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The government of President Roh Moo-hyun continued its record of repressing unions by ordering an all-out police assault against the Korean Government Employees Union that included the invasion and closure of over a hundred local union offices. In November, the government also forced through the Parliament a series of revised labour laws that will make it easier to hire replacement workers during strikes, and employ workers on temporary contracts. Employers continued to fire trade unionists with impunity, and frequently filed criminal charges (and demands for huge amounts of compensation) for alleged "obstruction of business" resulting from regular union activities. Police violence against strikers continued, resulting in serious injuries for some and the death of one steel worker.

Trade union rights in law

Law recognises union rights for civil servants: The law on the Establishment and Operation of Public Officials' Trade Unions went into effect on 28 January 2006. Civil servants are allowed to legally organise within administrative units predefined by the law. However, there are numerous categories of public officials who are still denied union rights, including managers, human resources personnel, personnel dealing with trade unions or industrial relations, and special public servants such as military, police, fire-fighters, politically-appointed officials, and high level public officials. A union member can work fulltime for the union, but only with the authority of the employer and while taking unpaid leave.

Civil servants have the right to collective bargaining, but the subjects of negotiation are limited to matters concerning trade unions, members' pay and welfare and other working conditions. Hence trade unions cannot address other economic and social issues. Law and budgets prevail over Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs), which makes it possible for the government to propose a budget that will nullify them. Trade unions can file complaints about unfair labour practices, but no sanctions for such practices are foreseen. The law maintains a ban on industrial action, such as strikes and work slow-downs.

The law also prohibits public sector unionists from engaging in "acts in contravention of their duties prescribed in other laws and regulations when doing union activities". This is a very broadly worded provision that is open to abuse. Finally, public sector unionists are not permitted to be involved in any sort of "political activities".

The bar on collective action and other restrictions prompted strong opposition to the law by the Government Employees Union (KGEU), which is affiliated to the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), and government repression of the KGEU (see Violations section). Among other issues, the KGEU notes that if it was to register and become a legal trade union under the new law, it would have to expel many of its present members, such as fire fighters or public servants at grade 5 or higher, or public servants exercising a number of different responsibilities.

Passage of law on irregular workers erodes protection: In the last days of the Parliamentary session in November, the government pushed through Parliament a new law that allows expanded use of temporary contracts for workers for up to two years. The law will go into effect in July 2007

for companies with more than 300 workers. For enterprises with between 100 to 299 workers, the law will be applied starting in July 2008, and will extend coverage to factories with less than 100 workers in September 2008.

Such contracts deprive workers of certain rights under the law, and entail less advantageous working conditions and less pay. Employers are also able to hire these contract workers without significant constraints, increasing flexibility in employment and reducing leverage of unionised workforces to bargain effectively with their employer. Unions fear that this new law will make temporary contracts the prevalent form of employment and significantly erode existing labour protections. Cases cited by the KCTU include Korea Telecom, service workers at hotels, Disabled Persons Call Taxis in Seoul, Hyundai Heavy Industries, Seoul Grand Park. All these companies had significant numbers of union members who were contract workers, identified as union activists by management, and who did not have their contract renewed when it expired.

In a freedom of association complaint filed at the ILO in April 2005 against the government, the KCTU argues that irregular workers constitute 55.9 per cent of the work force (approximately 8.16 million people), according to the 2004 survey of the Korean National Statistical Office. The government disputes that figure, claiming 36.6 per cent are irregular.

Right to strike - denied to many workers: The 1997 Trade Union and Labour Relations Adjustment Act (TULRAA) and public service legislation ban strikes by people working for the central government or local governments, and by those involved in the production of military goods. The law sets out a long list of "essential services" where the right to strike can be heavily restricted by the imposition of mandatory mediation and arbitration procedures. In 2003, the ILO called on the government to re-define in law "essential services in the strict sense of the term" but since then the government has taken no steps to do so.

By law, unions are required to go through a mandatory ten day "mediation" period before they can take industrial action. However, for public services and services which are classified as "essential", this mediation period is 15 days.

Under the 1999 law on establishment and operation of trade unions for teachers, members of this profession do not have the right to strike. According to the government, this restriction is based on the pretext of protecting students' right to learn.

