



**South Korea**  
**38,691 mi<sup>2</sup> = size of Indiana**  
**70% mountains**  
**Total Population = 52 million**  
**Capital of Seoul = 10 million**

**Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare national homeless statistics (2021)  
count 14,404 people, including:**

- sleeping on street (1,201)**
- temporary shelters (394)**
- long term shelters (7,361)**
- jjokbang (flophouse/ “piece” room) (5,448)**

**“Homeless” excludes:**

***Gosiwon* (Historically Student Cram Housing, Now Popular Choice for Urban Poor)**

**No-fixed Location, Sleeping in Public Baths, Fast Food Restaurants, Computer Cafes, Couchsurfing, etc.**

**Homeless Women and Youth Often Don’t Mix with the Majority of Older Homeless Men For Safety and Societal Shame/Visibility Reasons**

**People Living In Isolated, Hard-to-Count Areas (i.e. outside of central Seoul)**





# Yongsan Tent Village





# 홈리스행동 Homeless Action (Est. 2010)

A Quick Intro



Translated from Korean by  
Homeless Action Staff  
Activist Ja-ok

홈리스행동



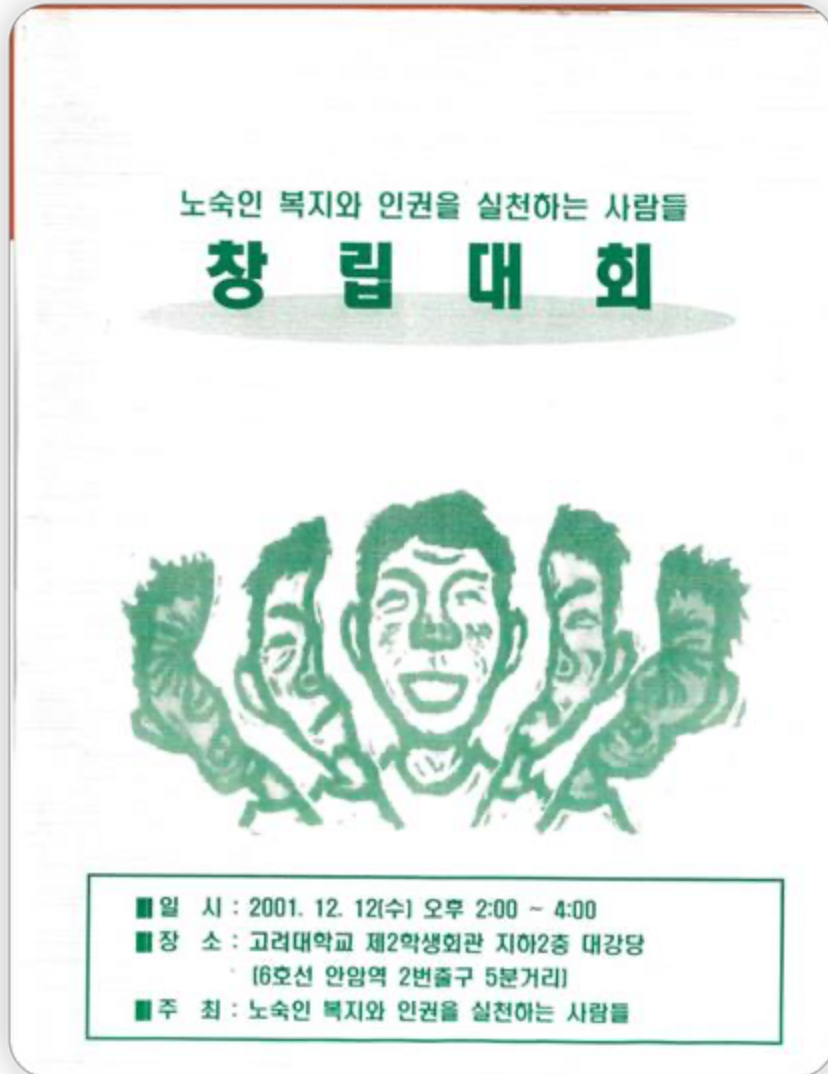
**Araetmaeul (Lower Village) Office and Community Center near Seoul Station.**



**Four Full-Time activists. No funding from corporations, finance or government. 100% of operations come from homeless and non-homeless paid members and donations.**



# 노숙인 복지와 인권을 실천하는 사람들 Organization Committed to the Welfare and Rights of the Homeless: NoSilSa (Est. 2001)



**No.Sil.Sa** was the predecessor of **Homeless Action**. It carried out significant initiatives, including launching the Homeless Memorial in the year of its founding.

