

Geneva, 23 November 2015

To Ms. Park Geun-hye
President of the Republic of Korea
Blue House
Seoul, Korea

By mail to president@president.go.kr; foreign@president.go.kr; mission.korea-rep@ties.itu.int

Calling on Government of Republic of Korea to Respect Fundamental Labour Rights

Dear President Park,

I am writing to you on behalf of [IndustriALL Global Union](http://www.industriall-union.org), which represents more than 50 million workers in mining, energy and manufacturing industries in some 140 countries, to call on your government to respect the right to freedom of association, including the right to peaceful assembly and to strike. In particular, we urge you to drop all charges against the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions' (KCTU) President Han Sang-Gyun and to release all workers detained in the police raids on the offices of the KCTU and its affiliates on 21 November. In addition, we call on you to withdraw the regressive labour reforms.

We condemn in the strongest terms the police raids of the offices of the KCTU and its affiliates on 21 November, including the headquarters and Seoul offices of IndustriALL's affiliate the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU). The police seized internal documents, equipment, computers and external hard drives. This raid follows the unions' participation in a rally on 14 November to protest, among other things, a proposed package of labour law reforms meant to seriously undermine the rights of workers and their trade unions.

Contrary to your government's claims, the reforms are not based on a tripartite accord. The proposed legislation would reverse legal precedents concerning the Labour Standards Act by prohibiting payment of certain bonuses when workers work overtime on days off. This will directly decrease workers' compensation while at the same time incentivizing employers to employ workers on overtime, increasing the already excessive working hours in Korea.

The legislation would also permit temporary agency work in so-called 'root industries' (enterprises performing basic manufacturing tasks including casting, moulding, welding, surface treatment, plastic work and heat treatment) and weaken legal precedents for determining the status of parent companies in subcontracting situations. This would have the effect of allowing large, unionized companies to employ workers through temporary employment agencies where this has to date been found to be illegal by the judiciary. Furthermore, the legislation would lower the level of unemployment compensation for workers in low-wage short-term jobs.

IndustriALL Global Union has already called your attention to increasing trade union suppression in Korea. Korean authorities routinely ignore serious violations of trade union and human rights, siding with the huge industrial businesses or 'chaebols' that dominate the country. The Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU) affiliates representing sub-contractor workers at the world's biggest shipbuilder Hyundai Heavy Industries (HHI) were in Geneva last week to sound the alarm at the number of deaths at Hyundai's Korean shipyards. Even though the courts have ruled that HHI has committed unfair labour practices, the government has been turning a blind eye to the HHI abuses.

IndustriALL Global Union calls on your government to fully abide by national labour legislation, and fundamental labour rights, as stipulated by International Labour Organizations' conventions, including Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize, and Convention 98 on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining. Lastly, once again, we urge you to drop all charges against the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions' (KCTU) President Han Sang-Gyun, to release all workers detained in the police raids on the offices of the KCTU and its affiliates on 21 November, and to withdraw the regressive labour reforms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a vertical line on the left, a horizontal line at the bottom, and a diagonal line on the right, with a small loop at the top right.

Jyrki Raina,
General Secretary
IndustriALL Global Union