Compulsory arbitration for disputes in "essential services": The TULRAA provides for compulsory arbitration for disputes in "essential public services" if the parties cannot come to an agreement on their own. The Labour Relations Commission (LRC) has the sole authority to determine whether to impose compulsory arbitration. In a complaint filed with the ILO, the KCTU, KGEU, and the Korean Federation of Transportation, Public and Social Service Workers Union (KPSU) maintained that LRC decisions on compulsory arbitration are taken systematically to prevent workers from going on strike. Referral of a dispute for compulsory arbitration means that further industrial action is prohibited. The arbitration award produced by an arbitration committee ends the dispute, and the award has the same effect as a collective agreement. If industrial action is taken, it is by definition illegal, and management can initiate criminal proceedings. Arrest warrants can be issued against union leaders, and management can call on the police to remove striking workers from the premises.

In industrial disputes in "non-essential" public services, the conclusion of mediation opens up the possibility of taking industrial action, including a strike or lockout.

Strikes are also illegal if they are not specifically about labour conditions, such as wages, welfare and working hours. This is contrary to ILO standards.

Emergency powers to impose compulsory arbitration in public services: The TULRAA also provides to the Minister of Labour with extensive powers to declare a situation of "Emergency Arbitration" which immediately halts all industrial action and compels the union to enter mediation. If the mediation is unsuccessful, the LRC can compel the labour dispute to enter a process of compulsory, binding arbitration. The only limitations on this power are the dispute must be related

to public services, and the Minister must decide that the disruption is large enough in scale and/or has a "special" character that the Minister thinks is "likely" to make the economy worse or disrupt "normal life."

The Minister used the "Emergency Arbitration" power twice in 2005 to end strikes by Air Asiana pilots, and by the Korean Airlines Flight Crew Union (KALFCU). Air transport is not listed as an "essential service" in the law.

Right to demonstrate limited: Under the Law on Assembly and Demonstration, any gathering is banned within a hundred metres of foreign diplomatic missions. As a result many large companies, such as Samsung, have invited embassies to rent offices in their buildings. This tactic effectively prevents workers from demonstrating in front of the company's headquarters.

Interference in internal trade union affairs: The TULRAA initially prohibited employers from remunerating union leaders from 1 January 2002. Unionists strongly protested against this restriction, stating that this matter should be left to the discretion of negotiations between the employer and union, and succeeded in delaying implementation of this provision until 2006. In the tripartite deal signed on 11 September, implementation of this provision was deferred until 2009 but there was no change made in the law to delete this measure. The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association noted in its 309th report that "the prohibition of the payment of full-time union officials by employers is a matter which should not be subject to legislative interference" and "therefore calls upon the government to repeal section 24(2) of the TULRAA."

The law also bans dismissed workers from remaining members of a union, and states that non-union members are not eligible for trade union office. Under ILO standards, such matters should be left to the discretion of the trade unions' statutes.

The TULRAA allowed for immediate trade union pluralism at industrial and national level from 1997, but implementation of union pluralism at the company level has been repeatedly delayed. Originally, formation of competing unions in workplaces would be allowed by 2002, but then the ban was extended until 31 December 2006. However, during the year, it was again decided to push back the implementation of this provision, and the ban was extended until 2009.

Third party intervention still hindered: The Ministry of Labour must be notified of the identity of third parties involved in collective bargaining and industrial disputes. Sanctions are foreseen if they intervene without the Ministry being notified. Current requirements for the registration of third parties make this a very cumbersome operation.

Criminalising union activity – "Obstruction of Business" in penal code: Employers used Article 314 of the Criminal Code, barring "Obstruction of Business" to systematically harass and seek the incarceration of union leaders, and to try and bankrupt unions. Despite the abusive and discriminatory way in which Article 314 was used against workers, the government did nothing to intervene or clarify the law – preferring to remain complicit in the anti-union actions perpetrated under this criminal code. The charge of "Obstruction of Business" was indiscriminately used by vengeful employers against union leaders who were seeking to collectively bargain, hold meetings, conduct strikes and pickets, and other basic, fundamental union activities. Some employers such as Kiryung Electronics went to absurd lengths to charge workers – such as hiring pro-management thugs to attack union members sitting in front of the factory, and then pressing charges against them under Article 314 for seeking to defend themselves. Employers also commonly used the government's prosecution of workers under this law to justify further company disciplinary measures, including termination.

Article 314 carries heavy penalties under law – a worker found guilty faces up to five years imprisonment or a fine of up to 15 million won (about 16,000 USD).