“The organization aims to promote the rights of homeless individuals, enhance the capabilities and working conditions of staff in homeless shelters, prevent NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) attitudes within local communities, strengthen connections among homeless individuals, and prevent burnout among shelter workers by fostering camaraderie.” - From the 2001 Steering Committee Agenda

“The organization will actively advocate for human rights and anti-discrimination efforts, with the participation of homeless individuals at its core It is also committed to improving the labor conditions of frontline service workers” - From the 2002 Action Plan

# 홈리스 추모제 Homeless Memorial Day (2001 - Present)



**Early Homeless Memorial altar**

Homeless Memorial Day is held annually around the winter solstice at the end of December outside of Seoul Station. It is a ceremony dedicated to remembering homeless individuals who have passed away in precarious living conditions such as on the streets, in jjokbangs, goshiwons, and shelters.

However, the event goes beyond mere remembrance. It serves as a platform to expose the dire human rights conditions faced by the homeless, to demand policy reforms, and to call on the government and society to uphold the rights of homeless individuals.



# 홈리스 추모제 Homeless Memorial Day (2001 - Present)



The photo on the left shows the “Stairs of Remembrance for the Homeless” installed at Seoul Station. Throughout the year, name tags of those who died as “unclaimed individuals” in precarious living conditions—on the streets, in jjokbangs, goshiwons, and shelters across Seoul—were tied to roses and placed on the steps. This installation was created as a participatory space where passersby could pause, read each name, and personally pay their respects. The photo on the right shows the march held after the Homeless Memorial Day ceremony, with an anti-poverty activist holding a sign that reads, “Do not evict the homeless from public spaces.”



# 홈리스 추모제 Homeless Memorial Day (2001 - Present)



On the left is the stage set up for Homeless Memorial Day at Seoul Station. A large banner at the front of the stage is densely filled with memorial portraits of homeless individuals who passed away in Seoul over the past year. Each photo is accompanied by the deceased's name and birth year. The 2023 Homeless Memorial Day slogan was: "The Deaths That Go Unspoken—Listen to the Voices of the Homeless!" On the right are participants of Homeless Memorial Day seated on the steps of Seoul Station Plaza, facing the stage as they take part in the ceremony.

# 홈리스 추모제 Homeless Memorial Day (2001 - Present)



Participants of Homeless Memorial Day complete the first part of the event and begin the second part: a march outside and through Seoul Station.

In South Korea, Seoul Station became a significant space for the homeless population following the IMF financial crisis in the late 1990s, when unemployment, job losses, and bankruptcies surged. Large public train stations like Seoul Station saw an exponential increase in the number of homeless individuals because they provided a relatively safer environment—bright lighting, heavy foot traffic, and sheltered spaces like underground walkways and plazas where people could lie down. Over time, these areas also developed emergency relief and support networks for the homeless.



# 홈리스 추모제 Homeless Memorial Day (2001 - Present)



“We offer our condolences for the hardship you endured in life.” - 2024 Homeless Memorial Day

However, Seoul Station management continuously sought to expel, monitor, and control homeless individuals. In the early 2000s, a homeless person was even murdered by public security personnel inside a train station. Beyond that, acts of oppression—such as contempt, surveillance, and forced evictions—were frequently carried out against homeless individuals. Thus, marching inside Seoul Station, the largest public transit hub, was a powerful and symbolic act of reclaiming a space that had long been a site of homeless oppression—a way to assert human rights and demand dignity and recognition.

# 월드컵 홈리스 대책 대응

## Korea-Japan World Cup Homeless Eviction Plan (2002)



In 2002, South Korea hosted the FIFA World Cup. Ahead of the event, the Seoul Metropolitan Government attempted to erase the presence of homeless individuals from the streets by designating “No Sleeping Zones” and announcing a “Special Protection Plan for the Homeless.” In reality, this so-called “protection plan” would have forcibly removed homeless individuals from the streets of Seoul and detained them for several days in remote training facilities located hundreds of kilometers away.

However, strong opposition from civil society organizations, including “People Practicing Welfare and Human Rights for the Homeless,” led to public outcry against Seoul’s policy. As a result, the “Special Protection Plan for the Homeless” was never implemented.



