

South Korean Parliament Votes to Defy President, Lifts Declaration of Martial Law

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law late Tuesday, vowing to eliminate “anti-state” forces as he struggles against an opposition that controls the country’s parliament and that he accuses of sympathizing with communist North Korea.

Hours later, parliament voted to lift the declaration, with the National Assembly Speaker Woo Won Shik declaring that lawmakers “will protect democracy with the people.” Woo called for police and military personnel to withdraw from the Assembly’s grounds.

The president’s surprising move harkened back to an era of authoritarian leaders that the country has not seen since the 1980s, and it was immediately denounced by the opposition and the leader of Yoon’s own conservative party.

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Following Yoon’s announcement, South Korea’s military proclaimed that parliament and other political gatherings that could cause “social confusion” would be suspended, according to South Korea’s Yonhap news agency.

The military also said that the country’s striking doctors should return to work within 48 hours, Yonhap said. Thousands of doctors have been striking for months over government plans to expand the number of students at medical schools. The military said anyone who violates the decree could be arrested without a warrant.

What happened today in South Korea: ☐☐

- The President accused the opposing party of being North Korean spies.*
- Goes on TV to mandate martial law.*
- Parliament calls a vote, and the military is summoned by the President, but political aides block them at the door.*
- They...*
- Pubity (@pubity) December 3, 2024*

Under South Korean law, martial law can be lifted with a majority vote in the parliament, where the opposition Democratic Party holds a majority.

Soon after the declaration, the National Assembly speaker called on his YouTube channel for all lawmakers to gather at the Assembly building. He urged military and law enforcement personnel to “remain calm and hold their positions.”

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All 190 lawmakers who participated in the vote supported the lifting of martial law. Television footage showed soldiers who had been stationed at parliament leaving the site after the vote.

Earlier, TV showed police officers blocking the entrance of the Assembly and helmeted soldiers carrying rifles in front of the building.

An Associated Press photographer saw at least three helicopters, likely from the military, that landed inside the Assembly grounds, while two or three helicopters circled above the site.

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