



Japan Visual Journalist Association (JVJA)
1-21-2F, Kandaawaji, Chiyoda, Tokyo, Japan
Tel: +81-(0)90-6101-6113 Fax: +81-(0)3-3252-7651
URL <http://www.jvja.net> E-mail infojvja@yahoo.co.jp

Announcement of protest against unjustifiable restraints on a Korean photojournalist, LEE SI WOO, and urgent call for his release

We, members of JVJA (Japan Visual Journalist Association)- a group of freelance photojournalists/video journalists, oppose to the unjust restraints on the photojournalist in South Korea, based upon the principle of freedom of expression and reporting as JVJA declares.

We cannot contain our anger or shock against the fact that LEE SI WOO has been detained on suspicion of violation of the National Security Law and others since 22 April 2007, with a warrant issued by the Seoul Central District Court.

LEE SI WOO, as a professional photojournalist, has keenly reported on United States Forces Korea and UN force headquarter, and has published his photos and articles through various media such as Tongilnews, photobooks, his homepage. It should be known that “the leakage of national/military secrets” for which the authorities blame LEE, had already been “disclosed” in South Korea via the internet, as the media reports.

From what we gather, we believe that he has been detained not because of suspicion of violation of the National Security Law, but because of political suppression of his free speech and reporting. Therefore, we firmly call for his prompt release. At the same time, we strongly protest against the political suppression of free speech by the authorities.

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