Special economic zones (SEZs): The law on Special Economic Zones (SEZs) of July 2003 contains preferential provisions in relation to foreign companies investing in the SEZs. It exempts them from many national regulations on the protection of the environment and labour standards. It is feared that this will result in further violations of workers' rights. The trade unions have objected

particularly to the fact that the new law makes it easy to hire "irregular" workers, who will have little or no protection.

Migrant workers: The Act on Employment of Foreign Labourers, and the Employment Permit System, allows employers to violate migrant workers' trade union rights with impunity. Migrant workers are permitted only three years' work before they must return to their own country, and are strictly forbidden from changing their employer during their stay in South Korea.

Government labour reforms fall well short of international standards: When Korea joined the OECD in 1996, the government publicly pledged that it would "reform existing laws on industrial relations in line with internationally accepted standards, including those concerning basic rights such as freedom of association and collective bargaining". In September 2005, the government released a "Roadmap" of 34 labour reform issues to be proposed to Parliament. Both the FKTU and the KCTU withdrew from the Tripartite "High Level Panel", claiming that the government's proposed measures do not meet international standards. But the FKTU later re-joined, and was involved in reaching a tripartite agreement on 11 September 2006. Outlines of the deal reached include ending compulsory arbitration in "essential services" in exchange for a significant expansion of the sectors included in the definition of "essential services", and provision for employers to bring in replacement workers during industrial actions. Moreover, striking public service workers will be required to maintain a level of "minimum services" so as not to inconvenience the public.

Observers noted that there was no change to the "emergency mediation" sections of the TULRAA, raising the possibility that the government would use these clauses to once again compel compulsory arbitration. Employers will also be given the right to offer financial compensation to workers who are found to be dismissed unfairly, in lieu of reinstatement. A particular concern is the proposed expansion of sectors covered under "public services" which would make strike action vulnerable to government intervention using "Emergency Arbitration" provisions under the TULRAA.

The "9-11 Agreement" served as the basis for the passage of reformed labour laws through Parliament in November which still fell well short of the government's commitment to the OECD.

Trade union rights in practice

Reprisals for opposition to new law on public officials' unions: After the Korean Government Employees' Union (KGEU) refused to register as a union under the terms of the Law on the Establishment and Operation of Public Officials' Unions, the government threatened to cut central budget support to any local authority that negotiated a collective agreement with the KGEU. The government further prohibited local government authorities from conducting check-off for KGEU dues, maintaining that the union was an unlawful organisation and that therefore permitting the collecting of dues would abet its illegal acts.

"Illegal" strikes and police violence: While it is not mandatory for the LRC to refer all disputes in "essential public service" enterprises to mediation, the practice so far has been to do so systematically, thus consistently denying workers in this sector the right to strike. The practice has been to delay or stall negotiations to the point where the union feels it has no solution other than to take strike action.

Collective action often becomes "illegal" outside of essential services as well, given the complicated legal procedures for organising a strike. Such action continued to be severely repressed by the government after being criticised for leniency at the beginning of its term of office. During the past seven years, at least 1,000 unionists have been imprisoned. In the vast majority of cases, the principal charge has been "obstruction of business", or trying to illegally organise trade unions in the public sector.

The authorities use the violence that takes place in some demonstrations and strikes to justify the detention of trade union leaders. Unions insist police action is unnecessarily provocative and disproportionately brutal. Prosecutors are quick to issue arrest warrants as soon as workers go on strike, or sometimes when one simply is announced. Police or security agencies mount surveillance

operations - occasionally sophisticated ones - in order to capture strike leaders. Unions' offices and telecommunications are routinely monitored. Unionists striking "illegally" often receive a one year prison sentence or are fined up to three million won (2,700 USD).

The apparent impunity with which a union member can be killed by the authorities is reflected by the death of Kim Tae-hwan, the chair of FKTU's Chungju regional chapter, who was killed on 14 June 2005 while he was on the picket line in front of the Sajo Remicon cement factory.

Prison conditions: Imprisoned trade unionists are generally isolated from one another in order to prevent them from taking collective action while in jail. Like many other prisoners, they are confined to their cells 23 hours a day and are allowed only one seven minute visit from lawyers or relatives per day.

"Paper unions": In a context where trade union pluralism is prohibited by law at plant level, many employers have resorted to creating management-controlled unions, known as "paper unions". As they are impossible to democratise from within, owing to management's hostility, and since it is legally forbidden to organise alternative unions, workers are left with few, if any, rights and cannot engage in genuine collective bargaining. The continued ban on union pluralism at the plant level reinforces the negative impact of these "paper unions" in denying workers their collective bargaining rights.

