**2007 South Korean hostage crisis in Afghanistan**

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Korean hostages photo taken before boarding the plane to Afghanistan

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The **2007 South Korean hostage crisis in Afghanistan** began on July 19, 2007, when 23 [South Korean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Korea) [missionaries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missionary) were captured and held [hostage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hostage) by members of the [Taliban](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban) while passing through [Ghazni Province](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghazni_Province) of [Afghanistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan). Two male hostages were executed before the deal was reached between the Taliban and the South Korean government. The group, composed of sixteen women and seven men, was captured while traveling from [Kandahar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kandahar) to [Kabul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabul) by bus on a mission sponsored by the Saemmul [Presbyterian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian) Church.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-0) The crisis began when two local men, who the driver had allowed to board, started shooting to bring the bus to a halt. Over the next month, the hostages were kept in cellars and farmhouses and regularly moved in groups of three to four.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-1)

Of the 23 hostages captured, two men, Bae Hyeong-gyu, a 42-year-old South Korean [pastor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastor) of Saemmul Church, and Shim Seong-min, a 29-year-old South Korean man, were executed on July 25 and July 30, respectively. Later, with negotiations making progress, two women, Kim Gyeong-ja and Kim Ji-na, were released on August 13 and the remaining 19 hostages on August 29 and August 30.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-2)

The release of the hostages was secured with a South Korean promise to withdraw its 200 troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2007. Although the South Korean government offered no statement, a Taliban spokesman claimed that the militant group also received some US$20 million in exchange for the safety of the captured missionaries.

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| **Contents**  [[hide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan)]   * [1 Negotiations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#Negotiations) * [2 Release](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#Release) * [3 Response](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#Response) * [4 Timeline](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#Timeline) * [5 List of hostages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#List_of_hostages) * [6 References](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#References) * [7 See also](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#See_also) |

**[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: Negotiations)] Negotiations**

As South Korea was already scheduled to withdraw its 200 troops by the end of the year, the Taliban's initial demand was only that they hold to this plan, but later also sought the release of 23 Taliban militants from prison. South Korean representatives in Washington DC requested a meeting with Afghanistan Kidnap / Ransom experts from [SCG International Risk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SCG_International_Risk) on August 1. SCG then began advising the South Koreans on ways to resolve the crisis.[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]

The Taliban issued and extended several deadlines for the release of the prisoners, after which they threatened to begin killing the hostages. Freedom for the militants was ruled out when it was apparent the Korean negotiators could not secure the release of Afghan prisoners, as Afghan president [Hamid Karzai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamid_Karzai) had previously faced criticism for freeing five rebel prisoners in exchange for an Italian hostage.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-3)

Face-to-face meetings between the Taliban and South Korea began on August 10, resulting in the release of two female hostages, Kim Ji-na and Kim Gyeong-ja, on August 13. However, on August 18, a spokesman said that the talks had failed and the fates of the hostages were being considered.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-talks-fail-4)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan&action=edit&section=2)**] Release**

The freedom of the remaining nineteen hostages (fourteen women and five men)[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-5) was secured on August 28[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-allrelease-6) with the participation of [Indonesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesia) as a neutral [Muslim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim) country. They were eventually released on August 29 and August 30.

After the release, a Taliban official announced that South Korea had paid the Taliban more than US$20 million in [ransom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ransom) for the lives of the hostages.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-7) However, South Korea stated that they have made a promise with the Taliban that they would not make any statements about the ransom.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-8)

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan&action=edit&section=3)**] Response**

Public gatherings were held in Korea during the capture to pray for the safety of the hostages. [Muslims residing in Korea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Korea) also expressed their grief regarding the incident and avow that the acts of the Taliban are against the principles of Islam.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-9) Many Koreans nevertheless held numerous protests and demonstrations outside the [Seoul Central Mosque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seoul_Central_Mosque). [[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-10)

