

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

Human Rights Documentary Heritage 1980 Archives for the May 18th Democratic Uprising against Military Regime, in Gwangju, Republic of Korea

Ref N° 2010-26

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1 SUMMARY

Documentary items related to the May 18th Democratic Uprising, which took place in Gwangju, Korea between May 18th and May 27th, 1980, take the form of documents, photos, images, etc. regarding the citizens' uprising, punishment of the perpetrators, and compensation.

The events of May 1980 followed quickly upon the October 1979 assassination of President Jeong-hui Park at the hands of the director of the KCIA, one of his closest colleagues. The unforeseen death of a dictator who had taken control of the country following a military coup was expected to usher in an era of democracy long hoped-for by the people of Korea. Unfortunately, things unfolded differently. In the absence of authority, another military coup took place. Students and citizens from across the country were enraged by the situation and took to the streets in protest against the government. On May 18th, 1980 the people of Gwangju passionately protested against the nationwide imposition of martial law. The new military government responsible for the coup dispatched special force paratroopers to Gwangju in order to suppress a peaceful protest led by university students and citizens.

The paratroopers brutally and randomly assaulted men and women, old and young, regardless of whether or not they possessed sticks. Such attacks aggravated the situation further, and more and more people joined the demonstrations. On day five of the protest, May 21st, 1980, soldiers opened fire on citizens leaving hundreds of people injured or dead before being driven by massive resistance to a position outside the city. Gwangju was isolated from the rest of the country, surrounded by soldiers who allowed no vehicles or communication from outside until the troops re-entered the city on May 27th, 1980. Despite the blockade, people continued their ordinary lives, living as an autonomous community, cleaning the city, opening stores and shops, etc. Amazingly, not a single case of robbery or burglary was reported despite having no proper administration or security force. However, in the early morning of May 27th the community was brutally ransacked by paratroopers using tanks and helicopters. During 10 days of resistance, 165 citizens died in and around Gwangju. 76 people went missing, 3,383 were injured, and 1,476 were arrested, affecting 5,100 in total. In addition, 102 people later died due to injuries incurred during the siege. Survivors were far from unscathed with many reporting mental health problems such as auditory hallucinations, somnambulism, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, etc. Incidences of divorce and suicide were uncommonly high among survivors, suggesting that the physical and emotional trauma left an indelible mark on those who experienced events first-hand.

For years the military government enforced a strict prohibition on public discussion of the traumatic events of May 1980. However, the anguished cries of the bereaved families triggered a large scale democratic struggle that culminated in the citizens of Korea being awarded a direct vote in 1987. In 1989 the 'Gwangju Riot' was officially renamed 'the May 18th Democratic Uprising' by the President. In 1995 a special law pertaining to the punishment of the perpetrators (Act No. 5029) was enacted by the National Assembly. Around the same time, legal action was initiated against two former presidents and the senior staff responsible for the brutal suppression (sentencing of the Supreme Court, occurred in April 1997). Participants of the uprising who had been sentenced to severe punishment for rebellion were subsequently found not guilty. In 1990 victims of the May 18th Democratic Uprising

began to receive compensation for their losses (Act No. 4266), and in 1997 May 18th was designated as a national holiday. In 2002 the cemetery used during the May 18th Democratic Uprising became a national cemetery, and victims became eligible to receive benefits as people of national merit (Presidential Decree No. 17687).

References to the May 18th Democratic Uprising are divided into three types. First, there are documents produced by the government institutions that came to power after 1980. They include administrative documents of the central government as well as records of investigation and trial by military judicial institutes. These serve to demonstrate the nature of the government in and before 1980. All the documents recorded by public officials during and after the incident as well as situation reports and compensation-related documents showing the severity of the damage are included. Secondly, there are documents produced at the time of the May 18th Democratic Uprising (old statements, declarations, hand-written posters and reporters' notebooks) that reveal just how urgent and desperate the situation was. Particularly compelling are the photos by photographers and foreign correspondents that document the extent to which Gwangju was cut off from the outside world. Thirdly, there are documents produced by the National Assembly and Supreme Court aimed at restoring the reputation of the people and discovering the truth about the incidents that took place during the time of the military government following the May 18th Democratic Uprising.

