

Dozens injured, One in Critical Condition

as S. Korean Police Turns Deadly on Protestors



A 67-year-old farmer is rendered unconscious after diluted capsaicin was blasted on his face through a high-pressure water cannon. He went through brain surgery and is in a coma. (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)

1. Massive Anti-Government Protest in Seoul



Last Saturday, on November 14th, despite the rain and chilly weather, over 80,000 (police estimate) citizens gathered from all over the nation to stage the largest anti-government protest since the candlelight demonstrations in 2008. Led by the “People’s General Uprising Rally Headquarters” organized by 52 labor, peasant and civic groups, 333 civil and social organizations held peaceful rallies in various areas in downtown Seoul.

2. President Park’s Announcement to Revive State-Issued History Textbooks Brings All Together

President Park’ Geun-hye’s approval rates are at the lowest since her inauguration in 2013, but being constitutionally barred from seeking a second term in 2017, the strongman’s daughter is doggedly pushing ahead with her agenda. The sluggish economy and President Park’s business-friendly policies that continue to widen the gap between the rich and the poor have



Protesters start to gather to march towards the Blue House. (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)

long been a concern for various sectors of the society. But it was President Park’s decision to restore the honor of her assassinated dictator father Park Chung-hee (1961-1979) by forcing state-issued history textbooks upon middle school and high school students that caused widespread public alarm and led to students, parents, laborers, peasants, small business owners and those living in poverty to come together after their respective rallies to march toward the Blue House.

3. Illegal “Great Wall of the Police” Set up Again

To “protect” the Blue House despite the non-presence of the president who was on yet another trip abroad, the government mobilized over 20,000 riot police, 700 buses and 20 fence trucks. In another act to

“normalize the abnormal” (the government’s pet phrase for the past year used even to rationalize state-issued history textbooks), the Park administration



set up a police truck/bus barricade - an act ruled unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court four years ago.

4. Clashes begin as Citizens Try to March Forward



Protesters start to gather to march towards the Blue House. (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)



Water cannons firing diluted capsaicin targets single protester. (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)

Diluted capsaicin and coloring agents were shot out through high pressure water cannons. At times it sprayed protesters including the elderly, women and children randomly, but once a target was set, the cannons joined forces to hit one person directly. As a result of direct blasts, at least

two people with fractures, a reporter with broken teeth and many people suffering from lacerations were rushed to hospitals in ambulances. Numerous others were treated by medics from the Korean Federation Medical Activist Groups for Health Rights and sent to hospitals or went for medical treatment on their own. According to these medics they were unable to treat those who suffered skin and eye injuries from the capsaicin because there were thousands of them.

5. Police Aims, Hits and Renders Farmer Unconscious

But the real violence was yet to come. At 18:56, after about 2 hours of blasting water cannons, the police targeted and hit 67-year-old Baek (Emmanuel) Nam-Gi straight in the face from a mere 7-8 meters distance and continued to blast away at him as he fell. He fell with a broken nose



Water cannon shifting aim towards Baek (Captured shot courtesy of OhmyTV)

and was knocked unconscious as he hit his head on the asphalt. Yet the police still blasted diluted capsaicin on the motionless Baek, pushing his body back about a meter.



Diluted Capsaicin hits Baek's face directly. (Captured shot courtesy of OhmyTV)



Water cannon still blasting Baek as he falls with a broken nose. (Captured shot courtesy of OhmyTV)



Police continue to target the motionless Baek. Baek's blue vest has been pushed up and hangs from his arms. (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)

6. Police Continues to Blast Capsaicin at Rescue Attempt



A fellow protestor reaches Baek who is still being blasted with capsaicin. (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)



Police still blasting away... (Photo courtesy of Voice of the People)

