



Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

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THE FLAME OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE BURNS ON: AFAD'S STATEMENT ON THE 37TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GWANGJU UPRISING

May 18 marks a central moment in the history of South Korea: the May 1980 Gwangju Democratic Uprising. The Gwangju Uprising was a wave of protests that took place in the southwestern city of Gwangju in May 18-27, 1980 that saw thousands of South Korean students, workers, mothers, teachers and farmers collectively deciding that they have had enough of the State's violence and repression, and revolted against a tyrannical military dictatorship that controlled the country for more than 18 years.

In an effort to quell the uprising, the government unleashed its arsenal of brutality. The army opened fire, assaulted, tortured and disappeared scores of civilians. An estimated 76 protesters were believed to have been disappeared, while 2000 were allegedly killed in the series of events. At the end of the 10-day uprising, the rebellion was eventually defeated, but not totally, since it served to intensify the growing rage of the South Korean people, a rage that drove the pro-democracy movement to victory.

The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) joins the People of South Korea in honoring the courage and love for freedom displayed by the participants of the May 1980 Gwangju Democratic Uprising. The light of their flame lives on in the hearts of freedom- and justice-loving people around the world, and it is the same flame that burns in the hearts of AFAD members as they trudge on the road towards a future where truth, freedom and justice reign, towards a world without *desaparecidos*.

Signed by:

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