Violations in 2006

Police beat striking worker to death at Pohang Steel Corporation (POSCO): The brutality and excessive violence frequently used by police against workers claimed another victim on 1 August, when Ha Joong Keun, a member of the Pohang Steel Local Union, died from the head injuries inflicted by riot police while he was demonstrating with the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions (KFCITU) outside the POSCO headquarters on 16 July. Eyewitnesses reported on that day that the police used their metal shields to repeatedly hammer Ha Joong Keun's head. The strike at POSCO was sparked by management's use of a labour sub-contractor to provide workers to the factory, and the employer's unwillingness to ensure that sub-contractor bargains in good faith with the union. Workers went on strike on 13 July, sitting in at the factory, and riot police were called in and surrounded the factory. KFCITU then organized the 16 July rally to support the workers at which the attack against Ha Joong Keun occurred. Police using water cannons also broke up another rally, organized by the KCTU in the ensuing week. When the approximately 2500 workers finally ended their sit in on 23 July and left the factory, police swooped in and arrested 138 workers who they identified as the union leaders and representatives of the striking workers. Despite public calls and letters from the ITUC and other international trade unionists to top government officials, no separate and impartial investigation was held to focus on the killing.

Systematic and pervasive efforts by the government to intimidate the KGEU: The government engaged in a systematic national campaign of persecution against the KGEU and its leaders. Government efforts included intimidation of leaders and rank and file members, violence against union rallies, arrests, systemic pressure against local and provincial government offices to withdraw recognition of the KGEU and refuse to collect union dues, and finally, and finally, a coordinated campaign of violence by police and military to forcibly close and seal off KGEU offices.

At the core of the dispute was the fact that the government refused to recognise elected KGEU leaders, and the KGEU refused to submit an application to register under the newly promulgated law on Establishment and Operation of Public Officials' Unions. For this reason, the government declared the KGEU an "illegal" organisation.

On 8 February, the government released its Joint Announcement related to Public Officials Unions law. In that announcement, the government immediately challenged the union by accusing the KGEU of electing as President "a person who has been de-commissioned or dismissed" as a result of the KGEU's collection union action in November 2004 and "and thus cannot be qualified to represent a public officials trade union as its president."

The government increased pressure on the KGEU when the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) issued on 22 March a "Directive to Promote the Transformation of Illegal Organisations into Legal Trade Unions (Voluntary Withdrawal of Membership)." The Directive set out to compel local government to "issue work orders" to compel public officials to withdraw their membership from the KGEU, and enumerate the disciplinary measures which could be imposed on officials who do not comply. The MOGAHA also spelled out other measures in the Directive, including using "heavy disciplinary penalties against leaders (exclusion from appointment)", "forceful measures such as closure of the offices of illegal organisations", "nullification of all existing agreements and prohibition of all consultation and assistance", "removal of the name plaque" and instructs local government managers to "secure, if necessary, the cooperation of police" to carry out these measures. A clear prohibition on providing check-off services for KGEU membership dues was included.

The Directive also set out the parameters for a campaign to harass KGEU members through what was euphemistically called "man-to-man persuasion team." Public office managers were instructed to contact all KGEU members at the office, by phone and through visiting their homes to compel workers and their families to withdraw from the union, and explain the dire consequences for punishment if they refused to do so.

Public office supervisors who failed to take the necessary actions against the KGEU were threatened with punishment. Municipal and provincial governments which did not act against the KGEU were informed they would likely receive cuts in budget allocations from the central government and be more likely to face hostile evaluations and audits of their finances.

The next step in the campaign was a government directive to forcibly close down KGEU offices. The MOGAHA ordered on 3 August that government offices must "take thorough countermeasures, including forceful closing down of the offices of illegal government employees' organisations, against illegal activities." An original deadline for nation-wide action was set for 31 August and resulted in violent police attacks, and the closure of two KGEU offices. MOGAHA then came out with two new Directives (on September 1 and 13) that ordered all government offices "to actively force implementation of actions to forcefully close down the offices of illegal government employees' organisations by 22 September, 2006." The Government onslaught came full force on 22 September, when KGEU offices all over the country came under attack from riot police and their auxiliaries. Police surrounded KGEU offices, beating and breaking through groups of protesters (many of whom were arrested) to attack and seize KGEU offices. Police used a barrage of weapons used to gain entry, including fire extinguishers, water cannons, fire-fighting flame retardant dust, hammers, claw hammers, hammer drills and power saws. Workers and KGEU leaders, often barricaded in the offices, were attacked, arrested, and hauled out of the offices – and doors and windows were then locked down to prevent the KGEU from entering again. By 10 October, the authorities had forced the closure of 125 KGEU offices (approximately 50 per cent of the union's offices) and arrested over 100 persons from the KGEU and allied organisations. Police pressed charges against scores of KGEU members, mostly for violation of clauses on obstruction of performance of official duties (Criminal Act) as well as illegal labour actions in violation of the Public Officials Unions Act.

