

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

## ITUC OnLine

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### Trade Union Rights Restricted in Korea

Brussels, 07 October 2008 (ITUC OnLine): Today the ITUC issues a new report on the respect of core labour standards in Korea, coinciding with that country's trade policy review by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Korea has ratified neither of the ILO core Conventions on trade union rights. According to the report, the government's labour law does not meet international standards or Korea's own commitments to the ILO and OECD. The report finds evidence of serious interference from the public authorities in trade unions' activities. It further highlights that by law many public workers are not allowed to join a trade union. In practice workers employed under flexible labour arrangements are strongly discouraged from joining a trade union. Commenting on the report Guy Ryder, the ITUC general secretary said "Workers' fundamental right to organise must be respected in Korea, and the government must stop using Article 314 of the Criminal Code to harass and seek the incarceration of trade unionists for so-called 'obstruction of business'."

While Korea has ratified both ILO core Conventions on discrimination and on equal remuneration, in practice discrimination against women and foreign workers is both frequent and serious. The report notes that measures adopted by the government to address women's disadvantaged position on the labour market have not yielded their expected results. Migrant workers are particularly exposed to discrimination, and the report argues that the current employment permit system exacerbates migrant workers' vulnerability. According to the report migrant workers face enormous difficulties when seeking to join or form a trade union. "It is unfortunate that the government of Korea does not support the crucial role played by trade unions in preventing the exploitation of migrant workers," said Ryder.

Korea has ratified both ILO core Conventions on child labour, and in practice the report found no evidence that child labour is a widespread phenomenon in the country. Finally, the government has not yet ratified the ILO core Conventions on forced labour, and Korean citizens are reportedly not subject to forced labour.

To read the full report:

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Korea- FINAL.pdf>

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

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