

# **South Korea - Urgent call for solidarity: : Release jailed trade unionists, respect workers' rights**

Tuesday 11 October 2016, by [ITF](#), [KCTU](#), [KPTU](#), [KRWU](#), [LabourStart](#) (Date first published: 6 October 2016).

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Dear Friends,

You may know that the KPTU's Koran Railway Workers Union (KRWU) public institution affiliates are in them midst of a historical coordinate national strike, fighting against the government's illegal imposition of a performance-related pay and termination system and other policies that threaten public services on public sector workers.

At the same time the KPTU Cargo Truckers' Solidarity Division (TruckSol) has declared a national strike to begin on October 10 against the government's plan for deregulation that will benefit corporations but put pressure on truck drivers to engage in unsafe driving practices. TruckSol is calling for safe standard rates, fair contracts and trade union rights - rights for truck drivers and safety for the public.

Our strike actions are coming together with a wider people's struggle against a dictatorial regime.

The government is responding by calling the KRWU's full legal strike illegal and charges and disciplinary actions against union leaders. It has threatened to use police force, criminal charges, licence cancellations and other measures against the truck strike.

Our members need your support to stay strong!

Please see the ITF action page below.

In particular, show your support by printing out the solidarity signs on the site and attached, taking solidarity pictures with your members and officers and sending them back/posting them to social media with the hashtag #KoreanStrike4Justice

More news can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/kctueng/>

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## **#KoreanStrike4Justice**

We need your support for South Korean transport unions

Dear colleagues, we need your support for South Korean transport unions.

Last week I visited South Korea and personally witnessed the courage and determination of Korean transport and public sector workers fighting for justice.

Now, an action day has been designated for 12 October 2016 and will be supported by the international trade union movement. I'm asking you to join the campaign.

South Korean workers are fighting back against government plans that would make sackings easier and divide workers.

Industrial actions in September brought together workers in 14 unions right across the public and public transport sectors in an impressive show of strength. But the government has declared the rail strike illegal. Charges have been pressed against 9 union officers, while 145 officers have been suspended from their job positions in preparation for further disciplinary actions.

The global union movement is fighting these attacks and is campaigning for rights in Korea as well as for the release of those arrested in the last wave of anti-union repression.

Get behind the campaign!

There are FIVE THINGS you can do to back South Korean unions [1]:

1. Take a selfie with these solidarity signs (Graphic 1, Graphic 2, Graphic 3) and these to support the truckers (Graphic 4, Graphic 5, Graphic 6, Graphic 7) and post them online with the hashtag #KoreanStrike4Justice or send them to us before 12 October
2. Send us, or post a video on social media with the hashtag #KoreanStrike4Justice
3. Send a protest letter to President Park, via Labourstart
4. Join the 12 October action: Visit your local South Korean Embassy and present a letter, see here; or if you can't visit, send a letter to the Ambassador. Please us send reports and pictures
5. Help us get the word out. Post content to the #KoreanStrike4Justice, and keep an eye out at this hashtag for sharable content to support our campaign for an end to attacks on trade unionists. Check out our campaign site at [www.Koreanstrike4justice.org](http://www.Koreanstrike4justice.org), too!

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in solidarity

Stuart Howard  
Assistant General Secretary

**International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)**

\* <http://www.itfglobal.org/en/campaigns-solidarity/campaigns/support-koreas-strikers-for-justice/>

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## **Release jailed trade unionists, respect workers' rights**

**LabourStart campaign in partnership with the International Trade Union Confederation, which represents 180 million workers in 162 countries and territories and has 333 national affiliates.**

The assault on workers' rights in South Korea is intensifying, with more than 20 trade union leaders and members now imprisoned including 7 KCTU leaders and officials namely KCTU President Han Sang-gyun, KPTU vice president Cho, Sung-deok and KPCWU president Lee, Jong-hwa. President Park Guen-hye's government has been throwing people into prison simply for standing up for workers' rights.

Currently, the strike of public sector workers against the regressive labour reform and performance based pay system was declared 'illegal' and 9 leaders of Korean Railway Workers Union are accused for the notorious 'obstruction of business'. In order to end the strike, the government is seeking 'emergency arbitration', a practice denounced by the ILO as infringement of freedom of association. The self-employed truck drivers also face criminal and civil charges for a strike they planned.

While the focus of international protest has been mostly on the government itself, the role of Korean business, and especially the shadowy Chaebol conglomerates which dominate the national economy, is coming under the spotlight. A new ITUC/IndustriALL report on Samsung details the lengths to which some Korean employers will go to bust unions and repress workers' rights inside Korea and in international supply chains.

President Park will have to step down at the end of her term in December 2017, and it is crucial to keep up the pressure to break the stranglehold that a few corporations have over the state. A new President should mean a new start for Korea, one where fundamental rights, economic security and safe work for ordinary people are the order of the day. In the coming weeks and months, every bit of pressure on the current regime of President Park will make it that much harder for corporate greed to maintain its grip on one of the world's most significant economies.

You can help! Type in your name and email address, then click on 'Send Message' on the bottom of the page [2].

### **Letter**

Dear President Park,

I am calling on you to release all the imprisoned trade unionists whom your government has jailed for standing up for working people, and to respect your country's obligations under international law to uphold fundamental workers' rights. I further call on you to resist the incessant demands of Korean companies, in particular the chaebol conglomerates, to intensify the repression of basic rights at the expense of those who work for Korean companies at home and abroad.

\* [https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=3190](https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=3190)

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View online : [To sign the letter:](#)

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## **Footnotes**

[1] For details and illustrations, see

[http://www.itfglobal.org/en/campaigns-solidarity/campaigns/support-koreas-strikers-for-justice/#tab\\_campaign3](http://www.itfglobal.org/en/campaigns-solidarity/campaigns/support-koreas-strikers-for-justice/#tab_campaign3)

[2] [https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=3190](https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=3190)