So far books referring to the May 18th Democratic Uprising have been published. The references will be distributed to major libraries and institutes of Korean studies all over the world, and to all the libraries in Korea in order to promote new studies and awareness of the uprising. Democratization in Asia will be accelerated once documents relating to the uprising are registered as a UNESCO World Record Heritage Record.

2 *DETAILS OF THE NOMINATORS*

2.1 Individuals & Organizations

Nomination Committee for the May 18th Democratic Uprising Documents to the UNESCO Memory of the World

- Young-jin Kim /Chairperson/ National Assembly Member
- Un-tae Kang/ Mayor, Gwangju Metropolitan City
- Huy-gook Jang / Superintendent, Gwangju Metropolitan Office of Education
- Yoon Soo Kim / President, Chonnam National University
- Ho-jong Jeon / President, Chosun University
- Hyuk Jong Kim / President, Gwangju University
- Jun Tae Kim / President, May 18 Memorial Foundation
- Soo-man Chung / President, Democratic Association for Honorable Persons and Victims' Families
- Hee-seung Yang / President, May 18th Association for Detainees and Casualties
- Kyung-jin Shin / President, Association for the Wounded from May 18 Democratization Movement
- Sung-ryea Ahn / Director, May Mothers' House

2.2 Status of the Documentary Heritage Nominated

Original documents and copies of documents have been collected and preserved separately by 518 Archive of Gwangju City Hall, Archive of May 18 Memorial Foundation, and May 18th Research Center of Chonnam National University. The individual applicants and applicant organizations all represent the spirit of the movement in some way. Therefore, despite many hardships, they have endeavored to keep the documents intact. In addition, several other state organizations have retained some of the relevant documents, as have private individuals and civic organizations. When registered, the various documents will be kept in one place, Archives of May 18th Democratic Uprising, and will

be properly managed in order to contribute to the human rights awareness and progress of humanity.

2.3 Contact Person

Dr. Jong-cheol Ahn, Director, Nomination Committee for the May 18th Democratic Uprising Documents to the UNESCO Memory of the World

2.4 Contact Details

Address: Uncheon-ro 25, Seo-gu, Gwangju Metropolitan City, Republic of Korea

Phone: +82-62-376-6644

Fax: +82-62-376-6642

Email: 518unesco@hanmail.net

3 IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE

3.1. Name and Identification Details

Documents of May 18th Democratic Uprising

- 1) Documents produced by State Organizations
- 2) Records of the Military Court Martial and the “Conspiracy to Rebel” charge against Dae-jung Kim
- 3) Primary documents related to the Civil Resistance
- 4) Documentary photographs
- 5) Eye-witness testimonies of victims and witnesses
- 6) Medical documents for victims
- 7) Minutes of the National Assembly in the Truth and Reconciliation Process
- 8) Records of compensation for victims
- 9) Relevant documents from the United States of America

3.2. Description

1) Documents produced by State Organizations

These documents were produced by central and local government institutions during the May 18th Democratic Uprising. At the time, central government institutions sent instructions to local governments declaring martial law, asking for cooperation, and ordering the production of related documents. Documents produced by local government institutions such as the Jeonnam Provincial Office, Gwangju City Hall, etc. consist of daily records of May 18th, reports of damages, countermeasures, recovery status, burial plans and personal information relating to the dead. Local police arrested and indicted hundreds of citizens and students for violating the government’s decree against public protests. Documents including instructions regarding decree violators, records of the acquittal of decree violators and relevant procedures were produced by various government institutions. These are kept in the National Archives of Korea.

2) Records of the Military Court Martial and the “Conspiracy to Rebel” charge against Dae-jung Kim

Martial law was declared in 1980, and those who violated the law were tried by the military. Hundreds of people imprisoned during and after the uprising were brutally tortured in subsequent investigations. Most were sentenced to death by the military prosecution or sentenced to life imprisonment by the Military Justice Department. Other ordinary citizens were released with a warning. Records consists of investigation reports by the military prosecution, investigations of non-indictment, records of suspension of indictment, records of military trials, etc.

