



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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South Korean captives hunger strike for change in Taliban prisons, 2007

Time period notes: *Although the end of the hunger strike was not documented by the press, all evidence points to the hunger strike ending on August 29, 2007, the date the Taliban released the South Korean hostages.*

August 19,
2007

to: August 29,
2007

Country: Afghanistan

Country: South Korea

Location City/State/Province: Ghazni Province, Afghanistan

Location Description: various locations in the Province

Goals:

The three hostages demanded that all 19 South Korean hostages be held together rather than in separate groups in various locations.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Hunger Strike

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Hunger Strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Hunger Strike

Methods in 4th segment:

- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Hunger Strike

Methods in 5th segment:

- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Hunger Strike

Methods in 6th segment:

- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast) › Hunger Strike

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- three hostages from a South Korean missionary group

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

The 3 hostages (1 male, 2 females)

Partners:

Not Known

External allies:

Not Known

Involvement of social elites:

Not Known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:

There is no information regarding whether any person or any group had joined the campaign or supported it.

Segment Length: *Approximately 2 days*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Taliban (commander Abdullah Jan)

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not Known

Campaigner violence:

Not Known

Repressive Violence:

During the hunger strike, violence utilized by the Taliban is undocumented. The threat, however, of murder was definitely always present.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

2 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

0 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

The campaigners were unable to unite all 19 hostages during their campaign. But it is likely that their campaign did in fact lead to their release (of course with the great aid of the South Korean government's negotiations). At the very least, it perhaps influenced the South Korean government to play a greater role.

Survival receives 1 point: The survival of infrastructure is not really applicable in this instance.

Growth receives 0 points: This campaign did not grow at all.

In 2007, three South Korean hostages of the Taliban launched a 10-day long hunger strike. Their goal was to unite all 19 of the South Korean hostages in one designated place, as opposed to being detained in different locations. The Taliban, meanwhile, demanded that South Korean forces remove themselves from Afghanistan and also that the Afghani government release all Taliban prisoners.

On July 19, 2007, the Taliban took 23 South Korean Christian aid workers from the Sammeul Community Church hostage in Afghanistan. Members of the Taliban hijacked the aid workers' bus on a road south of Kabul. They kept the hostages all together in a cellar. Later they moved the hostages to a farmhouse, and six days later, they separated the hostages into groups of 3 and 4 people. Overall, they moved the hostages 12 times, either via motorbike or on foot.

On July 25, 2007, the Taliban executed one of the hostages: South Korean pastor Bae Hyeong-gyu, the leader of the group. On July 30, after negotiations with the Korean and Afghani governments did not work, the Taliban killed another hostage named Shim Seong-min.

In mid-August, the Taliban actually released two female hostages, an action they called a "goodwill gesture". But the hostages were not satisfied. On August 19, 2007, three of the hostages (one man and two women) began a hunger strike. Their goal was to force the Taliban to bring together all of the hostages into one group. At the time, they were separated into as many as 5 groups and kept in various locations in the Ghazni province in Central Afghanistan.

The Taliban never united the hostages but did in fact release them on August 29, 2007, after successful negotiations between the South Korean government and the Taliban. South Korea agreed to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan as well as agreeing to discontinue sending missionary trips to Afghanistan. With the end of the hostage crisis, the three hunger strikers ended their campaign. They were relatively unsuccessful in their campaign because they could not unite the hostages during the ten days they were under Taliban control (from the start of the hunger strike to the end of the hostage crisis).

Research Notes

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Additional Notes:

When questioned about the hunger strike, the Taliban denied its hostages had launched a hunger strike campaign.

After the end of the hostage crisis, there was a considerable amount of backlash against the Korean missionaries for putting their country and government in a "bad position".

The U.S. gave support to the South Korean government during the hostage crisis.

Most information in the press and various journals covers the full hostage situation and focuses very little on the hunger strike. Yonhap (from South Korea) was the press that originally reported on the hunger strike. There are many gaps, however, in the actual campaign unable to be filled by public releases.

Throughout the campaign, the South Korean government greatly increased their "face to face meetings" with the Taliban.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Samantha Bennett, 24/04/2011

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