

Please Join in Making a Joint Statement to Stop
the Return of the Dictators' Heir to Power

**Expressing Concerns for Dictator's Heir Accessing to Power in Presidential Election
in South Korea in Dec. 2012**

Dear friends and colleagues

In the spirit of envisioning joint efforts of intellectuals beyond borders or 'borderless intellectuals in Asia', the National Association of Professors for Democracy (NAPD) in South Korea, wishes to undertake a signature campaign in 'Asia' and beyond in order to create this region away from the dangerous rise of the second-generation of dictatorship, presidential candidate Park Geun-hye, a daughter and heir of the late dictator Park Jung-hee of South Korea.

We are expecting your contribution as endorsement of this statement as early as possible. The campaign takes place until December 14, 2012. Afterwards, we want to announce this statement with many hundreds of scholars and activist-intellectuals around the world in December, 2012, and this will make a great impact in Korea and elsewhere. It would be highly appreciated if you would be kind enough to sign and endorse the attached statement.

We sincerely hope that such a campaign will make meaningful difference and we thank you in advance for your valuable cooperation.

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Please send your endorsement to Francis (dlee@pspd.org)
with your full name, institution, position, and country.

Statement of Intellectuals Who Remember the Yushin Dictatorship

A highly important election will be held in December in a country in Asia, known for its exemplary democratization, South Korea. This election, to elect a new President in a presidential polity, is likely to serve as a significant testing ground for the future of democratization not only in South Korea, but in Asia as well.

One concern is that the prominent presidential candidate of the conservative ruling party is none other than the daughter and heir of the late Park Jung-hee, the notorious dictator who took power by military coup and ruled the country with an iron-fist for 18 years. Park Geun-hye played not only the privileged daughter role of the dictator but acted as de facto first lady after her mother died. She won her way to the presidential candidacy through appealing to the voters with the successes of Park's regime and calling for restoration of its honor. She thus became the choice of oligarchic political forces who share the nostalgia of the authoritarianism that was Park Jung-hee's rule.

This is very exceptional in South Korea, compared to some other countries where it often a given that the second generation of powerful families gain access to power. Because in South Korea there has been a strong people's awareness against undue inheritance of political power has failed to gain ground. On the contrary, such a tradition has been opposed, while the children of the two previous Presidents have had to go through severe legal and public scrutiny of their business and political involvements.

We intellectuals around the world who remember the rule by terror of Park Jung-hee and his Yushin dictatorship, think that what is presently happening with the coming election in South Korea lays a dark cloud over the future of South Korean democracy. Contrary to the beautified stories that Park's followers make and spread, the days of Park's dictatorship were a series of political crises and Korean people had to suffer from totalitarian control and state violence that resembled the days of Japanese colonial rule.

South Korea of the 1960s and 70s was a tragedy. People in Asia and around the world witnessed the great violence created by the regime set up by a former Japanese military officer, Park Jung-hee, as innocent citizens, students and opposition leaders were subject to kidnappings, illegal detention, ruthless torture, threats and brain-washing. We still remember how South Korea was decaying from rampant corruption and closed-door politics, and how the whole society turned into a mega-military camp. What we remember now was, at that time, a shock and warning, and later, the ground for us to come and act together for democracy. However, we were fortunate to witness, afterwards, the great potential of the Korean people by means of which they eventually removed military dictators from power creating a democracy from below. We worked together with South Koreans to create our own democracy in our own countries. Similar upheavals of people in the Philippines, Taiwan, Indonesia and elsewhere converged and inspired each other in an Asian wave of democratization.

The possibility of the former dictator's heir becoming President in South Korea after 10 short years of democratic governments and a conservative government means more than a successful roll-back of non-democratic forces in the country. Despite great achievements, democracies in Korea and in Asia in general are incomplete and unstable democracies not able to clear up the legacy of old oligarchic political forces in each country. If a second-

generation takes power thanks to such a legacy in South Korea, it would signal denial of all that has been achieved by democratization from below and announce with a fanfare the come-back of oligarchic-monopolistic forces.

Just as democratization by people's power had a cross-border impact, in Asia, an all-out come-back of oligarchic forces will also likely have a spreading cross-border impact. This is more worrisome than before, because of the economic crisis and political instability that many countries face today that may easily look to an authoritarian come-back as a cure for their ills.

There is a vivid historical record of past military regimes in Asia seeking ways of justifying their oppressive rule by exaggerating security threats, expanding the military and militarism, equating domestic dissident views as national threats, and employing illegal methods of exercising violence against citizens, only to monopolize power, wealth and media into a few hands. The result was the devastation of the safety and basic livelihood of the common people. This record makes us look at the come-back of oligarchic forces in South Korea through nostalgia towards the late South Korean dictator as an ominous sign for the future of democracy in South Korea as well as elsewhere.

We strongly believe, though, that the majority of people in South Korea will stand up to stop this come-back. Our expressed concern comes from the shock that even coming close to the successful coming to political power of the former dictatorship's second generation is possible in a country like South Korea. This is because we all cherish the great transformation to democracy that the Korean people achieved from the June Struggle of 1987 onwards, with the establishment of powerful national human rights commission and comprehensive application of transitional justice processes to addressing the rights of the victims of state violence of the past. We also understand that the 10 years of democratic governments ironically led to the birth of the conservative government of Lee Myung-bak, because the democracy of those 10 years failed to address economic polarization, an employment crisis, worsening patterns of income distribution, an expansion of the irregular workforce and other socio-economic issues. The growth-and-competition-first agenda that conservative governments often use and re-use, like the Lee government in South Korea today, is a sad reminder of the resilient legacy of the past developmentalism that has long devastated, and could still devastate, the livelihood of common people.

In this light, we strongly hope that the Korean people will vote for a future-oriented model of democracy. We hope for this because future-oriented votes in South Korea will bring about hopes among friends in other countries. We believe our cross-border concern for democracy is a small step towards achieving genuine justice for people as well as a mutual support for continued development of democracy in other parts of the world. We also appeal for everyone to lend their support to this statement so that we can envision and create a world away from the dangerous liaison of crisis and oppression.