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Korean government must respect public workers' rights to collective bargaining and collective action!

An international delegation made up of 10 representatives from Public Services International (PSI), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and their affiliates travelled to South Korea on 26 September with the goal of supporting the Korean public sector workers' strike.

This campaign has been growing larger every day since our arrival in Korea. During our stay, we conducted several meetings and public dialogues to demonstrate, though sharing our experiences in the United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, that performance-related pay can bring great harm to ordinary community members who depend on public services.

Moreover, we have noted that the form of performance-related pay being imposed on the Korean public sector is much different and potentially far more dangerous than what we have experienced in our countries. Once more, we strongly urge the Korean government to stop attempting to introduce the performance-related pay and termination system, which threatens public safety and public interest.

We have been disappointed to learn that public institution employers have sought to implement the system unilaterally by passing decisions through their boards of directors, while refusing unions' requests for dialogue.

It appears that the Korean government has been directing the actions taken by public sector employers. This not only violates Korean law and jurisprudence, it is also a clear violation of the fundamental right to collective bargaining protected by ILO Conventions No. 87 (Freedom of Association and the Right to Organising), No. 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining) and No. 151 (Labour Relations [Public Service]), and, as such, is an international disgrace. We therefore call on the government and employers to listen to workers' demands to negotiate and reach an agreement with them.

We have been deeply shocked over the last five days to witness that the Korean government and employers have labelled the peaceful and lawful railway strike illegal, and suspended KRWU and Busan subway union leaders from their job positions rather than listening to their voices. This is despite the fact that several court decisions have found that orders to suspend striking workers from their job positions in 2006, 2009 and 2013 were unlawful. This is an unacceptable denial of workers' rights, and is even more shocking given the ILO's urgent intervention, at the

request of the PSI and ITF at the beginning of the strike, urging the Korean government to guarantee the right to strike according to international standards.

The Korean government has, on the contrary, sought to undermine public sector workers' legitimate strike action, going against the ILO's recommendations. We plan to report this situation back to the ILO and ask for a further intervention and will also organise the members of our unions to put further pressure on the government upon our return to our home countries. We once again demand that the Korean government and employers stop their violations of strikers' fundamental labour rights.

We also perceived the government's anti-work attitude in its imprisonment of KCTU President Han Sang-Gyun, KPTU Vice President Cho Sung-Duk and many other workers. During our time in Korea we met with these union leaders and recognised their courageous and legitimate struggle to defend the interests of workers. We stress that as long as they remain in prison, the South Korean government is calling international disgrace upon itself as an oppressive and anti-worker state. We support their actions and their plans to build international solidarity calling for their release. The government must immediately release all imprisoned workers.

Finally, we express our strong concern that while continuing to refuse workers' proposals for dialogue, the government and employers have used the excuse of maintaining normal services to bring in unexperienced substitute workers in the rail and subways causing grave dangers to public safety. We state our opposition to these measures and once again demand:

- Stop the unilateral enforcement of the performance-related pay and termination system!
- Guarantee workers' rights to collective bargaining and collective action!
- Reinstate all workers suspended from their job positions!
- Release all imprisoned workers!

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