



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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South Koreans protest land seizure for United States military base expansion, 2005-2007

February

2005

to: March

2007

Country: South Korea

Location City/State/Province: Daechuri and Doduri Villages, Pyeongtaek Region

Location Description: Rural farming villages

Goals:

1. The South Korean government must stop the violent oppression of the farmers in Daechuri.
2. The government must discuss the proposed base expansion with its people through a legal and reasonable process.
3. The government must revise the Republic of Korea-United States Status of Forces Agreement immediately.
4. The government must admit the right of the farmers to live on their land and must stop the violent execution of the base expansion plan.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 025. Displays of portraits
- 026. Paint as protest › Public resistance art
- 034. Vigils
- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 048. Protest meetings
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 026. Paint as protest › Public resistance art
- 034. Vigils
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 026. Paint as protest › Public resistance art
- 034. Vigils
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 4th segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 023. Destruction of own property › Burning of citizenship cards
- 029. Symbolic reclamations › planting illegal protest crop
- 034. Vigils
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 138. Sitdown
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction › Barricaded a building
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction › Villagers laid down in front of backhoes and climbed on top of them
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 5th segment:

- 034. Vigils
- 041. Pilgrimages
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › protesters stood on the roofs of homes during police demolition effort
- 171. Nonviolent interjection › protesters tied to buildings to interject in police demolition process
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 6th segment:

- 034. Vigils
- 173. Nonviolent occupation

Notes on Methods:

The diversity of methods is likely the product of both diverse composition of the campaigner collective as well as specific situations that necessitated these tactics. For example, the protest plantings that the villagers did.

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Democracy

Economic Justice

Human Rights

Group characterization:

- villagers and outside human rights organization

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Village leader Kim Jae Ti, Pan-National Committee to Deter the Expansion of U.S. Bases leader Priest Moon Jung-Hyun

Partners:

Korean peace activists, Peace Wind Organization, student groups

External allies:

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch Korea

Involvement of social elites:

Korean actor Choi Min-Sik, Film Director Bong Jun-Ho

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Peace Wind activists
- Villagers

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Human Rights Watch
- Pan-National Committee to Deter the Expansion of US Bases
- Student groups
- external Non-Governmental Organizations

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: 4 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Korean national government, Korean Land Expropriation Committee, U.S. military

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Some of the external protesters clashed violently with police who were guarding the fence around the village when they tried to break through the fence.

Repressive Violence:

Police exercised violence against the villagers on multiple occasions. During the demolition efforts, many of the protesters who climbed on roofs or tied themselves to buildings were injured. In addition, police exercised violence against protesters trying to break through the fence.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

2 points out of 6 points

Survival:

0 points out of 1 point

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

Two points were awarded for success because the villagers were able to negotiate for personal compensation packages from the Korean government, in the form of both money and land. These packages were worth significantly more than what the villagers were originally offered to evacuate the land. The campaign grew significantly over time and gained a large body of external support and international attention.

When the United States proposed an expansion of its military base in the Pyeongtaek region of South Korea in 2001, it threatened to be the third time that the people of the region were to be displaced from their land. The people who lived in Pyeongtaek, primarily farmers, were first evicted when the Japanese occupied the region in World War II. Then they were forcibly displaced a second time in 1952, when the United States built its military base, Camp Humphreys.

In 2001, the United States proposed an expansion of Camp Humphreys in exchange for a withdrawal of American military personnel from the US Yongsan base in Seoul. The expansion was part of the US's new Global Military Strategy. Though the overall number of American troops in South Korea would be reduced, the expansion would necessitate the redeployment of 35,000 troops within South Korea

Between 2001 and 2004, the residents of Pyeongtaek and Korean peace organizations tried to fight the proposed expansion through legal means, but it was to little avail. On August 23, 2004, the Korean government held a public forum to discuss the proposal and offered the equivalent of \$13,000 dollars in compensation to each resident who was to be displaced. However, the residents of the region refused the monetary offer. Both sides held strong, and in December of 2004 the Korean government announced its plan to give the United States 2500-3000 acres of extra land in Pyeongtaek for the expansion, tripling the size of the base.

In February of 2005, members of the organization Peace Wind moved into the city of Daechuri, one of the towns within the zoned expansion area, to work with the residents and to help them organize their resistance campaign. The villagers transformed the town into a "peace village" with the support of peace activists, church members, and local artists. They painted murals and installation pieces all over the village. One of the main warehouses was home to posters, sketches, and paintings supporting the resistance effort. Inspirational phrases were also painted in various places around the town. One wall held hundreds of photos of the residents of Daechuri. Every night, residents and supporters gathered for a candlelight peace vigil in the village.

In December of 2005, the Korean Land Expropriation Committee approved of the seizure of the towns of Doduri and Daechuri for the purposes of the base expansion, making the residents' existence on the land illegal. In total there were over 500 households and thousands of residents in the zoned regions for expansion. On February 7, 2006, residents of Daechuri marched on the Daechuri City Hall. The villagers burned their Korean residence cards, revoked their citizenship, and declared Daechuri to be an autonomous town. They informally established the elementary school in town to be the headquarters of the campaign. The residents put forth several key demands. First of all, they demanded that the government stop the violent oppression of the farmers in Daechuri. Secondly, they demanded that the government must discuss the proposed base expansion with its people through a legal and reasonable process. Furthermore, the South Korean government must revise the Republic of Korea-United States Status of Forces Agreement immediately. Finally, the residents demanded that the government must admit the right of the farmers to live on their land and must stop the violent execution of the base expansion plan.