When the KGEU joined protests against the proposed US-Korea Free Trade Agreement, the government threatened to dismiss public officials who play a leading role in the protests, and discipline KGEU members involved. Thirteen KGEU leaders were arrested for union activities connected to this campaign.

Attack on Rural Development Association union: On May 25, 2006, about 200 KGEU members gathered peacefully in front of the Rural Development Administration (RDA) in order to protest against the agency's restructuring plans. Although the authorities had been notified in advance about the union rally, riot police violently invaded the demonstration and blocked participants from joining the rally. Several trade unionists were severely beaten by both riot and plainclothes police officers, including Kim Jeong Soo, KGEU Secretary General, and Choi Nak Sam, Secretary of Public Relations. Both had to be taken to the hospital. Many other people were arrested, in particular eight KGEU members, against whom warrants of detention were issued and who were brought to the Suwon Joongbu police station. The Court subsequently approved four of these warrants, which led to the detention of Park Woon Yong, Secretary of Organising and Dispute, Lee Jeong Soo, Director

of Organising, as well as two KGEU vice-presidents, Park Kee Han and Han Seok Woo. The other four were released. After the dispersal of the rally, another 99 KGEU members were arrested in front of the police station while the union leaders were trying to negotiate their colleagues' release with the police, in vain. These members were released almost 40 hours after their arrest.

Arrests, suspensions, and terminations to break Korean Rail Strike: When negotiations between Korean Railroad Corporate (KORAIL) and the Korean Rail Workers Union (KRWU) failed in late 2005, the union and employer in this "essential service" industry sought mediation of the dispute. The KRWU twice postponed a planned strike (in November 2005, and January 2006) to provide more time for negotiations. The Labor Relations Commission explicitly and publicly indicated that it was not prepared to allow a strike to take place, writing in a notice that "when there exists a strong possibility that [the union will] undertake industrial action, we will immediately refer the dispute to Compulsory Arbitration." Late in the evening of 28 February, only three hours before the KRWU strike was to start on 1 March, the LRC ordered the parties to arbitration, and when the strike went forward, the government promptly declared the action illegal.

Within hours, the government issued arrest warrants for the KRWU's senior 11 union officers. The government's move against the leadership continued when arrest warrants for another 15 leaders were issued on 3 March. To break the strike, management imposed suspensions on 387 workers on 2 March, and another 1853 workers on 3 March. A total of 198 KRWU leaders and activists were hit with legal charges filed by KORAIL, alleging they were guilty of "obstruction of business" and violations of the TULRAA. Meanwhile, riot police threatened pickets, prompting workers to disperse, and then moved to track down and arrest 401 strikers. By 4 March, the combined force of management and government intimidation had broken the KRWU strike. Three more leaders were arrested by the police on 17 March, and by 22 March, KORAIL had suspended all 2680 union members who participated in the strike and initiated disciplinary procedures against them.

KRWU union leaders who had evaded arrest surrendered themselves to the police on 6 April. Most were released, pending investigation and trial, after two days. However, KRWU President Young-hoon Kim was held in police custody for over two months. Other union leaders, including the KRWU Seoul Provincial President, and Chair of the Irregular Workers Section of the KRWU, were also held for extended periods of time. Meanwhile 19 union leaders were terminated by KORAIL, and the company filed a major lawsuit, claiming over \$US 13.5 million in damages from the union.

Prosecutors jail hundreds of construction sector unionists on criminal charges based on collective bargaining: Employers and the government colluded to prosecute leaders of local construction workers' unions affiliated with the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions (KFCITU). Since most construction workers are sub-contracted workers, local prosecutors (supported by the construction companies) have charged that the unions, by forcing local site managers to sign collective bargaining agreements, are "extorting" funds on behalf of informal sector workers that they do not have the right to represent. In the past year, more than 100 construction sector union members were jailed for seeking to organise and represent informal sector construction workers. The charges carry significant penalties, meaning that if they are convicted the imprisoned trade unionists could be jailed for years.

