



## **KAESONG DETENTION AND THE PROTECTION OF ROK WORKERS**

North Korea announced on May 1 that it would step up its investigation of a South Korean employee of Hyundai Asan, identified by the surname Yoo, who has been held by North Korean authorities for 37 days.

A spokesperson from the North's Central Special Zone Development Guidance Bureau was quoted in an article run by the (North) Korean Central News Agency complaining, "South Korean authorities and conservative media have been reporting lately that the issue of Mr. Yoon's detention is a violation of agreements [between the two Koreas], or even a 'human rights infringement'." He countered, "Mr. Yoon entered the Kaesong Industrial Complex and maliciously attacked our highly noble regime, infringing on the Republic's autonomy and deliberately acted unlawfully...An investigation by relevant authorities will continue to intensify."

Responding to the South's accusation that detainment of Mr. Yoo is a violation of the inter-Korean agreement on entrance and sojourn procedures for the Kaesong Industrial Complex and Mt. Kumgang Tourist Resort, and that the North's failure to allow South Korean representatives access to the detainee is a human rights violation, the spokesperson accused Seoul of "a plot to distort the situation and blame us for the creating obstacles hindering inter-



Korean relations and the Kaesong Industrial Complex project.”

The spokesperson said the actions of the South Korean conservative media and authorities were “the pot calling the kettle black,” and warned, “If the South Korean authorities and conservative media continue to act this way, the situation could grow more serious, and nothing good for the Kaesong Industrial Complex will come of it. Unlike previous announcements, while North Korea did criticize the accusations of its violations of agreements and infringement of rights as being an “anti-republic plot”, it did not respond in detail, nor did it clarify whether it intends to recognize Mr. Yoo’s right to defend himself against his charges, or whether South Korean authorities will be allowed access to him.

By stating that Mr. Yoo’s actions were “serious”, however, the North implied that the incident may be drawn out for some time. According to inter-Korean agreements, “serious violation of agreements between the South and North will be handled by separate agreement between the two parties.” On April 30, North Korea announced that Mr. Yoo “criticized the noble dignity of the Republic’s political system” and tried to convince a female North Korean worker to defect.

ROK Unification Minister Hyun In-taek sharply criticized the North’s unilateral detention of the Hyundai worker, stating that the detention “is intrinsically related to the operation” of the complex. He promised to work on concrete measures to protect the safety of South Korean workers in the industrial complex.