



By: TA | AP Brief

A South Korean court sentences former President to 5 years in prison



A South Korean court sentenced former President Yoon Suk Yeol to five years in prison in the first verdict from eight criminal trials over the **martial law debacle** that forced him **out of office** and other allegations.

Yoon was impeached, arrested and dismissed as president after his short-lived imposition of martial law in December 2024 triggered huge **public protests** calling for his ouster.

The most significant criminal charge against him alleges that his martial law enforcement amounted to a **rebellion**, and the independent counsel has requested the **death sentence** in the case that is to be decided in a ruling next month.

In Friday's case, the Seoul Central District Court sentenced Yoon for defying attempts to detain him, fabricating the martial law proclamation and sidestepping a legally mandated full Cabinet meeting.

Yoon has maintained he didn't intend to place the country under **military rule** for an extended period, saying his decree was only meant to inform the people about the danger of the liberal-controlled parliament obstructing his agenda.

But investigators have viewed Yoon's decree as an attempt to bolster and **prolong his rule**, charging him with rebellion, abuse of power and other criminal offenses.

Judge Baek Dae-hyun said in the televised ruling that imposing "a grave punishment" was necessary because Yoon hasn't shown remorse and has only repeated "hard-to-comprehend excuses."

The judge also restoring legal systems damaged by Yoon's action was necessary.

Yoon, who can appeal the ruling, hasn't immediately publicly responded to the ruling.

The rebellion trial

But when the independent counsel demanded

a **10-year prison term** in the case, Yoon's defense team accused them of being politically driven and lacking legal grounds to demand such "an excessive" sentence.

Prison sentences in the multiple, smaller trials Yoon faces would matter if he is spared the death penalty or life imprisonment at the rebellion trial.

Park SungBae, a lawyer who specializes in criminal law, said there is little chance the court would decide Yoon should face the death penalty in the rebellion case.

The court would take into account that Yoon's decree didn't cause casualties and didn't last long

He said the court will likely issue a life sentence or a sentence of 30 years or more in prison.

South Korea has maintained a de facto moratorium on executions since 1997 and courts rarely hand down death sentences.

Park said the court would take into account that Yoon's decree didn't cause casualties and didn't last long, although Yoon hasn't shown genuine remorse for his action.