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KGEU Breaking News

7,000 members at Sep. 9th rally resolved to all out struggle against the repression

Monday 25 September 2006, by [KGEU](#) (Date first published: 15 September 2006).

The KGEU held a mass rally On September 9th in Changwon, Gyeongnam-do (province, south western part of Korea), where the KGEU Gyeongnam Regional Branch office were forcefully closed down on August 30, while the ILO Asian Regional Meeting was held in Busan, Korea.

The Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) claimed that the rally was illegal activities and that all the government employees participating would be taken to disciplines.

Despite that the rally was legally notified to the police in advance, the MOGAHA insisted that government employees' participating was illegal and that should be blocked.

About 7,000 KGEU members joined the rally from all over Korea. But the police and the authorities were trying to block them from joining the rally. In Bupyeong-gu(a municipality in Incheon Metropolitan City), the police tried to block the KGEU members from departing for the rally with a bus. In Gwangju Metropolitan City, the riot cops were deployed around a bus stop where the KGEU members tried to depart for Changwon. In Geoje(a city on an island in Gyeongnam-do), the police blocked up the bridge to the mainland. In Jeju-do(province, an island), the police also blocked the KGEU members from going aboard at the airport.

Although hundreds of government employees trying to join the rally were forced to get back due to the police blockade and questioning at the corners to the rally venue, more than 7,000 KGEU members managed to take part in the rally.

The KGEU members adopted a resolution that, "1/ 140,000 members of the KGEU resolve to launch an all-out struggle against anti-human rights and anti-labour repression on the union, 2/ in the name of 140,000 members of the union, we resolve to protest and fight back the Governor of Gyeongnam-do, who broke agreements with the union, 3/ we resolve to launch a struggle to pressure the minister of the MOGAHA to be stepped down, who is responsible for the violent and anti-human rights repression on the union."

"No opposition to government policies!"

The MOGAHA is trying to repress any activities of the KGEU. On September 7th, the ministry instructed the local governments, the ministries and the agencies to obstruct the KGEU's campaign against Korea-US FTA as well as to intensify supervision of government employees to prohibit them from joining the rally on September 9th. The KGEU has been actively involved in anti KorUS FTA campaign with other public sector unions like Korean Teachers' Union(KTU) and the Korean Public Service Union(KPSU). The MOGAHA stated that KGEU members' leafletting, placarding, publicising and joining anti KorUS FTA rallies are illegal, since these activities are violating public officials acts and especially government employees are subject to laws and orders. Furthermore, the ministry boasted that the Kor-US FTA negotiation is one of the core government policies to protect national

interests and to promote dynamics for economic development, and instructed that local governments should intensify thorough supervision in order that government employees should not stand against government policies.

Right after the rally, the MOGAHA issued a press release stating that it would take the union leaders who organised and led the rally to legal actions and heavy disciplines and that all the participants should be taken to disciplines as well. And the ministry claimed that it would be prosecuting 11 KGEU leaders including president, general secretary, and those who spoke at the rally.

Union's fighting back!

The KGEU president Mr. KWON Seung Bok started a hunger strike and sit-in protest in front of the central government building on September 12th. Of course this time also saw violent repression on the KGEU as well. When the union tried to set up a protest tent next to KCTU's tents that have been already set up from the mid of August, the riot cops swept into the KGEU members. And 6 members of the union were arrested and released a couple of minutes after then.

The KGEU is planning to hold regional rallies consecutively. The forceful closing down of the union offices will be confronted with the all-out resistance of the KGEU members with the KCTU and other solidarity organisations. The KCTU is also planning to hold a mass rally on September 17th in solidarity with KGEU.

The union is also organising a signature campaign demanding the minister of the MOGAHA to step down.

MOGAHA planning to simultaneously shut down KGEU offices nation wide

The MOGAHA issued another directive on September 13th. They demanded all the local governments, ministries and agencies to implement closing down of the KGEU local offices nation wide. The ministry warned that those who are adopting a lukewarm attitude will be audited and examined later on. They underlined the schedule as follows; a) issuing warrants of administrative execution of closing down of the union office: by September 15th. b) notifying implementation of the administrative execution : by September 20th. c) Implementation of administrative execution of closing down of the union office(nation wide simultaneously): 15:00 September 22nd.

7 more members dismissed, KGEU RDA Chapter

Meanwhile, the Central Disciplinary Committee made a decision on disciplines against 7 union officials of the KGEU Rural Development Administration(RDA) Chapter on September 8th. - The RDA is a government agency under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

They have been taken to disciplines due to their "getting involved in the activities of illegal organisations such as the KGEU and illegal activities bringing disgrace on the RDA and damaging dignity as public officials in violation of article 57(Duty of Obedience), 58(Prohibition of Deserting from Office), and 66(Prohibition of Collective Act) of the State Public Officials Act." The KGEU held a rally on May 25th in front of the RDA building in protest of RDA's breaking agreements with the union and repression on union activities. Although the rally was legally notified to the police in advance and the union asked for cooperation of the police, the riot cops attacked the union members and arrested 107 members, of whom 4 were imprisoned for 47 days.

Followings are the decision made on disciplines;

.	Service	Name	Function in KGEU RDA Chapter	Decision
1	National Institute of Agricultural Biotechnology	CHA Young-Soon	Chair of the Chapter	Dismissal without pension subsidy
2	National Livestock Research Institute	LEE Young-Chang	Vice Chair	"
3	Main office	LEE Hee-Woo	Director General	"
4	National Institute of Agricultural Science & Technology	PARK Chang-Gyu	General Affairs Director	"
5	Main office	PARK Seok-Young	External Relations Director	"
6	National Institute of Agricultural Science & Technology	PARK Hae-Cheol	Public Relations Director	Dismissal
7	National Institute of Agricultural Science & Technology	KIM Yong-Soon	Head of Policy Committee	"

Voices and actions from international community

On September 11th, the Public Services International (PSI) stated that it associated itself with the complaint against the Korean government submitted to the ILO on September 1st. The KGEU, with the KCTU and KPSU, lodged the complaint to the ILO for violation of right to collective bargaining and freedom of association, the government obstructing the formation of stable and democratic industrial relations and seriously repressing basic labour rights. And the PSI requested that this case be examined by the Committee on Freedom of Association as a matter of urgency.

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) sent a protest letter to President ROH Moo-Hyun on September 7th, condemning serious violations of the principle of freedom of associations and intensified campaign against the KGEU.

The Swedish Building Workers' Union (BYGGNADS) sent a protest letter as well on September 7th. They strongly protest against the violent crackdown on the KGEU.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), requested an urgent intervention by human rights activists and organisations in the world to send a protest letter to Korean government. The observatory is requesting to write to the authorities in South Korea urging them to:

- i. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of all human rights defenders in the country, including trade unionists;
- ii. put an immediate end to any obstacles to the activities of KGEU;
- iii. put an end to all forms of harassment, legal action, and ill-treatment of human rights defenders in South Korea, including trade unionists, as well as any obstacles to freedom of expression, association and assembly;

iv. ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, in particular article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually or collectively, to promote the protection and fulfilment of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”, article 5.b which stipulates that everyone has the right “to form, join and participate in non-governmental organisations, associations or groups, as well as article 12.2, which provides that”the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually or in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration"

v. guarantee the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international human rights instruments signed or ratified by the Republic of Korea, all the more that the Republic of Korea is member of the new United Nations Human Rights Council.

The campaign document is attached in the end of this news.