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South Korea: ITUC Calls on Authorities to Cease Repression of KCTU

Brussels, 7 August 2008 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has written http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/KCTU_KMWU_arrest_warrants_04-08-08.pdf to President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea strongly protesting at the government's actions in detaining Ms Jin Young-ok, First Vice-President of the ITUC-affiliated Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) and the issuing of arrest warrants against several other senior leaders of the KCTU, the Korea Metal Workers' Union (KMWU) and the Hyundai Motor Branch.

Arrest warrants have been issued against KCTU President Lee Suk-haeng and General Secretary Lee Yong-shik, KMWU President Jung Gab-deuk and First Vice-President Nam Taek-gyu and all six of the top elected officials of the Hyundai Motor Branch. The KCTU's headquarters were surrounded by police following the issuing of the warrants, persons entering the building have been searched and search warrants have been issued for the homes of those facing arrest. Family members have also been placed under surveillance.

The government's actions were taken under provisions of the Penal Code concerning "obstruction of business" following a general strike called by the KCTU on 2 July due to food safety concerns concerning imports of US beef and a series of other grievances including privatization and soaring consumer prices.

"The government's actions are completely unacceptable, and we call on President Lee to release Jin Young-ok immediately, to withdraw all the arrest warrants, and to cease the harassment and surveillance of the trade union leaders and their families. The government should be engaging in dialogue on these issues of huge importance to Korean workers, instead of once again resorting to anti-union repression," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

See also LabourStart, which has launched a public appeal calling on the Korean authorities to stop repression of the KCTU and its affiliates: www.labourstart.org/kctu

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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