

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Asia > Korea > South Korea > Labor & co. (South Korea) > **Korean Metal Workers' Union - general strike against the Kor-US FTA**

# **Korean Metal Workers' Union - general strike against the Kor-US FTA**

Friday 29 June 2007, by [KMWU](#) (Date first published: 5 July 2007).

**We are reproducing below several updates on the KMWU and anti-FTA movements ongoing struggle.**

The mainstream media has been trying to diminish our strike and by the evening of 28 June 2007, the government had issued arrest warrants against our national leaders, regional leaders, and leaders in big enterprises.. pretty much trying to nip everything in the bud, while 67 union leaders at all levels are being charged with the damages (employers' losses) from the strike. But our members came out in full force on the strike on June 29 anyways.

The fta agreement has been signed and will be put before the US Congress and the Korean National Assembly for ratification (although we do not know when it will be put before parliament).

So, we hope our general strike has sent a loud message to the members of our legislature that even with the labor clause, we oppose the Kor-US FTA.

We will continue to fight the Kor-US FTA !

On other fronts, we are trying to get the employers here to come to a national central bargaining table or commit to forming an employers' association with bargaining authority (so we can have a counterpart in industry-wide bargaining). But the employers have been dragging their feet and it looks like we may be forced to go on strike again. So far, we are planning to have a strike ballot next week, a protest rally in front of the Korean Employers' Federation (which is not empowered to do industrial bargaining on behalf of its membership) on July 10 and maybe set off another metal workers strike on July 18. Things are still settling down after the anti-FTA strike in that our leaders at national and regional and local level are all wanted by the police for the strike and thus, do not have the same freedom of movement as before. Indeed two co-chairs of our coalition group, called KoA, were already arrested on Tuesday. Because our government has not been willing to really consult with unions to set the terms of agreements like the Kor-US FTA, the only channel, and the strongest way to make a statement in the minds of many of our members was to go on strike. Thank you so much for making sure we were not alone in protesting the FTA, the kinds of neoliberal policies pushed on workers and farmers, and the government's efforts to keep us silent. I wanted to acknowledge all the organizations who sent us solidarity letters ! in the order I received them (somewhat, I tried to group countries together) you are :

## **Workers and Organizations who Sent Solidarity Messages to the KMWU**

International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF)

Public Services International (PSI)

ITUC and OECD-TUAC (\*statement)

AFL-CIO US

United Auto Workers (UAW) US

United Steel Workers (USW) US

United Electrical workers (UE) US

Labor Notes US

Korean Americans against War and Neoliberalism (KAWAN) US

I.G. Metall (IGM) Germany

Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) Australia

AMWU Chapel Australia

SEARCH Foundation and the Philippines Australia Union Link Australia, Philippines

GM European Employees Forum (EEF) Europe

European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF) Europe

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF) Europe

NSZZ Solidarno?? (message from GM Plant level union) Poland

TGWU Vauxhall Motors Convenor UK

Confederação Nacional dos Metalúrgicos (CNM-CUT) Brazil

Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Canada

Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) India

Fédération des travailleurs de la métallurgie CGT (FTM-CGT) France

FSIMEQ Angola

FENASIMECAM Cameroon

ICU Ghana

KEWU Kenya

AUKMW Kenya

AGWU Mauritius

EMWU Mauritius

MANWU Namibia

SATU Swaziland

NEWU Zimbabwe

TUICO Tanzania

SINTIME Mozambique

NUBEGW Zambia

UMMAWU Uganda

NUMSA South Africa

---

This is Hyewon from the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU) of the KCTU. Here is day 4 update for KMWU strike against the Korea-US FTA signing.

We have received solidarity support messages from across the world, including IMF, UAW, IGM, AMWU, AFL-CIO, CAW, Brazil, NUMSA, the European GM Employees' Forum, the PSI, unions in Angola, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, India, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. [1]

The government has issued arrest warrants for 23 leaders of the KMWU, including all the national officers and regional branch chairs of the KMWU in regions throughout Korea and the Korean Employers Federation and individual employers like Hyundai Motors are pressing suit to charge union leaders as individuals as well as the unions for damages owing to the strike.

Thank you for your solidarity and continued interest. It is a great strength to know that we are not alone in resisting Free Trade Agreements that would destroy the livelihoods of workers and farmers.

We are having national strikes again today and I will send you more news after the strike rallies, to be held in regions throughout Korea.

Stop the Korea-US FTA !

In solidarity,

Hyewon Chong

International Director

Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU-KCTU)

1. ESSF, France, sent also a message.

**Korean Metal Workers' Union - general strike against the Kor-US FTA**

**Day 4**

Following on the heels of the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU) regional strikes of June 25 - June 27, on June 28, about 110,000 KMWU members across the country downed tools in opposition to the signing of the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (Kor-US FTA).

About 9,000 members struck on Monday in Chungcheong and North Jolla regions (the regions KMWU issued a strike call for Monday), and over 20,300 striking in Seoul Metropolitan region and Kwangju/South Jolla province on Tuesday, and 38,000 striking in Yeongnam region on Wednesday to lead up to Thursday and Friday (June 28-29), when all KMWU membership will be asked to strike around the whole country.

This news brief will take us to Thursday's strike action in Ulsan, where all KMWU Hyundai Motors Branch union members heeded the strike call, halting production by 12:30. Workers at Hyundai Motors have been the focus of attack by the government, employers and press for striking against the FTA and there was concern that the employer could initiate small clashes (with line managers trying to revive the lines downed by the strike), then use the small clashes to legitimate a broader crackdown. So the union emphasized that everyone had to pull together with utmost restraint to make sure no clashes would occur.

Thus, instead of a mass strike rally workers gathered in 9 areas throughout the plant complex for smaller rallies near their lines. At plant 1, Chief Steward MOON, Young-ok and the chair of the entire Hyundai Motors Branch of the KMWU gave fiery struggle addresses to the striking workers. IMF Southeast Asia and Pacific Regional Representative Arunasalam gave an inspiring international solidarity support speech.