# 서울역 홈리스 사망 사건 Tragic Deaths of Two Homeless Individuals at Seoul Station (2005)



In 2005, a public security officer at Seoul Station attempted to remove two dying homeless individuals by placing them on a cart and moving them out of the station. Both homeless individuals died on the cart. The officer neither called for medical assistance nor provided any form of emergency care. This photo captures the tense standoff between homeless individuals and the police as they gathered around the deceased.

# 서울역 홈리스 사망 사건 Tragic Deaths of Two Homeless Individuals at Seoul Station (2005)



Enraged by the negligence and inhumane treatment, around 100 fellow homeless individuals confronted the police in a fierce protest. It was later revealed that the causes of death were liver cirrhosis and pulmonary tuberculosis, respectively.

However, this incident was not just about their deaths—it became the breaking point for long-standing anger among the homeless, who had faced years of police eviction, verbal abuse, and coercion.



# 홈리스 월례 문화 행동 From Anger to Action - Standing with the Homeless: Monthly Cultural Action (2005)



**“Protect Cultural Rights and Enhance Quality of Life – Not Crackdowns and Forced Institutionalization!”**



After the 2005 deaths of two homeless individuals, there was a growing need for a space where the anger of the homeless community could be channeled and mobilized. Every month, cultural festivals featuring singing and dancing were held, drawing the participation of many homeless individuals.

# 홈리스 월레 문화 행동 From Anger to Action - Standing with the Homeless: Monthly Cultural Action (2005)



Another key reason behind the creation of Monthly Cultural Action was the fact that many homeless individuals struggled with extreme boredom throughout the day. Organizers wanted to provide a meaningful and enjoyable way for participants to spend their time, making the gatherings not just a form of protest, but also an opportunity for shared joy and engagement.



# 홈리스 주말 배움터 Homeless Weekend Learning Center (2007)



One of the main challenges faced by the Monthly Cultural Action was the lack of a stable and consistent space. In response, organizers secured a more reliable venue and began operating a Weekend Learning Center. Various classes were offered there, including singing, traditional Korean percussion (pungmul), and computer skills, providing homeless individuals with opportunities to learn, connect, and engage in meaningful activities in a safe environment.

## 홈리스행동 출범 & 홈리스야학 개교 (2010)

### Launch of Homeless Action & Opening of the Homeless Night School



2010.02.05.

It became increasingly clear that sustaining the organization “People Practicing Welfare and Human Rights for the Homeless,” which brought together both homeless individuals and shelter workers, was no longer viable. This was due to fundamental differences in interests, perspectives, social positions, and power dynamics between the two groups. As a result, the need emerged for a new organization that would place homeless individuals themselves at the center. From this need, “Homeless Action” was launched—an organization prioritizing the self-organization and empowerment of homeless individuals.



## 홈리스행동 출범 & 홈리스야학 개교 (2010)

### Launch of Homeless Action & Opening of the Homeless Night School



Around the same time, it was also recognized that the Weekend Learning Center needed to be improved. Meeting only on weekends for learning was not enough. There was a collective agreement to create a “school” that could hold classes every day, offering more opportunities to learn, organize, and act together. This led to the founding of “Homeless Night School.”

2010.08.16.

## 홈리스행동 출범 & 홈리스야학 개교 (2010)

# Launch of Homeless Action & Opening of the Homeless Night School

## Homeless Action Korea's Core Values

Homeless Action asserts that the condition of homelessness arises from the inherent contradictions of capitalism and that the expansion of neoliberal financial globalization will further exacerbate this issue. Accordingly, the organization firmly rejects the notion that homelessness is a consequence of individual shortcomings, such as laziness or incompetence. Instead, it seeks to eliminate homelessness by organizing and empowering those experiencing not only street homelessness but also severe housing poverty. Moreover, Homeless Action is committed to contributing to a broader movement aimed at constructing a new society free from poverty.

## Preamble to the Regulations of the Homeless Night School

Homeless Night School recognizes that homelessness is not a result of individual incompetence or laziness, but rather a consequence of unemployment and poverty generated by capitalism. Our society, influenced by an unstable labor market and high housing costs, forces a segment of the population into homelessness. The issue does not lie with “us”, those experiencing homelessness, but with the “society” that perpetuates homelessness.