In March 2006, the Ministry of Defense and police forces began trying to occupy Daechuri. On March 6, they attempted to occupy the school where many of supporters were stationed. Farmers, residents, and peace activists barricaded themselves inside the school. A week later, 4,000 police entered the village and brought backhoes to begin gutting the rice paddies to prevent the farmers from planting that year's crops. Protesters climbed on the backhoes, and some laid down in front of the machines to stop the destruction of the fields. Residents used tractors as roadblocks and made human shields around the gates to the school. The police arrested approximately 40 people, and many of the protesters were injured in the conflict. On April 6, nearly 5,000 riot police forces returned to the town. They destroyed thousands of acres of farmland and cemented over the irrigation supply. Twenty more of the remaining 210 resisting households decided to take the cash compensation and evacuate the land.

In May, the government sent out letters to residents demanding that they evacuate the land by June. Furthermore, the government put a ban on farming on the land. In defiance, many farmers proceeded to plant a spring crop of rice on the remaining farmland. The government made clear its intent to clear the school grounds, stop the farming, and wrest control of the area from the farmers. Prime Minister Han Myeong-sook chaired a meeting of cabinet ministers to discuss the conflict.

On May 4, 13,000 Korean military troops arrived to guard the installation of a 29-kilometer wire fence around the farmland. Major roads into the town were blocked, isolating the residents and some supporters inside. 8,000 police were stationed on the outside of the fence around the clock, while 3,000 were on the inside. Protesters attempted to cut through the fence and incidents of violence broke out between the police forces and the resisters. Furthermore, Defense Ministry forces demolished the Daechuri elementary school, which had been serving as the organization headquarters for the resistance campaign. In total, police troops injured about 200 people and detained as many as 500 more. Amnesty International and the Human Rights Commission of Korea denounced the arrests and the violence against the protesters.

Following the May 4 actions, the activists, residents, and supporters involved formed the Pan-national Committee to Deter the Expansion of US Bases. The solidarity group was composed of 138 civic organizations. The group's leader was a Roman Catholic priest named Moon Jung-Hyun. Supporters began to hold actions all over Korea in support of the resistance effort. On May 13, 6,000 protesters held a candlelight vigil in Seoul, demanding the cancellation of the expansion and the release of 16 activists that were being detained. The next day, 3,500 protesters, mainly labor activists and university students, held a demonstration in Pyeongtaek. 18,000 police blocked the road and declared the protests to be illegal. About 1,000 students tried to get through the police barricade and enter the city of Daechuri. When they were unable to get through the barricade, they sat down in front of the police line. 120 residents from the village rallied on the other side of the police line. By May 16, there were still 70 households in Daechuri that were resisting the forced eviction.

In early June Korean officials arrested Kim Jae Ti, the village leader of Daechuri, as he was arriving at a meeting between residents of the towns of Daechuri and Doduri. In response some of the protesters, including Father Moon Jung-hyun, declared their intentions to hold a hunger strike while Kim remained in prison. Then on July 4, 50 members of the Pan-national Committee to Deter the Expansion began a five-day walk of 91 miles from the Presidential office of Cheong Wa Dae in Seoul to Daechuri. Simultaneous rallies were held outside the Defense Ministry in Seoul and the detention house in Pyeongtaek where detained protesters were being held.

In September, riot police staged the largest invasion of Daechuri, accompanied by private security forces and bulldozers. Their first target was the "human rights house" in the village. Villagers climbed onto the roofs of the buildings in the village to stop the demolition effort. Other protesters tied themselves to buildings, barricaded buildings, and sat in front of the demolition machines. Police entered the homes and arrested many of the activists and residents. Overall, the 22,000 police were able to demolish 60 homes, and many of the resisters were injured and arrested in the eviction attempt. However, 40 villagers and supporters were able to remain on the roofs of many of the buildings and were able to save 13 homes that the troops tried to demolish in the resistance effort.

Following the events in September, the number of resisting households began to slowly dwindle. In October, 38 of the remaining 92 households in Doduri agreed to move out in exchange for some monetary compensation every month for the next ten years, and a small piece of land outside of the expansion zone. The government moved forward to use the legal system to evict the 50

remaining resisting households in Daechuri, as their occupation of the land had been made illegal by that point in time.

In early January of 2007, government officials met with remaining households that were still on the land, 61 in total. They discussed individual compensation packages for each household. In February, all of the remaining households reached agreements to leave the land by the end of March in exchange for compensation. After holding candlelight peace vigils every night for three years, the last vigil was held in March 2007. Though estimates vary, as many as 74,200 protesters and resisters were involved in the resistance campaign at some point. While as many as 187,800 police were involved in the eviction process. As of March 2011, the expansion process is still under way in Pyeongtaek, and officials estimate the final transition may be complete by 2016.

Research Notes

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