

A Message of Solidarity from the USA: Down, Down WTO!

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January 15, 2006 - We the undersigned organizations in the US, in solidarity with the global community, welcome the January 11 decision of the Hong Kong authorities to release 11 detainees held for participating in a lawful demonstration against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December, 2005. Since their arrest, organizations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York have coordinated numerous actions in front of Chinese Embassies and Consulates and Hong Kong Trade Offices to demand that the Hong Kong authorities drop all charges against the 14 unlawfully detained. The release of 11 of the 14 detainees is a victory for millions of people around the world who have supported the global resistance against the unjust trade policies of the WTO.

However, PARK IN HWAN and YOON IL KWON from the Korean Peasants League and YANG KYOUNG KYU from the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions remain charged with unlawful assembly. Therefore, as part of a global movement for justice, the undersigned organizations demand that the Hong Kong authorities reverse this decision. The three demonstrators charged are scheduled for a trial in March and we vow to continue to conduct further actions in the US until ALL are exonerated and released.

As US-based organizations representing diverse sectors concerned about human, civil and immigrant rights, low-wage labor, youth, women, the environment, education, media, community development, trade policy, military conflict, and peaceful reunification of the Korean people and peninsula, we firmly oppose the free trade policies of the WTO that fail to address the real needs of the people, both in the US and in our international communities. The resistance demonstrated by people gathered in Hong Kong was a testament to the unfair practices of the WTO that disenfranchise and destroy the lives of millions throughout the world. As representatives of numerous communities throughout the US, we stand firmly with the people of the world who oppose the undemocratic practices of the WTO, an institution which lacks legitimacy and transparency and only benefits wealthy nations and transnational corporations.

Background - Last December, thousands of ordinary people peasants, fisherfolk, blue and white collar laborers, migrants, students and activists came together in Hong Kong to protest the violence of the World Trade Organization. The policies proposed and deals brokered inside the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, where the WTO

ministerial was taking place, will impoverish billions of people across the globe. Thus, delegations of protestors, seeking to represent the interests of the world's people, traveled to Hong Kong to demonstrate peacefully in its streets.

For the governments of developed countries, often led by the United States, the WTO is a means to gain power and wealth at the expense of developing nations and workers, farmers, women, migrants and the poor. It destroys lives, cultures communities by commodifying basic human rights such as access to food, education, and healthcare. Therefore, over a thousand protesters who, on December 17 attempted to march peacefully towards the Convention Centre where they would be seen and heard, were engaging in necessary actions to protect their livelihoods and loved-ones as well as those of people throughout the world. These actions were not crimes.

However, police in full riot gear surrounded close to 1000 demonstrators sitting peacefully on Gloucester Road for over 10 hours before arresting 944 of them. 14 of these people were charged with "unlawful assembly" and barred from leaving Hong Kong to reunite with their families and return to their lives. On January 11, 2006 the Kwun Tong Court of Hong Kong released 11 of them, while upholding charges against 3 and preparing to bring them to trial.

Organizations in Solidarity

6.15 Coalition, Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (A.N.S.W.E.R.), Agribusiness Research and Popular Education, API Movement Building, Asian American Resource Workshop, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Audre Lorde Project, BAYAN USA, CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities, Channing and Popai Liem Education Foundation, CJWP, Chinese Progressive Association, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, Community Organizing Coalition (CYOC), Congress for Korean Reunification (CKR), Corean Action Network for Unification (CAN-U), Cuauhtemoc, Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, International Action Center (IAC), Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA), Korea Democratic Labor Party Support Committee, Korea Exposure and Education Program (KEEP/Delegation to the Hong Kong WTO), Korea Truth Commission/US, Korean Community Center of the East Bay, Korean American National Coordinating Council/Westcoast, Korean Americans United for Peace, Korean Immigrant Workers Advocate, Labor Community Strategy Center, Los Angeles Indigenous People's Alliance, Mindullae, Minjok Tongshin, Mujeres Libres, Mujeres Unidas y Activas, Multiethnic Immigrant Workers Organizing Network, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), Nodutdol for Korean Community Development, Oakland Institute, One Korea LA Forum, Pan Korean Alliance for Reunification, Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California (PWC), Restaurant Workers Association of Koreatown, Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE), South Central Farmers Feeding Families, Sweatshop Watch, St. Peter's Housing, Young Koreans United

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