Homeless Night School strives to foster solidarity through education on rights, learning about society, cultural activities, and everyday interactions. We are committed to building a world that does not create homelessness - a society free from poverty and discrimination.



## 서울역 홈리스 강제 퇴거 대응

### Seoul Station Nighttime Door Lock Measures to Remove the Homeless (2011)



A sit-in protest staged in opposition to Seoul Station's closure decision.

In 2011, Seoul Station decided to close its facilities during late-night hours, a move clearly intended to force homeless individuals out of the station. In response, Homeless Action, along with other civil society organizations, launched a full-scale protest through sit-ins, occupations, solo demonstrations, and pressure campaigns targeting those responsible for the decision. Despite these efforts, the closure policy was implemented and remains in place to this day—Seoul Station continues to shut its doors at night.

## 서울역 홈리스 강제 퇴거 대응

### Seoul Station Nighttime Door Lock Measures to Remove the Homeless (2011)



Even during the daytime, Seoul Station is unwelcoming to homeless individuals. Those who lie down or eat inside are often expelled, and in some cases, access is denied simply based on appearance. Homeless people who are pushed out to nearby plazas and underground walkways find themselves constantly displaced by security personnel, unable to settle in any one place for long.

**A homeless individual actively occupying the station in protest of the policy.**



# 홈리스지원법 제정 운동

## Movement to Establish the Homeless Support Law (2011)



In 2011, during the drafting of the Homeless Welfare Act, there was an attempt to define “homelessness” in an overly narrow way. Furthermore, the law focused heavily on the operation of homeless facilities, while failing to clearly specify what kinds of support homeless individuals themselves were entitled to from their own standpoint.

In response, a campaign to establish a Homeless Support Act emerged, calling for legislation that would explicitly guarantee the rights of homeless individuals. However, despite these efforts, the Homeless Welfare Act—centered primarily on facility management—was ultimately passed, and that framework remains in effect to this day.

# 요양병원 유인 입원 대응

## Deceptive Hospitalization of the Homeless (2014)



There have been cases where homeless individuals were deceived with promises of food and shelter, only to be admitted into nursing hospitals without proper consent and fraudulently registered as patients in order for the hospitals to receive government subsidies. The homeless individuals were used as a means for hospitals to profit. The left photo is believed to show a scene where someone is luring a homeless person into hospitalization.



# 서울로7017 (2017) & 국일고시원 (2018)

Seoullo 7017's Anti-Homeless Ordinance & Goshiwon\* Fire Tragedy



\* prevalent form of cheap lodging in South Korea, originally for students cramming for exams



# 쪽방 주민의 주거권 보장을 위한 활동

Actions for Ensuring the Housing Rights of Jjokbang Residents (Ongoing)





