



AS IT IS

## South Korean Court Upholds Tattoo Ban

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Tattoo artists in South Korea will continue to risk arrest if they violate a long-standing ban on their work. Last week, the highest court in the country ruled in support of the restriction. Only medical professionals may legally tattoo people in South Korea.

A tattoo is a permanent image on skin. Tattoo artists use needles filled with **ink** to mark the body with words or a design. Some people consider the **practice** an important form of expression.

The Constitutional Court voted 5-to-4 last week to keep the law in place. It said the tattooing is a medical process that carries risks. Tattoo artists do not have the training to provide acceptable medical care to the people, the court said.

Violators of the law risk serious punishment, including fines of about \$40,000 and two years in prison.

Tattoo artist groups in South Korea began pushing for reform of the law in 2017. The ban is based on one that Japan established in 1992. However, that country has since repealed the law.

Kim Do-yoon leads an alliance of about 650 tattoo artists seeking reform. The group condemned the court's decision as a rejection of modern time.

“The court is still walking on four feet when all citizens walk upright,” Kim said. The popular tattooist is better known as Doy.

Tattoos in South Korea are becoming more popular. While they are rarely seen on television, some South Korean **celebrities**, including actors and musicians show their tattoos on social media.

Public opinion research in South Korea finds that most people support an end to the tattoo art restrictions.

Tattooists and their supporters say the law is too strong.

Kim Sho-yun is the president of the Korea Tattoo Federation. She called the court's decision "nonsense." She spoke to reporters gathered at the courthouse in Seoul.

She wondered why the court still considered tattooing a medical treatment when, in her words, "doctors can't and don't do that?"

Even South Korea's president-elect, Yoon Suk-yeol said he supported permitting tattoos that can be used to make hair seem darker.

I'm Dan Friedell.

*Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by Reuters.*

*Do you have a tattoo? Are you thinking of getting one? Write to us in the Comments Section and visit our Facebook page.*

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## Words in This Story

**ink** -*n.* colored liquid used for writing or printing

**practice** - *n.* the action of doing something or using something

**celebrity** - *n.* a person who is famous