

# **South Korea: Sexual Harrassment and Unfair Dismissal of Female Worker at Hyundai Motors, please show support**

Thursday 10 November 2011, by [PSSP](#) (Date first published: 4 November 2011).

Dear friends,

The case described below has gotten a great deal of attention S. Korea and now around the world. The victim in the case, Ms. Park, has been struggle for redress for many months. The coalition supporting here is hoping that international solidarity will help make it possible to win the case by the end of the year.

My organization, People's Solidarity for Social Progress (PSSP), has been participating in the Coalition to Support the Irregular Woman Workers' Sit-in Protest against Sexual Harassment and Unfair Dismissal at the Hyundai Motor Asan Factory. This Coalition includes the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) Seoul Regional Council, the KCTU Women's Committee, the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU), the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions (KFCITU) and several progressive political parties and civil society organizations.

## **Liem Woi-san**

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This is a solidarity letter to support a woman worker who has been sexually harassed by her managers, and unfairly dismissed at a subcontractor of Hyundai Motor. She has been holding a sit-in struggle in front of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family from June.

The health of a courageous woman is at stake in this case. This solidarity action, however, is not just for her but also for all those women who suffer sexual harassment at their workplaces. It is especially for those women workers who work at subcontractors. Given that the owners of subcontractors can easily fire or cancel the labor contract of anyone who causes trouble, it is very hard for these women to fight against sexual harassment on the shop floor. Parent companies, moreover, never take responsibility in such cases. The recent Hyundai Motor case is very typical of these widespread and rampant practices. It is very important, therefore, to call attention to this wrongful practice in Korea.

Please take action to call on that the Ministry of Employment and Labor, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and Hyundai Motor to take responsibility and find a solution to this problem. All concerned authorities should be made responsible for punishing the offenders and having the victim reinstated promptly.

## **DETAILS:**

Ms. Park had worked for 14 years at a factory of Hyundai Motor in Asan, Korea. She had renewed

her labor contract with different subcontractors every two years. But regardless of whoever the employer was, she had worked same works in that factory. A group leader and the manager of that factory sexually harassed her from April 2009. They swore at her with unspeakable words and demanded to have sex with them over the phone. Furthermore, they touched her body and threatened her. Eventually, she told of her suffering to her colleague one day. But after this news became known to other co-workers, the employer punished her. The reason was that she tarnished the company's image by her careless behavior. What was worse, the offender attended in the personnel committee as a member. At first, she was suspended for six months. And after the retrial, they decided to cut her wages for three months. So she petitioned the National Human Rights Commission to judge whether this case is sexual harassment and unfair dismissal or not. Then, the personnel committee dismissed her from work. She started picketing alone at the main gate of the factory. But the security guards and managers assaulted her. So she was hospitalized for four weeks. This time on, she started a sit-in struggle in the factory, but they attacked her again.

On November 2010, the subcontractor, Kumyang Logistics, reported a closure of the business. And another subcontractor, Hyungjin Company, hired all workers of Kumyang except her. She continued her struggle in front of the factory, but they attacked her whenever she set up a tent.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, the National Human Rights Commission reached a ruling that her case was definitely a sexual harassment and urged the employer and the offenders to compensate her for mental and physical damage. But they have ignored the judgment and take no particular action. A officer of the Ministry of Employment and Labor told they can nothing because Kumyang closed their business. And another officer of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family told they can nothing either because their business is not to seek a resolution but just to train anti-sexual violence. Hyundai Motor strongly denies that they need to take any responsibility as a prime contractor. Furthermore, Hyundai Motor distributed an official paper to the members of the National Assembly during the inspection saying that she is a divorcee and a trouble maker. She does not retract and now keeps on her sit-in struggle in front of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family for more than 150 days.

### **SUGGESTED ACTIONS:**

There are many things that you can do in response to this appeal. Here are just four of them.

1. If you agree to our action, please sign up for our public statement. Send a reply to [psspjinbo.net](mailto:psspjinbo.net), with your name and the name of your organization on it. Then we'll hold a press conference in front of Hyundai Motor, backed up with the expression of your solidarity.
2. Also, you can sign and send a sample letter below or send your own letter. If you send a protest letter please forward a copy by fax to 82 2 778 4006 or by email to [psspjinbo.net](mailto:psspjinbo.net) (The content of this sample letter is same as our public statement.)
3. If you have a blog or other online presence, please post information about this case.
4. Use social media and networking sites to urge the punishment of offenders and reinstatement of Ms. Park at Hyundai Motor.

For further information, please contact Wol-san Liem, People's Solidarity for Social Progress (<http://www.pssp.org/>)

Tel : +82 2 778 4002

Fax : +82 2 778 4006

## **A PUBLIC STATEMENT (SAMPLE LETTER)**

(Dear \_\_\_\_\_)

### **Punish the offenders of sexual harassment and reinstate Ms. Park.**

We were shocked to hear the news that a woman worker has been holding a sit-in struggle for more than 150 days asking for the punishment of those offenders who sexually harassed her and reinstatement of her. We can't understand why she was unfairly dismissed, despite being a victim of sexual harassment. And we are deeply concerned that this case has a bad effect on the women workers' rights in Korea.

Many of women workers are sexually harassed at the work places. But it calls for great courage to expose their problem. Especially, it is even harder for those women workers who working at a subcontractor because of their precarious employment. So if a woman worker reveals her problem, the company has to protect her and solve the problem immediately. But Ms. Park was dismissed just because she made her suffering known to her colleagues. Another shocking fact is that the offender is still working at the same factory. We know that the National Human Rights Commission judged her case definitely constituted a sexual harassment and urged the employer and offenders should compensate her for damage. If they keep avoiding their responsibility, Hyundai Motor has to punish them and reinstate Ms. Park, using its position as a prime contractor. But we came across a report that Hyundai Motor distributed an official paper to condemn her not to save her.

We regret that Ms. Park has no choice but to keep her sit-in in front of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, because the ministries and companies who should take the responsibility do not come on her side, avoiding their responsibility.

We urge them as below

(when you send a letter, choose addressee and make it clear what you want to do)

To Hyundai Motors

- Apologize to her for secondary harassment, by mentioning and condemning her privacy.
- Punish offenders and reinstate Ms. Park to her work.

To Hyungjin Company

- Punish offenders and reinstate Ms. Park immediately.

To the Ministry of Employment and Labor and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

- Demand strongly to Hyundai Motors to take an action and solve this problem promptly.
- Take preventive and counter measures for women workers not to be

unfairly dismissed on the account of exposing sexual harassment.

(Sincerely,)

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**PLEASE SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:**

1. Mr. Jung Mong-gu

Chairman, Hyundai Motor Company

231, Yangjae-dong, Seocho-gu, Seoul, Korea

2. Mr. Kim Sang-hoon

Chairman, Hyunjin Company

Hyundai Motor, 129, Gumsung-lee, Injoo-myun, Asan, Korea

Tel : +82 41 530 5996

Fax : +82 41 532 1954

3. Mr. Lee Chae-pil

Minister, Ministry of Employment and Labor

BD #1, Gwacheon Government Complex

47, Gwanmoon-ro, Gwacheon, Korea

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4. Ms. Kim Kum-lae

Minister, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

Premier Place BD, 8, Cheonggyecheon-ro , Joong-gu, Seoul, Korea

Tel : +82 2 2075 4501

Fax : +82 2 3210 4702

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