

Release Date	Upon Announcement	Announcement Date	November 29, 2022
Division in Charge	International Criminal Affairs Division	Head	Director LEE, Ji Hyung
		In Charge	Prosecutor IM, Hana

Suspect of “Suitcase Murders” Surrendered to New Zealand -Swift and stern law enforcement for the criminal case of global interest-

- The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea surrendered the suspect of “Suitcase Murders” (female, age 42, New Zealand national) to New Zealand yesterday evening (November 28, 2022). LEE is charged with alleged murders of two children and is to stand trial before the New Zealand Court, after the bodies of the children were found in suitcases in a storage facility last August.
- The MOJ has provided “Dual-track Cooperation” for this case: significant pieces of evidence were secured and provided without any delays upon the request of New Zealand through Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, while the suspect was being surrendered to New Zealand through Extradition.
- This extradition case lays a firm basis for a globally high profile case to be resolved in a swift manner through thorough compliance with the treaties and laws of the two countries, close communication channel between the MOJ and New Zealand authorities and a prompt decision made by the Justice Minister, HAN Dong Hoon.
- The MOJ will provide full support for criminal extraditions from and to Korea, which is expected to increase with the ease of COVID-19 restrictions, so that thorough investigations and trials take place for international fugitives. Moreover, the MOJ will spare no efforts in global endeavors to counter transnational crimes by expanding its international cooperation network.

- LEE is the main suspect of a murder case in which two children's bodies were discovered in August 2022, in the suitcases in a storage facility in Auckland, New Zealand. The New Zealand Court charged her for the deaths and issued an arrest warrant.
- In September 2022, the MOJ received a request for provisional arrest from the Government of New Zealand. After reviewing the request, the MOJ determined there are sufficient grounds and ordered the Seoul High Prosecutors' Office to provisionally arrest LEE.

< Provisional Arrest >

- ▲ Ground : Article 9(1) of the Treaty on Extradition between the Republic of Korea and New Zealand
 - ▲ Significance : A requested party may hold in custody the person sought for extradition on the condition that a formal extradition request would be registered by a requesting party within a certain period of time under the treaty.
 - ▲ Process : Request for Provisional Arrest submitted by a requesting party → Provisional arrest enforced by a requested party → Formal Extradition Request arrives within a certain period of time of the arrest (45 days under the Treaty between Korea and New Zealand) → Extradition processed or rejected
- On September 15, 2022, after the Seoul High Court issued a provisional arrest warrant, the Seoul Central Prosecutors' Office arrested LEE per the Seoul High Prosecutors' Office's request and simultaneously confiscated the evidentiary materials requested by the New Zealand authorities.
 - Having discussed and reviewed evidentiary relations with the New Zealand authorities in real-time, the MOJ received the official Extradition Request from the New Zealand Ministry of Justice (Minister Kiri Allan) within the time limit.
 - During this process, the MOJ also received a Request for Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters from New Zealand for further investigation, and provided the materials immediately collected by the Seoul Central Prosecutors' Office following the execution order, which ultimately enabled New Zealand to corroborate scientific evidence.

- On October 27, 2022, the Minister of Justice ordered the Seoul High Prosecutors' Office to request an extradition hearing, as it was determined that there was probable cause to suspect that LEE had committed an extraditable offense, after conducting an in-depth review of the bilateral treaties and criminal jurisprudence as well as an extensive body of evidence, without any delays.
- As the Seoul High Court granted extradition on November 11, 2022, the Minister of Justice immediately reviewed the court decision and relevant circumstances and, on November 14, 2022, issued a Writ of Surrender upon his final decision to surrender LEE to New Zealand.
- The Minister determined that, considering the nature of the crime (both the offender and the victims were New Zealand nationals, giving Korea no jurisdiction over the case), a speedy trial in New Zealand to find the substantive truth behind the case was the strict enforcement of the laws in compliance with criminal justice system.
- As a result, after close consultations with the Seoul High Prosecutors' Office and the New Zealand authorities on extradition schedules, the MOJ decided to surrender LEE to the New Zealand authorities yesterday (November 28, 2022) at Incheon International Airport with the confiscated evidentiary items.

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Significance and Ways ahead

- While extradition of fugitives usually takes a longer period time in practice, the MOJ was able to successfully process the case in only three months, from the initial request from the New Zealand government to the final surrender of the suspect following the court proceedings.
- This successful extradition would not have been possible without the close network between the MOJ and the New Zealand authorities, thorough compliance and legal review of the bilateral treaties and laws, joint investigations through coordination in real-time, as well as the Minister of Justice, HAN Dong Hoon's decision rendered without delays.

- As the bilateral authorities jointly moved forward with both extradition and mutual legal assistance, a rare Dual-track approach in international criminal justice cooperation, the case has set a prime example for efficient cooperation and investigation against international fugitives.
- In particular, since this was the first extradition request submitted by the New Zealand to the Republic of Korea, the extradition will provide the chance to find the truth behind the case which garnered much public attention across the world, through fair and strict criminal justice process in New Zealand.
- As the countries start to wind down on the quarantine measures with regard to COVID-19, there are more incentives and opportunities for the criminals to flee overseas and, in tandem, an increasing need for an active response against international fugitives.
- In order to join global efforts to deter transnational crimes and to establish an international cooperation system in lines with the global standards, the MOJ will continue to build networks with international counterparts, hold in-person as well as remote meetings to address current issues, and expand the treaty framework for extradition and mutual legal assistance.