The new military government announced on May 21st, 1980 that the Gwangju Massacre had

been started by rebels in the Gwangju area under the leadership of Dong-nyeon Jeong and “Commie” Dae-jung Kim, who funded the riot and nurtured it into a public uprising. Daejung Kim was tried by the military for instigating the May 18th Democratic Uprising, and on September 17th, 1980 was sentenced to death for plotting the rebellion and attempting to overthrow the government. He was also found guilty and sentenced to death by the Supreme Court on January 29th, 1981. Due to the intervention of countries such as the United States of America, which urged the military government to suspend the death sentence, Dae-jung Kim was set free in 1982 and deported to the United States. The establishment of the Special Law Relating to the Gwangju Democratic Uprising (1995) helped restore Dae-jung Kim’s damaged reputation. Following his Presidential term in 2003, he applied for a retrial and was found not guilty in 2004.

3) Primary documents related to the Civil Resistance

These documents exposing the illegality and brutality of the military government were made at great risk by journalists and others. In carrying and keeping such documents people risked their lives because at that time the May 18th Democratic Uprising was considered to be a rebellion and Gwangju citizens were described as a mob. However, some brave people took that risk, and collected and preserved the documents which are now in bad condition. These references, which include pleas to citizens, letters about rallies, newsletters by the resistance, and newsletters by democratic citizens, describe the exact conditions of the May 18th Democratic Uprising, making them invaluable permanent sources of information.

4) Documentary photographs

Most of the photographs were taken by domestic photo journalists (Yonhap, DongA Ilbo and Jeonnam Ilbo) who risked their lives to capture the scenes in vivid detail. Photographs of people brutally murdered during the May 18th Democratic Uprising enraged citizens and served as a catalyst for launching fact-finding missions. Films depict the scenes even more clearly. Footage of Gwangju in May 1980 (such as that filmed by Jurgen Hinzpeter from NDR, Germany and others representing NHK, Japan) was broadcast worldwide. These films were later imported and secretly televised, playing a major role in revealing the truth about the May 18th Democratic Uprising.

5) Eye-Witness Testimonies by Victims and Witnesses

Testimonies were produced by survivors of the uprising and take the form of written words, recorded voices, and images. The collection consists of testimony from 1,500 people, including participants, observers, families of victims, etc. However, the number of victims exceeds 5,000 and testimony is still being collected. This work needs to be completed urgently because many are losing their memories due to age and the after-effects of the incident. These references are used not only for study but also for education. There is also testimony from foreign nationals (Henry Scott, Philip Pons, Mark Peterson, Arnold Peterson), US government personnel (Ambassador William Gleysteen, James Lilley, Donald Gregg, General John Wickam) and martial law military personnel.

6) Medical documents of Victims

These consist of records of the injuries sustained by citizens and students at the hands of armed soldiers and policemen. Those who were injured during the uprising were treated at nearby hospitals such as Chonnam National University Hospital, Chosun University Hospital and Christian Hospital. Those who were brutally tortured or assaulted were mainly sent to the Armed Forces Combined Hospital. Daily records and records of treatment are kept in the archives of the Gwangju Metropolitan City Hall.

7) Minutes of the National Assembly in the Truth and Reconciliation Process

In 1998 the Special Fact-finding Committee of the May 18th Democratic Uprising was organized, and a hearing was held. Documentary items related to the hearing are managed by the Secretariat of the National Assembly. In addition, the entire hearing process was televised live at the time, which greatly contributed to public understanding of the uprising. Original footage is kept at various TV stations, and recorded films are kept at the May 18th Archive of the Gwangju Metropolitan City Hall.

8) Records of compensation for Victims

In 1990, after the National Assembly passed the "Act on Payment for Persons Affected by the May 18 Democratic Uprising", the State Government and Gwangju City Government began compensating the victims. The recipients included families of the dead, the wounded and all of the detainees (5,100 people). The records produced by Gwangju City Hall amount to over 695,000 pages contained in 3,880 volumes. These have been preserved in their original form and are housed in the Gwangju City Hall Library.

