

Emergency resolution by IndustriALL Global Union Congress to support the struggle against the South Korean government's crackdown on unions

The government of South Korea has unleashed a vicious attack on workers' rights and democracy by seeking to dramatically weaken labour legislation, criminalize protest and imprison trade union leaders.

In 2015, the government proposed changes to labour legislation that would make it easier for employers to dismiss workers, impose low wages and increase the use of precarious work.

On 21 November, 2015, one week after a major union rally held to protest against these proposed legislative changes, the government sent riot police to raid the offices of a number of unions including IndustriALL affiliate Korean Metal Workers' Union and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Police seized documents, equipment, computers and external hard drives.

The President of South Korea likened protestors to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in a shameful attempt to vilify public protest in defence of workers' rights.

Police have investigated, arrested and jailed dozens of union members and leaders in the current crackdown. KCTU President Han Sang-gyun and Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union (KPTU) Vice-President Cho Sung-deok, were sentenced in July 2016 to five years and two years in prison respectively for their participation in the recent protests.

IndustriALL demands the government of South Korea respect workers' fundamental rights, withdraw the proposed anti-worker changes to labour legislation and release all imprisoned trade unionists.

IndustriALL expresses its solidarity with South Korean workers and their unions in fighting back against the government attack.

IndustriALL and its affiliates commit to work with Korean unions, the International Trade Union Confederation and other national and global unions to support this struggle and escalate pressure on the government of South Korea to agree to our demands.

Specifically, IndustriALL and its affiliates will:

1. Support the 12-13 November People's Mass Mobilization and National Workers Rally taking place in Korea.
2. Participate in a global day of action taking place in the coming months demanding Korea respect workers' rights.
3. Participate in a public campaign to bring attention to Korea's violations of workers' rights including imprisonment of trade unionists by linking it to Korea hosting the February 2018 Winter Olympics.
4. Explore possible action under labour provisions in Korea's free trade agreements with the EU and the U.S.