On the other hand, many Koreans were critical of the hostages, as the hostages were conducting Christian missionary service in Islamic Afghanistan despite the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's repeated warnings that Taliban has plans to kidnap Koreans in order to free imprisoned militants.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-11) [Protestant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant) Churches in general also come under intense criticism in South Korean society.[[1]](http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=10166&size=A)

Among these criticising the deal from the government as a dangerous precedent was the [bishop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop) of [Taejon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taejon) and chairman of [Caritas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caritas_%28charity%29) Corea Lazarus You Heung-sik.[[2]](http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=10166&size=A)

The execution of the two hostages also provoked outrage in much of the rest of the world.

**[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: Timeline)] Timeline**

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* On July 19, 2007, a number of South Korean citizens are reported to have been were captured by the Taliban from a public bus traveling in the [Ghazni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghazni) Province, from [Kandahar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kandahar) to [Kabul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabul), and held hostage.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-12)
* On July 20 the Taliban demanded that all South Korean forces be withdrawn from Afghanistan within 24 hours and also that Afghan president [Hamid Karzai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamid_Karzai) release all Taliban inmates.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed)]
* On July 21 South Korean president [Roh Moo-hyun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roh_Moo-hyun) gave a national televised speech informing the public of the kidnappings.[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*] The Taliban reduced its demand to twenty-three Taliban prisoners in exchange for the lives of the hostages.
* On July 24 the [Taliban](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliban) demanded a sum of $100,000 in exchange for the right to contact the hostages via phone. The South Korean government refuses.[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citation_needed" \o "Wikipedia:Citation needed)*]
* On July 25 one of the South Korean hostages was executed. South Korea's foreign ministry identified the victim as 42-year-old South Korean pastor [Bae Hyeong-gyu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bae_Hyeong-gyu), who was the leader of the group.[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-13)
* On July 29 a final deadline was set by the Taliban for July 30, 0730 [GMT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GMT).[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-14)
* On July 30 the Taliban extended the deadline for the seventh time by 4 hours to 1130 [GMT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GMT) to give Afghan officials more time to negotiate.[[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-15) A Taliban spokesperson later announced another male hostage had been killed because the government did not cede to the group's demands.[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-16)[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-17) This was later confirmed when the body of 29-year-old [Shim Seong-min](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shim_Seong-min) was found in the village of [Arzoo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arzoo) (50 miles from where the kidnapping took place).[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-18)
* On July 31 the deadline was extended to August 1, 0730 [GMT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GMT).[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-19)
* On August 1 South Korean officials meet with [SCG International Risk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SCG_International_Risk) Kidnap / Ransom consultants at the South Korean Embassy in Washington DC.
* On August 1, 1200 [GMT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GMT), another deadline passed, while the local governor said the Taliban militants have agreed to a face-to-face meeting requested by South Korea's ambassador".[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-20) [North Korea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korea) also called for the release of the hostages.[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-21)
* On August 2, 1200 [GMT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GMT), Korean hostage negotiators agreed to direct talks with Taliban kidnappers in Afghanistan.[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-22)
* On August 10, 1600 [GMT](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GMT), the Taliban began the first round of face-to-face talks with a South Korean team concerning the hostages. The talks were held in an area under the control of the Afghan government in Ghazni province.[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-23) Two top Taliban leaders and four South Korean officials met at the office of the Afghan Red Crescent in Ghazni, along with four members of the International Committee of the Red Cross ([ICRC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Committee_of_the_Red_Cross)).[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-24)
* On August 13, two female hostages were released as a goodwill gesture.[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-2-released-25) The Taliban had originally decided to free Lee Ji-yeong, but she allowed another hostage to take her place.[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-26)
* On August 18, the Taliban announced that the face-to-face talks with the South Koreans had failed and that they were considering the fate of the remaining hostages.
* On August 28, a breakthrough in the negotiations was announced with the Taliban agreeing to release the remaining hostages on the condition that South Korea withdraw its two-hundred non-combat troops within the year and suspend missionary work in Afghanistan. Indonesia was a neutral Muslim party in these negotiations.
* On August 29, a total of twelve hostages were released.[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-12-released-27)
* On August 30, the remaining seven hostages were released, bringing an end to the crisis.
* On September 1, South Korean President [Roh Moo Hyun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roh_Moo_Hyun) called Afghan President [Hamid Karzai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamid_Karzai) and Indonesian President [Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susilo_Bambang_Yudhoyono) to thank them for their help in getting the hostages released. Karzai praised the negotiation of the South Korea government.[[29]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-28)
* In December 2009, the South Korean defence ministry announced the army would return to Afghanistan with 350 troops in 2010 to protect South Korean civilian engineers working on reconstruction. These troops would not engage in any fighting except to protect the aid team and be backed by helicopters, armoured vehicles and an unmanned reconnaissance drone to protect the 100 civilian engineers and 40 police. The South Korean contingent would be based in [Parwan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parwan) province, just north of Kabul for 30 months from 1 July 2010.[[30]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan#cite_note-29)