9) Relevant Documents from the United States of America

The United States government was keenly interested in the May 18th Democratic Uprising in South Korea, receiving frequently updated reports from the US Embassy in Seoul and discussing countermeasures. Documents includes telegrams between the US State Department and the US Embassy in Seoul as well as references produced by the Ministry of National Defense and CIA.

4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1. Authenticity

Records of the May 18th Democratic Uprising describe the counteraction of citizens and students against the oppression and slaughter of the military forces. These documents were produced while military forces were oppressing citizens and were recorded by people on the spot, which is meaningful and significant in terms of historical research. There are also records filmed by foreign journalists and other third parties that reveal the exact situation, time and place of the incident.

Not only governmental organizations but also civic groups and citizens have volunteered to record and witness the events of the Uprising, which are indisputable, irreplaceable evidence within the history of democratic movements, human rights violations, and human rights movements.

4.2. Unique and Irreplaceable Heritage

The May 18th Democratic Uprising demonstrated the nobility of human life in the face of state violence that infringed upon people's dignity and rights. Their resistance against the military government under continuous threats and oppression later became the catalyst for democracy. In the history of humanity, victors tend to eradicate the records of those defeated in failed revolutions and uprisings in order to justify their actions and fabricate the facts, but in the case of the Gwangju Massacre, events have been recorded by Gwangju citizens and foreigners alike. Therefore, this is a very unique development in democracy which cannot be found elsewhere. Citizens fought off Special Forces armed with up-to-date weapons for 10 days and governed themselves as a civic community without burglary or looting. This ultimately helped to develop democracy and ensure human rights in the Republic of Korea.

The May 18th Democratic Uprising was a major incident that encouraged people to struggle on a large scale by continuously demanding fact-finding missions and punishment of the perpetrators, even after resistance was quelled and the military government continued its oppression. This, in the end, led to the transition from a military government to a democratic one. In other words, these efforts became a catalyst for a series of democratic movements and the development of democracy in Korea. People learned that the military should not intervene in politics and Korea became an example for those still struggling to achieve democracy.

4.3. World Significance

The May 18th Democratic Uprising not only played a pivotal role in the democratization of South Korea but also affected other countries in East Asia by dissolving the Cold War structure and

achieving democracy. After the 1980s various democratic movements took place in the Philippines, Thailand, China, Vietnam, and elsewhere in an attempt to follow in Korea's footsteps. Wardah Hafidz, secretary general of the Urban Poor Consortium in Indonesia said, "Growth of human rights in Korea after the May 18th Democratic Uprising is an example and a goal for human rights activity in Asia." Furthermore, Dandeniya Gamage Jayanthi, leader of the Monument for the Disappeared in Sri Lanka said, "The May 18th Democratic Uprising is a great source of inspiration in the human rights struggle. In particular, it helped to demolish conventional impunity omnipresent in East Asia."

Thus, the five major principles of 'fact-finding, 'punishment of perpetrators', 'restoration of honor', 'compensation' and 'memorial works' have become an example and criteria used to determine the rules of compensation for human rights violations by the UN Human Rights Commission (special report by Theo van Boven, 1992).

Records of the May 18th Democratic Uprising, from the outbreak of the incident and its suppression to fact-finding activities and compensation, are remarkable in terms of their diversity and the variety of the contents. For instance, preserved films vividly portraying the incident are invaluable (and perhaps comparable to the voice tapes of the Philippines). Also preserved is the Supreme Court sentencing, which condemned the leader of the opposition party to death (which may be compared to the sentencing of Nelson Mandela in South Africa). Cases of human rights violations voluntarily examined and recorded by various human rights groups (similar to human rights documents collected from Argentina, Chile and Paraguay) are rich in their variety and content. These documents serve as textbook examples democracy and human rights development.

Many scholars and human rights activists around the world point out that the May 18th Democratic Uprising was a turning point for democracy and human rights. Bruce Cummings, a professor at the University of Chicago said in a comment to the BBC (2005) that the May 18th Democratic Uprising helped South Korea escape dictatorship and America's control. George Katsiaficas, a professor at the Wentworth Institute of Technology said in a seminar (2000) that the Gwangju democratic movement was a historic road from the dictatorship era to democracy, and the energy is spreading worldwide. Edward Baker, consultant of the Harvard-Yenching Institute pointed out (2005) that the May 18th Democratic Uprising was a turning point at which Koreans changed their stance *vis-a-vis* dictatorship and America.

