temperature of protest site is around 10°C. It is also difficult to make a fire for a heating because of the police and surroundings.
- On 2 October 2013 at around 1pm Seoul time, the police forced to demolish protest tents where villagers are staying. Environmental defenders including villagers cried out that there were people staying inside and urged the police to stop enforced vicarious administrative execution, the police continued to demolish the protest tent. As a result, Ms. Jung-sun MOON, a member of Miryang City Council tied her neck with wire to the protest tent to stop vicarious administrative execution.

3) Human Rights Violation at the Protest Site



Inside the protest tent. Villagers tie their neck with metal chain and tied it to the tent.

- Near the Miryang transmission tower construction site, there are seven protest sites. Around 10~30 environmental defenders and villagers are staying at each protest site. In total, around 150 people are protesting.

- All seven protesting sites are far from each other and most of them locate in the middle of mountain on a slope. Therefore, it is very difficult to identify safety and health condition of environmental defenders. Also, it is difficult to use phone and internet, it is difficult to publicize about what is happening in the protest sites.



Hand of Ms. Phil-ee YOON(age 81) which were injured during conflict with the police

- Villagers dig the ground and stay underneath, and/or they set up a protest tent and tie their body to the protest tents. They stay up all night and continue sit-in protest, which endanger their health condition bearing in mind that most of them are over 70~80s. Most of them are also women villagers.
- As it is quite chill during autumn in the Republic of Korea, temperature is very low especially at night and dawn. There are not enough heating facilities at the protest sites, and environmental defenders and villagers are suffering from cold.
- Currently, members of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea and human rights activists from civil society organizations are conducting fact finding mission at the construction sites, monitoring excessive use of force by the police and human rights violation of environmental defenders.

4) Hunger Strike

- At the construction site, three villagers started hunger strike to protest against enforced vicarious administrative execution by the police. (Ms. Young-ja KIM(age 57), Ms. Eun-hee SUNG(age 52), Ms. Nan-sook SHIN(age 50)). 3 October 2013 is their 3rd day of hunger strike. At around 12:40pm on 3 October 2013, Ms. Young-ja KIM had difficulties in breathing and was sent to the hospital. When she was sent to the hospital, a doctor at the protest site was accompanying and police asked a doctor to show his ID.
- In front of the Sangdong-station, Mr. Jung-kyu PARK(age 52) started a hunger strike. He is a chief of Geumoh Village. 3 October 2013 is his second day of hunger strike.
- After the press conference in front of the KEPCO on 2 October 2013 at 11am, Mr. Jong-hoe KIM, the chairperson of the Miryang Danjang-myeon Donghwajun Village Committee Against Power Transmission Tower, wife of Mr. KIM, and Catholic Priest Sung-jae CHO, co-representatives of Miryang Committee Against 756kV Power Transmission Tower, started hunger strike in front of the KEPCO, calling for stopping the construction of Miryang 765kV Power Transmission Tower.

4. Alleged Perpetrators

- The Korea Electric Power Corporation(KEPCO)
- The Ministry of Trade, Industry & Energy

5. Chronology of Conflicts related to the construction of Miryang 765kV Power Transmission Tower

- Nov. 2007: The Government approved construction of 765kV Power Transmission Tower line.
- Jul. 2008: First demonstration calling for rescinding the construction plan (Since the first demonstration, villagers had candlelight vigils for 119 times)
- Aug. 2008: The KEPCO started a construction.
- Dec. 2009: Conflict Mediation Committee was established.
- Nov. 2010: Promotion Committee to Improve Compensation System for Transmission Tower was established.
- 16 Jan. 2012: Mr. Chi-woo LEE, a villager, burnt himself to death in protest to the police's violence and oppression of government and the KEPCO.
- 7 Mar. 2012: Cessation of the Miryang 765kV Power Transmission Tower construction. (Since then, it repeated to restart and cease for 11 times.
- 5 Jun. 2013: A consultative group of experts was formed for 40 days. The consultative group included members recommended by each party; 3 from KEPCO, 3 from Miryang Committee Against 756kV Power Transmission Tower, 3 from the National Assembly. The National Assembly did not adopt the final report from the consultative group of experts.
- 20 Jul. 2013: Mr. Sang-jick YOON, the Minister of Trade, Industry & Energy, visited Miryang
- 11 Sep. 2013: Mr. Hongwon CHUNG, the Prime Minister, visited Miryang and announced his plan for compensation.
- 1 Oct. 2013: The KEPCO announced restart of the construction.

6. Who is submitting this information?

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