

# The End of Democracy in the Republic of Korea: Imminent Threat To Political Expression and Civil Rights

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PRESS RELEASE

[update below]

*A path breaking decision which will have far reaching impacts on civil and political rights in the Republic of Korea (ROK) is forthcoming.*

*A decision from the Constitutional Court in South Korea regarding the dissolution of the Unified Progressive Party (UPP) is imminent.*

On November 5, 2013, the South Korean government requested that the Korean Constitutional Court initiate dissolution proceedings against the Unified Progressive Party (UPP), the third largest political party in Korea, following the arrest of one of its members, the parliamentarian Lee Seok-Ki.



Representative Lee (image right) was accused (allegedly on trumped up charges) and later convicted of violating South Korea's national security law and for planning a future incitement of violence. The incitement of violence charge was reversed by the ROK Court of Appeals. His case is now pending on appeal before South Korea's Supreme Court.

A vote in favor of dissolution of the UPP by the Constitutional Court would carry significant implications for political expression and civil rights in South Korea. As a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, South Korea is obligated under international law to protect freedom of assembly and expression. After a year of hearings into the matter, there is little or no evidence that the UPP is a "threat" to the South Korean

constitutional or legal order, and there is a risk that dissolution would be little more than an attempt by the government to chill political speech with which it disagrees.

As part of its efforts to avoid dissolution, the UPP consulted with American lawyers and secured a legal opinion from the law office of Comar Law in San Francisco, which submitted legal opinions both to the Korean Constitutional Court as well as to the United Nations, asking that the judges side in favor of the rule of law and freedom of political expression.

#### UPDATE

We have just been informed that the UPP has been dissolved by an 8-1 vote of the Constitutional Court. It is a sad day for The Republic Korea which has been precipitated back to the era of martial law.

This decision is a de facto repeal of parliamentary democracy, whereby an opposition party can be silenced for opposing the policies of the ROK government of Mrs. Park Geun-hye.

UPP leader Lee Jung-hee said the ROK has been “degraded into a dictatorship,”

Political debate regarding the reunification of the two Koreas is considered to constitute treason.

President Park Geun-hye is the daughter of military dictator Park Chung-hee of the period of martial law, which is now being glorified as an era of successful economic growth.

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