

Global Crisis Workers Struggle



Report by Manrico Moro, AAWL Coordinator to Annual General Meeting: 2 March 2011

Mass struggle is back

As predicted, 2010 was another turbulent year for the workers of the world. The wheels of capitalism continued to grind on, ruining workplaces, environments and communities across the world, sacrificed to the global economic crisis. In response we have seen mass workers mobilisations across the globe. The most notable of these was the General Strike called in India in September. An estimated 100 million workers participated in a one day strike on 7 September 2010. This was the biggest ever mass industrial action! What brought workers out on the streets was their collective protest against soaring prices, privatisation and public sector disinvestment, the casualisation and contracting out of work, and the struggle to ensure health and safety at work.

These are very similar to the demands that European comrades took to the streets in opposition to the austerity measures that had been proposed. Workers in Greece, Italy, France, Poland, Spain and Portugal called General Strikes in 2010. Many other significant mobilisations occurred as well, mainly in the car and textiles industries, but in many other industries too. In our own region there have been massive struggles. Apart from India we have seen huge strikes in the garment industries in Bangladesh and Cambodia, big disputes in Korea with factory occupations and large

mobilisations. There have been major strikes in China, with workers demanding democratic union elections. We have also seen mobilisations where workers in the same company or in the same industry advance their common issues. Campaigns in Unilever and against Nestle come to mind, but it has been an element in many disputes.

As we go to press there are hourly developments in the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, and much news about workers mobilisations that have intersected with democratic rights movements to challenge dictatorial regimes that seemed to be stuck to their thrones forever. It is clear that the importance of the work of Australia Asia Worker Links is increasing. International solidarity is a key element defending and advancing workers' struggle in this period of crisis, repression and rebellion. This is the report on our work in 2010.



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Union Affiliates.

Without our union affiliates the solidarity work of AAWL could not continue. We would like to thank the following unions and labour councils for their support in 2010: **AEU (Vic), AMIEU (Vic), AMWU (Vic), ANF (Vic), ASU A&S (Vic), ASU VPS (Vic), Ballarat RTLC, CEPU T&S (Vic), CFMEU C&G (Vic), CPSU SPSF (Vic), ETU (Vic), Geelong THC, MUA (Vic), NTEU (Vic), QCU, RTBU (Vic), SWTLC, TCFUA (Vic), UCIW, VIEU, VTHC**

AAWL Team

Our work would not be possible without the contributions and leadership of the Executive and Area Coordinators. In particular we would like to thank the people who spend much volunteer time developing our campaigns and materials and distributing our news to a growing audience of labour activists globally.

Asia Pacific Currents

Our radio program is broadcast on Community Radio 3CR every Saturday morning. It provides critical news and analysis of labour issues in the Asia Pacific region. This year, the broadcasting team introduced the Red Star award for remarkable and significant examples of struggle and solidarity. In 2010 two awards were presented. They were given to:

Somboon Sikhamdokkae and the workers at the Bangkok Weaving Factory who, after a 15 year battle, won a legal battle against their employer for compensation. The workers have byssinosis, a very serious occupational respiratory disease common among textiles workers who inhale too much cotton and other dust.

The 10 women workers members of the KMWU at Kiryung Electronics. After a strike that lasted over five years, they won their fight to become permanent.



Kiryung Electronics originally claimed they were subcontractors. This win was particularly significant as it is the first time in Korea that an employer has hired dismissed irregular workers into permanent positions.

You can listen to Asia Pacific Currents on 3CR at 855 AM in Melbourne, but you can also listen to live web broadcasts and download the podcasts at aawl.org.au/radio

Public meetings

We continued to hold public and general meetings each month over 2010. Significant meetings on the struggle against racism and fascism, on women workers organising, on the workers movement in Iran and on Occupational Health & Safety campaigns were later used to provide material for our publications and radio programs.

Asian Workers Organising

Our newsletter provides in depth articles about global solidarity issues and reports on the discussions held at AAWL meetings, particularly when we have presentations from international guests. In 2010 we published five issues, on topics ranging from Indigenous issues in Australia to the global struggle for a living wage, from women workers organising to campaigns to free union prisoners in Korea and other countries, and the campaign to stop the killings of unionists in the Philippines. All our publications are on our website: aawl.org.au

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Leaflets

We have a big web presence, but there is no substitute to distributing leaflets at big meetings and demonstrations to promote our events and the idea of internationalism in the workers movement. In 2010 we distributed ***How do we achieve a global ban on asbestos?*** at the Melbourne OHS Reps Health & Safety conference. We distributed the ***Free Han Sang Kyun*** leaflet co-authored with the KMWU and AMWU and we published a ***Free Mansour Osanloo*** leaflet to support the solidarity campaign of the RTBU.

At May Day we had ***Workers: Organise to Win!*** in support of the mass uprising in Thailand, with our ***May Day statement*** on the reverse, written in collaboration with comrades in more than ten countries and signed by 57 unions and workers' organisations in the Asia Pacific region.

Solidarity visits

We welcomed comrades from many countries. Significant among our meetings were the discussions with representatives of KASBI, which is a very dynamic union federation rapidly building support in Indonesia, and the discussions with a representative of the KMU Labour Centre from the Philippines about increasing solidarity campaigns against repression. AAWL delegates went to Korea and Indonesia to meet with unionists. These visits resulted in significant campaigns, for union prisoners in Korea, and for solidarity campaigns in Indonesia including the Readimix dispute that received a great deal of solidarity in Australia and in the region. This paid off with an important win for the workers.

International conferences

In Indonesia and in Australia we participated in international labour movement conferences, and we

email news: aawl.org.au/subscribe



were pleased to begin discussions with comrades from Europe and Latin America. We continued discussing global workers demands which are outlined in the proposal for a **Global Labour Movement Charter** and the concept of global campaigns of international industrial action and solidarity to achieve workers demands. In 2010 we acted on our commitment to make the Global Labour Movement Charter more accessible and the Charter document is now available in Arabic, French, Spanish, Indonesian, Somali and Chinese as well as English. There is now much interest in the Charter. We have received important amendments on the Charter as well as valuable proposals for developing our global discussions further.

Rallies

Again we participated in many rallies to support workers campaigns in our city, in our region and globally. We were key organisers in rallies against an attempt by fascists to assemble in the streets of Melbourne (which was defeated) and in solidarity rallies against the violent repression of workers in Thailand in May.

Website & mini news

In addition to our main site and our mini news email service, we now have AAWL on Facebook, AAWL on Twitter, AAWL at UnionBook and AAWL at iTunes. Our mini news has reached new heights of popularity. We publish mini news every fortnight, including analysis of significant international struggles, as well as reporting on news and promoting labour movement events. When we took a short break over Christmas we were inundated with requests for its publication.

Thank you

This is a lot of work for an organisation without any paid staff! It all happens thanks to you: the members and affiliates of AAWL, working together to build solidarity. Thank you. Our struggle continues. Workers change the world.

podcasts: aawl.org.au/radio



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we need a
**global labour
movement
charter**



The right of all workers to organise collectively without being subjected to violence, intimidation or legal harassment

The right to organise unions and take collective action including industrial action and solidarity actions

Secure employment

Health & Safety at work, compensation, rehabilitation

A living wage for all workers in all industries

Decent work, with appropriate hours of work proposed by workers, paid leave and paid holidays

Full rights for women workers

Indigenous workers' rights & Land Rights

Permanent residence with full employment rights for all refugees and all migrant workers in all countries

No child labour

Education, housing, health and childcare provisions

Social security and adequate welfare benefits

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