# 공공장소 내 거리홈리스 퇴거 감시 활동 Monitoring on Eviction of Homeless Individuals from Public Spaces (Ongoing)



# 홈리스 인권지킴이 활동 Homeless Rights Guardians: Outreach and Human Rights Violation Monitoring (Thursdays)



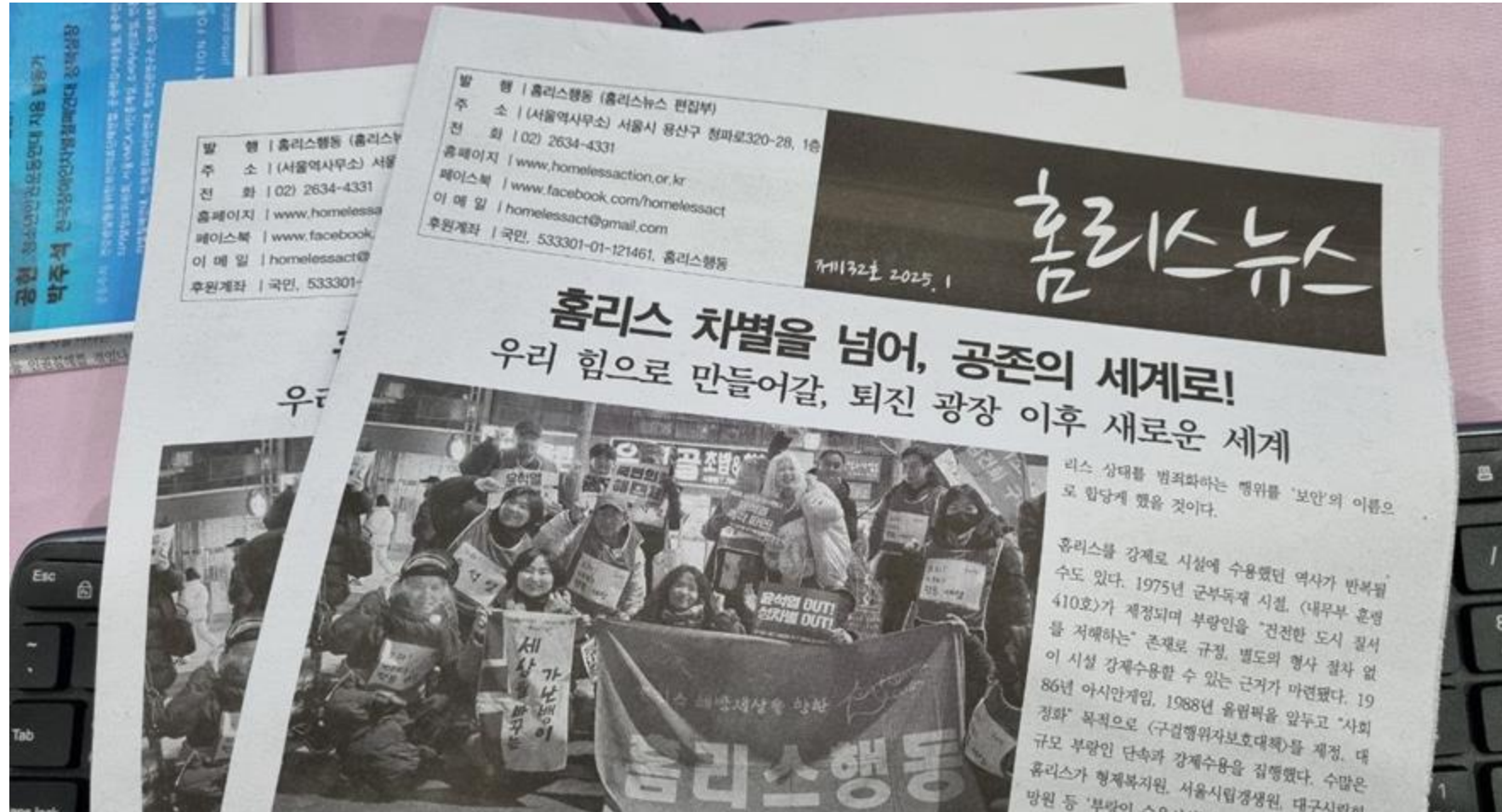


# 홈리스야학 Homeless Night School: Two-Semester Daily Classes and Participation in Protests



# 홈리스뉴스

Homeless News: Official Journal of the Homeless Movement





# 홈리스행동의 2024년 주요 현안과 활동 Key Issues and Activities of 2024

Reference :[People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) Welfare Trends] “*Homeless Memorial Ceremony and Key Issues of 2024*” <https://www.peoplepower21.org/welfarenow/1985613?cat=291&paged=0> (Korean)

## Housing

- Advocacy for the Housing Rights of Jjokbang Residents: Demanding public redevelopment of the Dongja-dong jjokbang village.
- Protection of Goshiwon Residents' Housing Rights: Preventing indiscriminate evictions and abolishing inhumane living regulations.

## Remembrance

- Ensuring Dignified Public Funerals for Homeless Individuals: Advocating for proper implementation of public funeral services.

## Coexistence

- Opposing the Forced Eviction of Street Homeless Individuals and Restrictions on Public Space Use: Calling for the prohibition of exclusionary measures.

# Women & Youth Homeless



@yhousingrights



# Connect with Homeless Action Korea



Sign up for Mailing List  
News in English

Website: [homelessaction.or.kr](http://homelessaction.or.kr)

Facebook & Twitter:

@homelessact

YouTube: @홈리스행동

Donations:  
Cash or Paypal

# Further Reading

[Housing System in Korea - Wolse vs Jeonse?](#)

[Why Are Homeless Women Invisible?](#)

[Yoon Suk Yeol Is Leaving, But We're Stuck](#)

[Is a City "City Where Poor People are Invisible" the Future of Development?](#)

[Over 70,000 teens homeless, urgent support needed](#)