

7 Days To Go Until... The International Day of Action to Support South Korean Workers

Saturday 11 November 2006, by [KCTU](#) (Date first published: 9 November 2006).

Call on the South Korean Government to:

- Stop Trade Union Repression
- Implement ILO Recommendations
- Recognize Irregular Workers' Rights
- Reform Labour Laws in line with International Standards and not the Proposed "Roadmap"

Despite the international communities cries calling on the South Korean government to stop repression of trade union rights, the government continues to undermine the basic fundamental rights in South Korea. While the government continues to ignore the recommendations made by the Committee of Freedom of Association of the ILO, it chooses to imprison workers for engaging in trade union activities.

Currently over 70 trade unionists still remain in jail and the majority are members of the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions who have been organizing construction workers--- one of the most marginalized in South Korean society.

Recently the UN Human Rights Commission raised concerns about the South Korean government's refusal to recognize the Korean Government Employees Union (KGEU) and the right for the KGEU to conduct trade union activities. However, the South Korean government continues its systematic campaign to destroy the KGEU, as indicative by their recent action in forbidding the KGEU to conduct votes for the KCTU General Strike.

Finally, the government has decided to introduce a series of legislation to supposedly eradicate discrimination against irregular workers but in reality these bills will basically make the entire South Korean work force into irregular workers. Rather than moving forward and reforming labor laws in line with international standards as it promised when South Korea joined the OECD ten years ago, it is clear that the government is going backwards.

Already unions, labor rights organizations, and other solidarity groups in thirty countries around the world such as India, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Sweden, Germany, Brazil, Colombia, South Africa, and the United States have declared their support for the KCTU's call for International Day of Action. Join these unions and participating in the International Day of Action. The KCTU will be conducting a press conference on November 14, a day prior to the General Strike called by the KCTU announcing the support by the international community. Please notify the KCTU of your actions.

On November 15 join the International Day of Action by conducting a demonstration in front of a South Korean embassy or consulate, coordinating a press conference, or issuing a statement (sample enclosed).

Send a protest letter to President Roh Moo Hyun at the Blue House through your local embassy or consulate. And e-mail at president.cwd.go.kr

Copies should be sent to the Ministry of Labour, Minister Lee Sang- Soo at 82-2-504-6708, 82-2-507-4755 (Fax) or e-mail at m_molab molab.go.kr

And sent to the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, Minister Lee Yong-Sup at 82-2-2100-4001(Fax) or e-mail at yongsupl mogaha.go.kr

Please be sure to send copies to the KCTU at 82-2-2635-1134 (Fax) or e-mail at inter kctu.org

Please visit the international campaign web-site on the KCTU homepage and leave your solidarity message or protest letter on it.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact:

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SAMPLE LETTER

Honorable Roh Moo Hyun

President

Republic of Korea

Blue House
Seoul, South Korea

Via e-mail president cwd.go.kr

Dear President Roh:

On behalf of the _____, I am writing to express our outrage at the severe labor repression

workers in South Korea is facing under your current leadership. When South Korea joined the OECD in 1996, your then government made a commitment to reform existing laws on industrial relations in line with internationally accepted standards, including those concerning basic rights such as freedom of association and collective bargaining. However, your administration's current repressive attacks against the Korean Government Employees Union (KGEU), the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trades Unions (KFCITU) and irregular workers are indicative of the failure of your country to live up to those promises.

Claiming that the KGEU is an "illegal organization" on Friday, September 22, you ordered the closure of all KGEU local union offices. Armed with fire extinguishers, fire-fighting dust, hammers, claw hammers, hammer drills, and power saws, riot police and hired thugs forced inside local union offices, dragging KGEU members and their supporters outside the office, and then finally shutting and sealing the offices like coffins. We are appalled by these actions which we assure are not in lines with any international labor standards.

In March of this year, the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) of the ILO made several recommendations in association to trade union rights violations in South Korea. We are deeply concerned by the failure of your administration to implement these recommendations. More concerning to us is the fact that your administration has chosen to intensify the labor repression by arresting and imprisoning local union leaders and organizers of the KFCITU under charges of engaging in criminal activity, when it appears that their only "crime" has been organizing construction workers. Through these actions, we can only assume that your government has no real understanding of the role the ILO plays to ensure implementation of international labor standards.

Finally, we would like to point out that your government recent proposal on "Roadmap for Industrial Relations Reforms," dramatically fails to address the fundamental basic labor rights of irregular workers who are an increasingly large segment of the work force in your country. If you truly want a smooth industrial relations, then we believe that a key step forward towards to this objective is to ensure the basic three labor rights---right to strike, right to organize, and the right to collective bargaining---for irregular workers, who are harshly discriminated in terms of working conditions and wages. We would also like to express our deep concern that the proposal has deferred the existence of multiple unions at the enterprise level for another three years. In doing this, you have definitely taken a "disturbing step backwards" rather than "building industrial relations that conform to international standards." We strongly urge you to immediately revise the current proposal that it truly is in line with international standards.

South Korea is internationally recognized as a democratic and economically developed country. Yet your labor standards and policy is a dramatic contrast to this image. We strongly urge you to not only change your policy but more importantly implement these policies into action, so that South Korea can be seen as country that abides and ensure international labor standards. In order to do this, we urge you to stop the immediate repression against the KGEU and the KFCITU, to release all imprisoned trade unionists and rescind all arrest warrants against workers for engaging in trade union activities, to make revisions to the "Roadmap to Industrial Relations" so that is truly conforms to international standards, and ensure the basic fundamental labor rights for irregular workers. We will continue to monitor the situation until these matters are resolved.

Sincerely

Representative

Union/Organization