

# THE HANKYOREH

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## Teachers' union delivers a second emergency declaration

As teachers endorsing the statement on the current state of national affairs increase to 28,600, Education Ministry says disciplinary action is unavoidable



» Members of the Korea Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU, Jeon Gyo Jo) publicly release their second emergency declaration in Seoul Plaza, July 19.

The Korean Teachers and Education Workers' Union (KTU, Jeon Gyo Jo) issued a second emergency declaration on the current state of national affairs Sunday, with the endorsement of 28,600 teachers from across the nation. Given the harsh disciplinary measures handed out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) over KTU's first emergency declaration issued on June 18, observers are concerned about a precipitating clash.

KTU publicly released its second declaration and demanded a guarantee for the freedom of expression in a press conference held in Seoul Plaza in front of Seoul City Hall at 2:00 p.m. Sunday. The declaration contained the signatures of 28,635 teachers, an increase from the 17,147 signatures collected for the first declaration. The union plans to print a list of the

names of the teachers who endorsed the Tuesday declaration in their union newsletter "EduHope."

The teachers stated in the declaration that teachers, as citizens, have a right to freedom of the press and freedom of expression. They are arguing that threats of disciplinary action against the 17,147 teachers who endorsed the first declaration is a misuse of public power that destroys the basic democratic order.

They are also saying that if the Lee Myung-bak administration is sincere about its willingness to communicate, it would listen to the justified perspectives of teachers, and not attempt to suppress them. They demanded a removal of the punishment issued against teachers who participated in the first emergency declaration, an end to educational policies that prioritize the privileged, a guarantee of the democratization of school management, and the suspension of competitive school policies that include the establishment of autonomous private high schools.

Lee Seong-hee, head of the Education Ministry's bureau on school autonomy, said punishment against the teachers was unavoidable since the teachers' declaration was in clear violation of both the National Civil Servant Law, which bans collective activities and mandates the maintenance of professional sincerity and dignity, and the Educational Workers Union Law, which bans political activities.

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