**[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2007_South_Korean_hostage_crisis_in_Afghanistan&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: List of hostages)] List of hostages**

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| **Romanized name** | **Name in** [**Hangul**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hangul) | **Name in** [**Hanja**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanja) | **Gender** | **Birth year** | **Status** |
| Bae Hyeong-gyu | [배형규](http://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/%EB%B0%B0%ED%98%95%EA%B7%9C) | 裵亨圭 | Male | 1965 | killed on July 25, 2007 |
| Shim Seong-min | [심성민](http://ko.wikipedia.org/wiki/%EC%8B%AC%EC%84%B1%EB%AF%BC) | 沈聖珉 | Male | 1978 | killed on July 30, 2007 |
| Kim Gyeong-ja | 김경자 | 金慶子 | Female | 1970 | released on August 13, 2007 |
| Kim Ji-na | 김지나 | 金智娜 | Female | 1975 | released on August 13, 2007 |
| Ryu Gyeong-shik | 류경식 | 柳慶植 | Male | 1952 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Ko Sei-hoon | 고세훈 | 高世勳 | Male | 1980 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Lyu Jeong-hwa | 유정화 | 柳貞和 | Female | 1968 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Lee Seon-yeong | 이선영 | 李善英 | Female | 1970 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Lee Ji-yeong | 이지영 | 李智英 | Female | 1970 | released on August 29, 2007 (offered to be freed August 13) |
| Han Ji-yeong | 한지영 | 韓智英 | Female | 1973 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Lee Jeong-ran | 이정란 | 李貞蘭 | Female | 1974 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Lim Hyeon-ju | 임현주 | 林賢珠 | Female | 1975 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Cha Hye-jin | 차혜진 | 車惠珍 | Female | 1976 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| An Hye-jin | 안혜진 | 安惠珍 | Female | 1976 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Seo Myeong-hwa | 서명화 | 徐明和 | Female | 1978 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Lee Ju-yeon | 이주연 | 李週妍 | Female | 1980 | released on August 29, 2007 |
| Je Chang-hee | 제창희 | 諸昌熙 | Male | 1969 | released on August 30, 2007 |
| Song Byeong-woo | 송병우 | 宋炳宇 | Male | 1974 | released on August 30, 2007 |
| Seo Gyeong-seok | 서경석 | 徐京石 | Male | 1980 | released on August 30, 2007 |
| Kim Yoon-yeong | 김윤영 | 金允英 | Female | 1972 | released on August 30, 2007 |
| Pak Hye-yeong | 박혜영 | 朴惠英 | Female | 1972 | released on August 30, 2007 |
| Lee Seong-eun | 이성은 | 李成恩 | Female | 1983 | released on August 30, 2007 |
| Lee Yeong-gyeong | 이영경 | 李英慶 | Female | 1985 | released on August 30, 2007 |

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