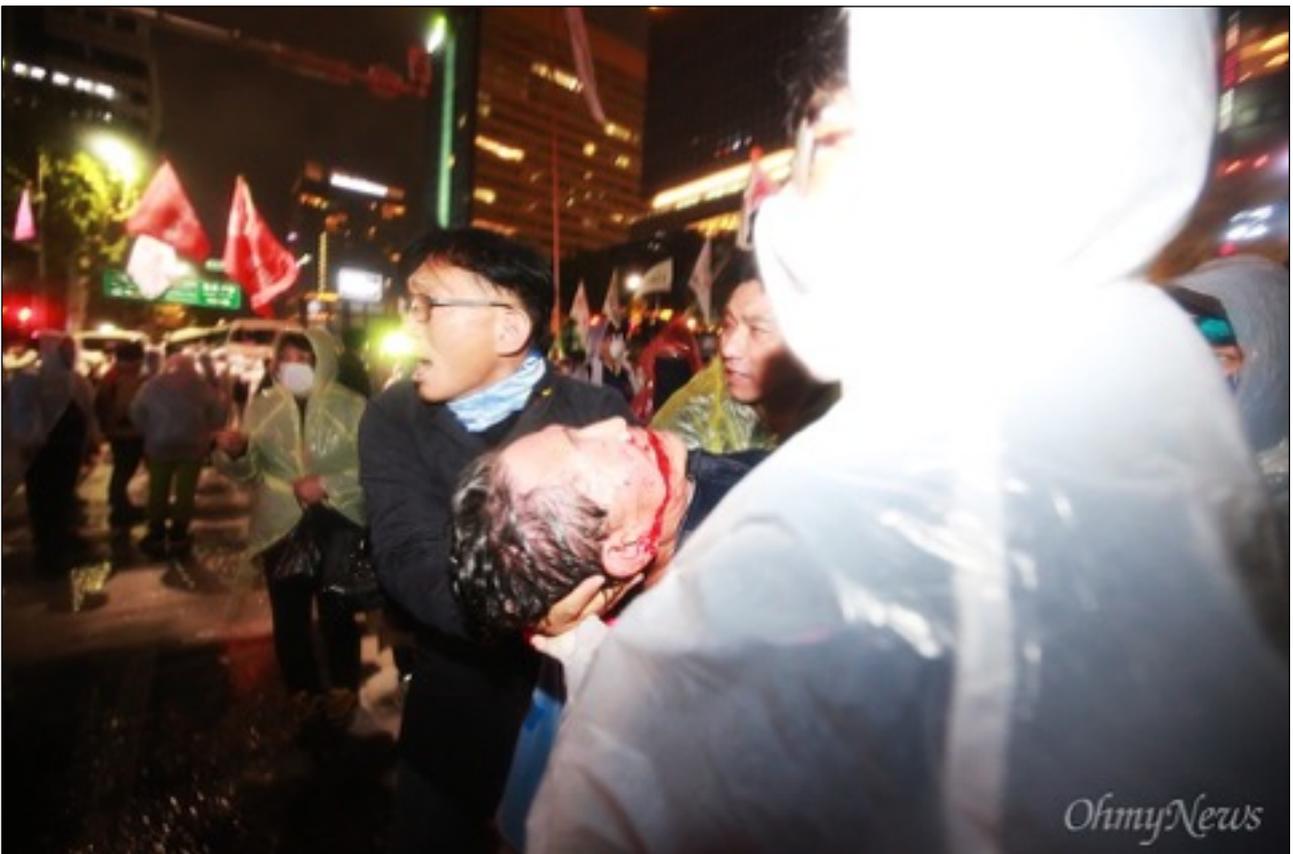


...and away... (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)



...and away... (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)

7. Farmer Baek Nam-Gi Finally Rescued



Baek, bleeding from his nose and mouth, is being rushed to safety by fellow protestors and a reporter. (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)

Fellow protesters and a reporter were finally able to carry Baek to safety shouting for a doctor. An ambulance arrived about 10 minutes later

at 19:08 and Baek was carried to the Seoul Nat'l Univ. Hospital where he went through brain surgery. He is now in a coma. Yesterday, two days after his surgery, doctors told his family to prepare themselves for the worst.

8. Baek: Oppressed by the Father...

The general and former Japanese army officer who participated in cracking down on those fighting for Korea's independence in Manchuria Park Chung-hee changed the whole life of law school student Baek.



Park Chung-Hee in the Japanese army (left) and in the 1961 military coup (right, in sunglasses)

To become president for life after grabbing power in a coup

in 1961, Park Chung-hee shut down universities with the tank-led military in 1971, declared a state of emergency and passed the infamous Yushin



Tanks at Korea University (right) and Park Chung-Hee swearing himself in as the de facto president-for-life as Park Geun-hye watches on from the far right in 1972 (left).

Constitution in 1972. By 1973, Baek was wanted by the police and expelled from Chung-Ang Univ. for his anti-Yushin activities. Reinstated, Baek was arrested and expelled a second time in 1975 and worked for monasteries, abbeys and vineyards until he was reinstated again in 1980 after Park's assassination the previous year. Baek was almost immediately arrested by the military and expelled for the third and final time the same year after organizing protests calling for the punishment of Yushin forces. Since then, he has lived in his hometown as a farmer and activist, later becoming the vice president of the Korea Catholic Farmers Movement and president of the Movement to Protect Domestic Wheat.

9. Baek: ...Fighting for His Life Because of the Daughter



Tens of thousands peasants from all over the nation at the Farmers Rally before the march. (Photo courtesy of the KPL News)

When Baek left Bosung with fellow farmers early in the morning of November 14th, to participate in the Farmers Rally, his demands were straight forward and anything but illegal: for the government to stop importing rice for human eating, stop the ratification of the Korea-China FTA and preparations to join the TPP, and to resume agricultural exchange with North Korea, etc. But what came back to him and other protesters was brutal violence. What came back to him was deadly state violence. As of November 20th, Baek is still in a critical condition.



Another protester who was knocked over by a water cannon is being carried away to safety. (Photo courtesy of OhmyNews)



Water cannon blasting away at the injured being moved into an ambulance. (Photo courtesy of Voice of the People)

10. Fighting for Justice

The government has yet to apologize for its illegal use of force. To the police, blasting Baek for over 20 seconds after he collapsed is a “regrettable incident”; to a ruling party lawmaker (he has been very public, but we will refrain from naming him), the Korean police were acting more reservedly

than their counterparts in advanced nations who don't hesitate at shooting those who pose a threat to official forces and even if they had, they should be found innocent and true to their duties as courts in advanced countries have ruled.



The November 15th press conference against state violence. (Photo courtesy of the KPL News)

Numerous peasant organizations, human rights NGOs and catholic organizations have set up camp in front of the hospital where Baek is being treated. Many farmers who came to Seoul for the November 14th rally still haven't made it back home and they are vowing not to return home until they can do so with Baek.



In front of Seoul Nat'l Univ. Hospital where Baek is being treated. (Photo courtesy of KPL News)

"Hoping for Farmer Baek Nam-Ki's Recovery" (Photo courtesy of KPL News)

We would be grateful if you circulate this as widely as possible, pray for Baek with us and watch on as we continue our fight for justice, human

rights and a more equal world where such desperate protests are no longer needed.

Thank you. - The Korean Peasants League (KPL) -