



**COMMUNICATION**

by

**Mr KIM Min-ki**  
**Secretary General of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea**

on

**“Overcoming Emergency Martial Law and  
Restoring Democracy in the Republic of Korea”**

**Geneva Session**  
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## ***Introduction***

Honorable Members of Parliament,  
Distinguished Secretaries General,

I am Kim Min-ki, Secretary General of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea.

At the ASGP session two days ago, I spoke about the events of December 3 last year, when an unlawful declaration of martial law was made in the Republic of Korea, and outlined how the National Assembly, through constitutional procedures, overcame this crisis and safeguarded our democracy.

It is profoundly meaningful for me to have this opportunity today, at the invitation of the IPU, to address this distinguished assembly and share our experience once again.

## ***Illegal and Unconstitutional Imposition of Extraordinary Martial Law***

On December 3, 2024 at 10:28 p.m., then-President Yoon Suk-yeol declared extraordinary martial law through an emergency address to the nation.

In his speech, he strongly accused the National Assembly of having become a den of criminals, paralyzing the nation's judicial and administrative systems through legislative dictatorship, and plotting to overthrow the liberal democratic system. Then, through an emergency proclamation, he issued an unconstitutional order imposing a total ban on citizens' assembly and association, restricting freedom of the press and publication, authorizing arrests and detentions without warrants, and prohibiting the political activities of the legislature and local councils.

At the same time, President Yoon mobilized more than 1,800 police officers to blockade the parliamentary complex and prevent National Assembly Members and Secretariat staff from entering. In addition, more than 190 Special Forces were deployed to the National Assembly by helicopter, and over 400 armed martial law troops entered the parliamentary grounds in an attempt to neutralize the legislature.

He also sought to seize control of the National Election Commission by deploying martial law troops and attempted to arrest key political figures, including Speaker Woo Won-shik.

## ***National Assembly's Response to and Lifting of the Emergency Martial Law***

The National Assembly responded swiftly to the President's declaration of martial law, undertaking the necessary measures pursuant to constitutionally prescribed procedures.

Immediately after the declaration, I issued an emergency mobilization order for Secretariat staff. At the time, I was resting at home, some 50 kilometers away from the National Assembly. At once, I took a taxi and arrived there within 38 minutes.

Following my emergency call, more than 1,000 Secretariat staff, parliamentary aides, and party officials

broke through the police blockade and entered the parliamentary compound - arriving even faster than the martial law forces. They began preparations for a potential emergency and for holding a plenary session. Speaker Woo, I, and key senior officials of the Secretariat had held a series of meetings since the previous summer to prepare for such a situation. These preparations proved invaluable.

That night, countless citizens also gathered in front of the legislature to show their support, despite the freezing winter cold and the late hour.

Promptly after the martial law declaration, Speaker Woo spoke with me on the phone and said, "Let us end this emergency martial law tonight." He then called upon all Members to convene in the Plenary Chamber immediately.

However, the Speaker and many Members were unable to enter the parliamentary complex through the gates due to the police blockade and had to climb over the outer fence. Despite these challenges, 190 Members eventually gathered in the Plenary Chamber to pass the *Resolution Demanding the Lifting of the Extraordinary Martial Law*.

At 11:57 p.m., Speaker Woo addressed the nation, despite the urgency of the situation, declaring that "the National Assembly will take action in accordance with constitutional procedures in response to the President's emergency martial law declaration," which was both unconstitutional and unlawful. He also sought to ease public anxiety by urging citizens to trust the National Assembly and calmly monitor developments.

Meanwhile, martial law troops deployed to the National Assembly attempted to enter the parliamentary building. Parliamentary aides, party officials, and Secretariat staff resisted fiercely - physically blocking and barricading entrances, and spraying fire extinguishers and fire hydrants to repel the troops. I went outside the Main Building to confront the troops directly and to supervise our efforts to defend the legislature.

Having received the order to forcibly remove Members from the Plenary Chamber, martial law troops broke office windows as they stormed the building around 12:34 a.m. By 12:41 a.m., some had reached the Rotunda Hall leading to the Plenary Chamber, but they were met with determined resistance from Secretariat staff and aides defending the Chamber.

At 01:01 a.m., amidst the chaos, Speaker Woo announced the passage of the resolution demanding the lifting of extraordinary martial law, in accordance with the Constitution and the National Assembly Act. Out of a total membership of 300, all 190 Members present voted unanimously in favor. The National Assembly thus nullified the declaration of extraordinary martial law just two hours and thirty minutes after it was proclaimed.

This was made possible by the Speaker's calm and carefully-coordinated response, the Members who risked their safety to gather at the National Assembly, as well as citizens who rallied in support of the legislature despite harsh weather conditions.

As the Secretary General responsible for mobilizing human, physical and institutional resources on the night of December 3, thereby enabling the National Assembly to lift martial law, I take great pride in

having overseen the legislatures' effort to restore democracy.

### ***Efforts of the National Assembly and the Republic of Korea in Restoring Democracy***

The mobilization of police and military forces to blockade and seize the National Assembly, along with the unconstitutional emergency proclamation, far exceeded the constitutional and legal limits of extraordinary martial law. The National Assembly suppressed the unconstitutional and unlawful martial law and subsequently led the process of restoring democracy.

On December 14, the National Assembly passed a motion to impeach President Yoon Suk-yeol, suspending him from office. Following impeachment proceedings by the Constitutional Court, he was officially removed on April 4, 2025. Subsequently, Korea held a democratic election, paving the way for the inauguration of a new administration led by President Lee Jae-myung on June 4, 2025.

On June 5, the National Assembly enacted the Special Prosecution Act to uncover the facts behind the unconstitutional and unlawful imposition of martial law and to hold those responsible accountable. A special counsel team has been investigating this case in accordance with the law since June 12.

Former President Yoon has been arrested and is standing trial on charges of leading an insurrection. Former ministers, intelligence officials, and military officials who led, aided or abetted the act have also been arrested or remain under investigation.

All of this was possible because the National Assembly suppressed the unlawful martial law through democratic procedures. Had the National Assembly failed to resolve this situation by adopting a resolution that night, the outcome could have been the exact opposite.

### ***Closing: The Resilience of Democracy Demonstrated by the Republic of Korea***

After the collapse of prolonged authoritarian rule in 1987, democracy firmly took root in Korea. The unconstitutional and unlawful actions of a sitting President came as a profound shock to the Korean people and served as a valuable lesson that democracy can come under threat again unless we remain vigilant.

The National Assembly stood as the final stronghold of democracy and protected the people at a moment of crisis. The swift decision of the legislature and the trust of the people helped restore democracy in our country.

Today, there is a growing concern around the world that democracy is in crisis. I wish to emphasize that when democracy comes under threat, the international community must respond with even greater solidarity and cooperation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the many parliaments around the world that offered words of confidence and support when the National Assembly lifted martial law on December 3 last year.

Distinguished Members of Parliament,

Secretaries General,

The Republic of Korea will continue to fulfill its responsibilities as a leading member of the international community. The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea will remain steadfast in safeguarding and advancing democracy.

We ask for your continued trust and support for Korea and the National Assembly.

Thank you for your kind attention.