In order to preserve this noble spirit, the Gwangju Human Rights Award is presented annually to those who contribute to human rights in Korea and abroad. It has been awarded in May every year since 2000, and 50 million won (48,000 USD) has been given to each of the twelve awardees (including Aung San Suu Kyi) for the development of democracy and human rights. In addition, the Gwangju International Peace Forum is held annually to discuss human rights and democracy in the region. In addition, every year the May 18 Memorial Foundation selects ten Korean volunteers and sends them to different organizations in Asia and America to share the past experiences of Gwangju with others and help develop human rights-related programs.

In this way, records of the May 18th Democratic Uprising have contributed to the development of democracy and human rights.

4.4. Significance of Records

1. Time
 - a) Records of violation and infringement of human rights in the form of brutal assault, torture and slaughter of citizens and students by the martial army in the downtown area of Gwangju from May 18th to 27th, 1980
 - b) Records of human rights infringement such as torture, confinement and cruel treatment of those who participated in the uprising whilst awaiting military trial after May 27th, 1980

- c) Records of procedures regarding investigation of the uprising, restoration of honor of Gwangju citizens, compensation for victims, punishment of those responsible from 1980 through 1997.
2. Place
 - a) The history of the movement for democracy in the vicinity of Gwangju, Jeollanam-do, South Korea
 - b) The history of the nationwide movement for democracy including fact-finding activities and punishment of perpetrators
 3. People
 - a) Citizens and students who participated in the May 18th Democratic Uprising
 - b) Perpetrators who oppressed and slaughtered citizens and students
 - c) Democratic citizens of Korea who participated in the investigation of the uprising in order to bring democracy to Korea
 - d) Democratic citizens around the world who have visited or sought out Korea to learn about Korean democracy and examine the related records
 4. Subject/Theme
 - a) Democracy: Records of the citizen's uprising calling for suffrage and democracy and an end to the intervention of the military forces in politics
 - b) Human rights: Records of the struggle for the citizen's right to life and liberty, against the military government
 - c) Constitutional government: Records which set an example of the right to resist by demanding the withdrawal of the military government for its wrongful and illegal proclamation of martial law.
 - d) Cleansing of the past: Records of citizens of Gwangju and Korea who called for fact-finding investigations into the Uprising, the restoration of honor, compensation for victims and memorial projects
 5. Form and Style
 - a) Documents: Consisting of administrative, military and public statements which have been kept and used as bibliographical data.
 - b) Video data: VHS tapes directly recorded by international journalists. Eye-witness recordings by those who participated in the Uprising are in Beta-Cam/VHS format.
 - c) Oral statements: Eye-witness testimonies from those participated in the Uprising (i.e. casualties and those confined, some members of the military forces who took part in the oppression, and international citizens who observed the uprising) have been preserved in the form of audio data and transcripts.

4.5. Supplementary Conditions

1. Rarity:

Such records cannot be found anywhere outside Gwangju. There have been many uprisings in the world against military governments; however, few records have survived in their original form. When uprisings fail, it is usual that data maintained by victims is lost, but records of the May 18th Democratic Uprising have been preserved and still possess their original authenticity and vividness. These may be some of the few records maintained by victims.

2. Integrity:

Related data has been preserved without damage, but some data produced by the military government has not.

3. Threats:

- a) There is no danger of theft or damage unless some unavoidable event occurs such as fire.

b) In the event of another military government coming to power, there is a possibility that the data from the uprising would be considered 'harmful' and be discarded.

4. Management Plan:

Currently there are three main organizations and two government authorities which hold the data. In the event of UNESCO's recognition of the data as 'Memory of the World', a new facility tentatively named 'Archives of the May 18th Democratic Uprising'^{*} will be built to preserve them in a systematic and scientific way in accordance with ISO 9000.

^{*} 'Archive of the May 18th Democratic Uprising' or 'May 18th Archive' in short will be used throughout the document; however, a permanent name for the facility will be discussed later.