

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/south-korea-journalists-prosecuted-for-14-01-2015,47479.html>

---

Asia - South Korea

SLAPP

## Journalists prosecuted for covering murder case involving president's relatives

14 January 2015

---

Reporters Without Borders condemns the criminal defamation proceedings against two independent journalists, Kim Ou-joon and Choo Chin-woo, that have been under way for more than a year. President Park Geun-hye's brother, Park Ji-man, accuses them of insinuating that he was involved in the 2011 murder of his cousin.

They were acquitted on all charges in a jury trial last year but the prosecutor appealed, without presenting any new evidence, and a Seoul high court judge is due to issue a verdict on 16 January.

**Kim** presents Naneun Ggomsuda, a podcast created in April 2011 (20 months before President Park's election), in which **Choo** criticized inconsistencies in the investigation into the murder of Park Ji-man's cousin, Park Yongchul.

According to Choo, the police failed to account for many facts and contradictions that cast doubt on the investigation's hasty conclusions. Claiming he had been defamed, Park Ji-man sued both of them.

*"This prosecution is a crude manoeuvre designed to dissuade journalists from doing their job in a matter of public interest,"* said Benjamin Ismail, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Asia-Pacific desk.

*"The work done by Choo and Kim could not only shed new light on the murder but also expose an attempt to hush up the case. The courts must recognize the media's right to cover public interest matters, regardless of their sensitivity. They must also refrain from applying defamation laws that provide for jail sentences and thereby encourage self-censorship and endanger freedom of information."*

The Korean Union of Media Workers [issued a statement](#) on 7 January accusing the authorities to trying to intimidate the two journalists, who have received international support from various quarters including well-known US philosopher and political commentator Noam Chomsky.

[Chomsky called their prosecution](#) "a serious attack on freedom of press" and, referring to South Korean democracy, said "some of its achievements are being undermined."

A petition for the journalists' acquittal can be signed [here](#).

South Korea has been falling in the [Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#) for the past three years and is now ranked 57th out of 180 countries.

(photo: Makiko Segawa)

---