

[ICFTU OnLine]

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Hong Kong - ICFTU Calls on Authorities to Drop Charges Against WTO Protesters

Brussels 9 January 2006 (ICFTU OnLine): On the eve of a court hearing of charges against 14 people accused of "unlawful public assembly" arising from protests at the December WTO Ministerial meeting, the ICFTU and its Global Unions partners have reiterated their call on the Hong Kong authorities for the charges to be dropped. The 14, including two Korean trade unionists, have been released on bail, and are expected to appear in court on 11 January. A delegation of ICFTU and Global Union Federation representatives is currently in Hong Kong meeting with government representatives and legislators to press for the charges to be dropped, and international trade union leaders met today with the Chinese Embassy in Geneva for the same purpose. The 14 accused are currently on a hunger strike, which will be joined by the international trade union delegation in Hong Kong.

In a letter to Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang on 5 January, the ICFTU drew attention to serious flaws in the case being presented against the 14 individuals, and suggested that in fact the charges amounted to "selective prosecution". The letter noted that beyond its legal aspects, the case should also be examined from a humanitarian perspective, given that the protesters have not been able to return to their own countries since their arrest on 17 December.

Media reports in Hong Kong in recent days have called into question the tactics used by police during demonstrations at the WTO meeting, and a senior police officer is understood to have been transferred due to inadequate police preparations for the demonstrations.

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