

# South Korea's presidents make disgraced exits

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — If there's one thing South Korean presidents dread more than the looming threat of rival North Korea, it may be this: becoming an ex-president.

Nearly all former presidents, or their family members and key aides, have been embroiled in scandals at the close of their terms or after leaving office. There have been corruption allegations, coups, and even a suicide and an assassination.

Now, South Korean prosecutors say they believe current President Park Geun-hye, facing historic levels of unpopularity approaching her last year in office, conspired in the criminal activities of a confidante who allegedly exploited her presidential ties to force businesses to donate money to two foundations she controlled.

Here's a look at the troubles faced by South Korean presidents over the years:

## Syngman Rhee (1948-1960)

A U.S.-educated Christian leader who campaigned for Korean liberation from Japanese colonial rule, Rhee became South Korea's founding president in 1948, with help from Washington.

Rhee staged vigorous campaigns to fight communism but later turned authoritarian and, critics say, resorted to corruption and nepotism to cling to power. He won his fourth presidential term in 1960 amid widespread allegations of vote rigging. Nationwide student demonstrations forced him to flee to Hawai'i, where he died in 1965.



AP Photo/George Sweezy, File



AP Photo/Alan Young-Joon, File



AP Photo/Kun-ai-hyung, File



AP Photo/Lee Jin-man, File

**CORRUPTION & SCANDAL.** If there's one thing South Korean presidents dread more than the looming threat of rival North Korea, it may be this: becoming an ex-president. Nearly all former presidents, or their family members and key aides, have been embroiled in scandals at the close of their terms or after leaving office. There have been corruption allegations, coups, and even a suicide and an assassination. Pictured are former presidents (L-R) Syngman Rhee (1948-1960), Roh Tae-woo (1988-1993), Chun Doo-hwan (1980-1988), and Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008).

## Park Chung-hee (1961-1979)

A former Japanese colonial army lieutenant and primary school teacher, Maj. Gen. Park took power in a coup in 1961, which ended a brief period of civilian rule after Rhee resigned.

Park, the father of the current president, was credited with laying the foundation for South Korea's economic growth. But his critics point out that he also arrested and tortured dissidents. He was assassinated by his spy chief during a drinking party in 1979.

## Chun Doo-hwan (1980-1988)

Maj. Gen. Chun and his military cronies rolled tanks and troops into Seoul to seize power in a coup that ended the interim government of acting President Choi Kyu-hah.

Chun had himself elected president in a gymnasium filled with a pro-government electorate. In 1987, massive pro-democracy demonstrations forced him to accept a constitutional revision for direct presidential elections.

After his tenure ended, Chun spent two years in exile in a

remote Buddhist temple as calls mounted to punish him for corruption and human-rights abuses.

## Roh Tae-woo (1988-1993)

Roh, Chun's army buddy and handpicked successor, won the 1987 election, thanks largely to divided votes among opposition candidates. He presided over the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

In 1995, both Chun and Roh were arrested on charges of collecting hundreds of millions of dollars from businessmen while in office. They were also indicted on mutiny and treason charges stemming from Chun's coup and a bloody 1980 crackdown that killed hundreds of pro-democracy protesters in the southern city of Gwangju.

Chun was sentenced to death and Roh to 22 1/2 years in jail. They were pardoned in December 1997.

## Kim Young-sam (1993-1998)

Kim's election formally ended military rule. He arrested Chun and Roh and launched a widely popular anti-corruption campaign.

His mismanagement of the economy, however, helped precipitate the 1997-1998 financial crisis that toppled some of the country's debt-ridden conglomerates and forced the government to accept a \$58 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

He left office amid rock-bottom popularity with his son arrested and jailed for corruption.

## Kim Dae-jung (1998-2003)

Sentenced to death by a military tribunal under Chun, Kim rose to the presidency and held an unprecedented summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il in 2000; he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize that year.

He left office tainted by corruption scandals involving aides and all three of his sons and dubious cash remittances to North Korea shortly before his historic inter-Korean summit.

## Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2008)

Roh committed suicide in 2009, a year after leaving the presidential Blue House, amid allegations that his family members took \$6 million in

bribes from a businessman during his presidency.

Roh's older brother was sentenced in 2009 to two-and-a-half years in prison for influence peddling during Roh's presidency. He was later pardoned.

Roh was impeached in 2004 on allegations of incompetence and illegal electioneering. But the impeachment triggered a strong public backlash that helped his party win big in parliamentary elections. The Constitutional Court then ruled that his actions did not warrant removal from office.

## Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013)

Toward the end of his term, Lee, who campaigned on an anti-corruption platform, watched his only son and an elder brother come under fire for alleged irregularities in funding Lee's retirement home.

Another brother was arrested on separate allegations of taking bribes from bankers and served a 14-month prison term.

Lee called the corruption scandals involving family and aides "heartbreaking."

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## Philippine court urged to order remains of Marcos exhumed

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Human-rights victims who suffered during the rule of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos filed petitions asking the Supreme Court to order the exhumation of his remains that were buried November 18 at the country's Heroes' Cemetery. They also wanted the court to hold officials and his heirs in contempt for carrying out the burial before the court heard final appeals against it.

Former President Fidel Ramos, who played a key role in the peaceful army-backed revolt that ousted Marcos in 1986, called the former leader's burial at the military-run cemetery "an insult" to the sacrifices of soldiers and veterans.

Left-wing former lawmaker Saturnino Ocampo and other activists urged the court to hold Imelda — the widow of Marcos — their three children, defense secretary Delfin Lorenzana, and two military officials in contempt for "the hasty, shady, and tricky" burial of the long-dead president at Heroes' Cemetery.

The petition said they should be fined and detained for mocking the legal process that gave petitioners 15 days to appeal the court's November 8 ruling allowing the burial.

Opposition representative Edcel Lagman, who represents another group of petitioners, sought a court order to have the remains exhumed "because the hasty and surreptitious interment was premature, void, and irregular."

He asked that the remains be examined to determine if they are not a wax replica.

The secrecy-shrouded burial at the cemetery reserved for presidents, soldiers, and national artists shocked democracy advocates and human-rights victims, prompting street protests in Manila and other cities.

Marcos's rule was marked by massive rights violations and plunder. After being ousted in 1986, he fled to Hawai'i, where he lived with his wife and children until he died in 1989.

Groups opposed to the burial called for a national day of protest at Manila's Rizal Park and in other parts of the country. Organizers urged Filipinos to join the protest and hold President Rodrigo Duterte accountable for allowing the burial and the Supreme Court for obscuring "the crimes of the dictator."



**COVERT BURIAL.** Human-rights victims who suffered during the rule of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos have filed petitions asking the Supreme Court to order the exhumation of his remains that were buried November 18 at the country's Heroes' Cemetery in suburban Taguig city, east of Manila, the Philippines. They also want the court to hold officials and his heirs in contempt for carrying out the burial before the court heard final appeals against it. Pictured are supporters of Marcos attending a mass at the graveyard of the late dictator a day after he was buried in a secrecy-shrouded ceremony. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

Ramos, 88, who led soldiers in turning against Marcos in 1986, told reporters the burial was an insult and a "trivialization of the role, the sacrifices of our armed forces, (police), coast guard, veterans."

Ramos, a supporter of Duterte, expressed hope that Imelda will apologize to the Filipino people and contribute whatever ill-gotten wealth remains with the family to help compensate human-rights victims and their descendants.

Also in late November, the Philippine government's top historian resigned to protest the president's decision to allow the burial of the dictator in the cemetery. Maria Serena Diokno said in her resignation letter that she would join protests against the burial.

Diokno, who was chairwoman of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, said Duterte could have blocked the burial despite a Supreme Court decision that dismissed petitions against the entombment.

Diokno said the burial was wrong and "mocks the collective action we took to oust the dictator."

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