

FIVE YEARS JAIL

FOR UNION ORGANISING IN SOUTH KOREA

Han Sang Gyun was arrested in late December 2015 following large working class demonstrations in the weeks before. These demonstrations were in opposition to the Korean government's new Labour Laws. These laws are designed to weaken the power of unions and decrease job security for workers.

Han Sang-Gyun was not the only one arrested. More than 500 KCTU members have been summoned by police for their participation in these rallies. Thirteen have so far been convicted and sentenced to between eight to 18 months in prison. Other high profile arrests include Bae Tae-sun, KCTU Executive director of organization department, and Cho Sung-deok, Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union (KPTU) Vice President.

On the 4th of July, 2016 Hang Sang-gyun was jailed for five years for his part in organising these demonstrations. This is not the first time he has been jailed for trade union activities as he has a long and proud history as a labour activist.

In early October, Han Sang Gyun was chosen as the recipient of the 2016's Freedom from Fear Award from the UNI Global Union, an international union federation.

Large scale protests by Korean workers have continued in the second half of 2016.

Han's sentence represents a clear criminalisation of legitimate protest and is aimed at weakening the powerful Korean workers movement. This will allow employers to increase precarious employment contracts, make workers work for longer, for less pay and in unsafe working conditions.

All this is part of a global offensive by capital against workers. The aim is to make workers pay for the ongoing economic crisis and to increase profits for companies and capitalists.

To defeat this offensive, workers have to join together globally. Only by co-ordinating struggles and campaigns at an international level will workers be able to defeat this offensive.

We are campaigning for his release.

We demand the dropping of charges against Han Sang Gyun and all other arrested labour activists in South Korea.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Send an email/letter of solidarity to the KCTU**

14th Fl. Kyunghyang Daily News Bldg.
22 Jeong-dong, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea 100-702

inter@kctu.org

- **Write to Sang-kyun in prison c/o KCTU**

- **Write email/letter to the South Korean President**

President Ms. Park Geun-hye
Cheongwadae, Sejong-ro No. 1
Jongno-gu, Seoul 110-820
Republic of Korea

president@president.go.kr
foreign@president.go.kr

- **Pass a motion at your workplace and get your union to endorse it**

- **Organise a solidarity action in support of Sang-kyun or participate in the action for the Global Day to Stop the Repression Against Unionists. The Melbourne event will be held at 5.30pm Wed 16 November at the 8 Hour Monument, cnr Victoria and Lygon – opposite Trades Hall.**

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SAMPLE UNION MOTION

Workers continually face companies that in order to increase their profits want us to work harder, for longer, for less, and in unsafe workplaces.

Unionists must be able to resist this and take industrial action, including strikes, sit-down strikes, picket lines, demonstrations and solidarity actions. To organise is not a criminal offence.

Our union demands that Han Sang Kyun, and other imprisoned South Korean trade unionists, be released immediately.

SAMPLE LETTER TO KCTU

Dear comrades,

We are aware that comrade Han Sang Gyun, President of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), was given a five year jail sentence in July of 2016.

Hang Sang Gyun has a proud history of fighting for workers rights, including the Ssangyong Motor Car Company occupation in 2009. He has been jailed before for his staunch defence of workers rights.

Han Sang Gyun 'crime' was for organising demonstrations and stopping road traffic in late 2015.

We need to defend the right of all workers and genuine unions to organise, protest and take industrial action. We strongly condemn comrade Han's imprisonment, and we demand his immediate release.

Please let Han Sang Gyun know about our support and solidarity for him, as well as to the other imprisoned trade unionists.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH KOREA

To the South Korean President,

We, the undersigned, are writing to express our concern at your labour law reforms that will seriously undermine the rights of workers and their trade unions.

These labour reforms will reduce payment for overtime work on days off, would permit temporary agency work in basic manufacturing (which has been illegal to date) and would lower the level of unemployment compensation for workers in low-wage short-term jobs.

In addition, we are calling for the immediate release of Han Sang Gyun, President of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), and other imprisoned union officials, who have been imprisoned these year for the sole reason of defending the rights of workers.

These arrests represent a serious attack on the right to freedom of association and to bargain collectively in South Korea.

PARTICIPATE IN THE ACTION FOR THE GLOBAL DAY TO STOP THE REPRESSION AGAINST UNIONISTS. THE MELBOURNE EVENT WILL BE HELD AT 5.30PM WED 16 NOVEMBER AT THE 8 HOUR MONUMENT AT THE CORNER OF VICTORIA AND LYGON STREETS OPPOSITE TRADES HALL.