



**SOUTHERN AFRICAN
LEADERS COALITION
FOR FAITH FREEDOM
AND JUSTICE
SALC-FFJ**

Urgent Joint Statement Against Arbitrary Detention

Issued by the Southern African Leaders Coalition for Faith, Freedom and Justice (SALC-FFJ)

We, the undersigned members representing a broad alliance of religious leaders, traditional fraternity, community leaders, legal professionals, human rights advocates, and civil society representatives from across Southern Africa, stand united in defense of human dignity, justice, the rule of law, and religious freedom.

We are deeply concerned by the ongoing targeted persecution and continued pre-trial detention of Chairman Man Hee Lee the 95-year-old founder and leader of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus in the Republic of Korea.

This case raises profound concerns regarding due process, the presumption of innocence, proportionality in the use of pre-trial detention, and the protection of freedom of religion. As documented in legal analyses and commentary, including those of scholar Massimo Introvigne, Chairman Lee has cooperated with the judicial process, yet continues to remain in detention despite his advanced age and deteriorating health. Continued detention of a frail 95-year-old religious leader is unduly harsh and may place his health, dignity, and overall well-being at significant risk.

This situation raises serious concerns under internationally recognised human rights standards, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly freedom from discrimination (Article 2), protection from arbitrary arrest and detention (Article 9), the right to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal (Article 10), protection against arbitrary interference with privacy, family, reputation, and honour (Article 12), and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 18).

It likewise raises concerns under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, including respect for human dignity (Article 5), freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention (Article 6), the right to a fair trial (Article 7), and freedom of conscience and religion (Article 8).

Furthermore, the continued detention appears inconsistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a legally binding treaty to which the Republic of Korea is a State Party. In particular, it contravenes provisions stating that pre-trial detention should not be the general rule (Article 9(3)), that all persons deprived of their liberty be treated with humanity and respect for their inherent dignity (Article 10), and that everyone charged with a criminal offence shall have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law (Article 14(2)).

The continued detention also appears inconsistent with the principles reflected in the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), which emphasise the humane treatment and dignity of all persons deprived of their liberty.



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As leaders from a region whose own history bears the scars of injustice, arbitrary detention, and the denial of fundamental freedoms, we cannot remain silent when these same principles are called into question elsewhere. Human rights are universal, indivisible, and deserving of equal protection regardless of nationality or religious affiliation.

We therefore urgently call upon **African human rights institutions, the Parliaments in Southern Africa, respective International Relations government departments in Southern Africa, international partners, and governments** to take the following actions:

1. Engage urgently with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, requesting that it examine the continued detention of Chairman Man Hee Lee.
2. Call upon the Republic of Korea to immediately consider appropriate alternatives to continued pre-trial detention, including bail or house arrest, in light of Chairman Lee's advanced age, health vulnerabilities, and internationally recognised standards.
3. Urge the Republic of Korea to expedite judicial proceedings while fully safeguarding fair trial guarantees.
4. Issue public statements and diplomatic communications encouraging full compliance with the Republic of Korea's obligations under the ICCPR and internationally recognised human rights standards.
5. Request the Governments of Southern Africa, through their respective Departments of International Relations, to formally raise these humanitarian and due process concerns with the Government of the Republic of Korea.

We stand ready to support all lawful and good-faith efforts that advance justice, due process, freedom of religion, and the humane treatment of all persons. We will continue to monitor developments closely and work alongside national, regional, and international partners to promote accountability and the protection of fundamental human rights.

Silence in the face of injustice is not an option.

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Southern African Leaders Coalition for Faith, Freedom and Justice (SALC-FFJ)

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