Systematic denial of freedom of association at LaFarge Halla Cement: Woojin Industry, a sub-contract firm created by former LaFarge Halla middle managers which operates directly under the orders and control of LaFarge Halla, launched a campaign of intimidation against its 35 employees when it learned that more than two-thirds of them had joined the Korean Chemical and Textile Workers Federation (KCTF) in early March. On 9 March, two days after learning of the workers' action, La Farge Halla proposed a new set of plans for its ten sub-contract firms in its Okgye factory that proposed phasing out Woojin Industry. Former LaFarge Halla management employee Kim Eunsoo, the CEO of Woojin, reported the news to the workers the same day and in the first of many instances directly tied the unionisation of the employees to a future decision on whether Woojin would shut down. Woojin workers report that on 11 March, in a meeting with all the workers, Kim Eunsoo clearly stated that "If you abandon joining the union, I will not close down the company." When the KCTF met with Kim Eunsoo on 28 March to initiate collective bargaining, he refused to enter substantive negotiations because he stated the Woojin would close down on 31 March. Woojin ended operations on 1 April, and transferred its equipment and assets to two other sub-contract firms substantially controlled by LaFarge Halla.

On 25 September, the Gangwon Regional Labour Relations Commission ruled that LaFarge Halla is the real employer of the dismissed KCTF members – thereby decisively shredding the myth of Woojin’s independence from LaFarge – and ordered the reinstatement by LaFarge of all workers who had been employed for more than two years, and pay these workers for the period of time since they were terminated on 31 March. Since LaFarge Halla did not follow that Commission’s order, the KCTF requested on 16 October that the National Labour Relations Commission take action, and at the end of the year, that case was still pending. On 18 December, the Gangwon Regional LRC issued a second order, finding that LaFarge Halla had engaged in unfair labour practices, and had violated the TULRAA sections 84 and 86 by failing to implement the previous order to reinstate the fired workers.

The KCTF filed a complaint with the Korean National Contact Point (NCP), alleging that LaFarge Halla had violated numerous provisions of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The NCP’s response was highly unsatisfactory because it limited itself to disputing interpretations of the Guidelines, repeating allegations by management, and ultimately refusing to conduct any further investigation until the National Labour Relations Commission had issued a ruling.

Sejong Hospital – intimidation and violence against the union: The Korean Health and Medical Workers Union (KHMWU) exercised its right to strike in January after extensive negotiations to reach an agreement with management resulted in a deadlock. From that point onwards, Sejong Hospital refused to conduct further negotiations and engaged in a campaign of systematic repression against the union. Management hired security guards who disrupted the KHMWU’s daily pickets in front of the hospital and launched serious assaults against KHMWU leaders and rank and file members. One attack by the guards resulted in breaking the leg of a KHMWU member. Hospital management also proceeded to fire union activists among the membership, and targeted the union’s office by cutting off the electricity in early February, and then raiding the office and destroying records and office equipment and supplies.

The union filed a legal appeal against management’s anti-union acts, and the court ordered the hospital management to allow the union’s protests to continue without interference, and to resume good faith negotiations with the union. Public Services International (PSI) mounted a major international campaign in support of the KHMWU and Hong Myung-ok, the President of the KHMWU, who started a sit-down vigil at the hospital on 27 February.

Busting the union at Kiryung Electronics: Workers belonging to the Kiryung Electronics Workers’ Union Local of the KMWU continued to suffer the effects of a systematic anti-union campaign. Kiryung Electronics discriminatorily terminated contracts and dismissed members of the union beginning in July 2005. They have not been reinstated since and furthermore 20 union members face huge damage compensation suits filed by the company, based on "obstruction of business" charges. Most of the workers concerned are women that earned minimum wage levels prior to their dismissal. The union president was imprisoned.

Migrant Trade Union still battling for recognition: The government continued to refuse to register the Migrant Trade Union (MTU), organised in April 2005, and would not let it engage in trade union representation or bargaining. When the MTU filed a legal appeal against the government’s refusal, the first court to hear the case upheld the government’s position. The Seoul High Court later ruled however that there were no legal grounds for the government’s request that MTU file a list of its members with its application. Furthermore, the High Court ruled that migrant workers have the right to organise unions, no matter what their legal status in South Korea.

Meanwhile, on 25 April, Anwar Hossain, President of the MTU, was finally released after 11 months in detention. His release came on grounds of ill health, and upon release, he immediately was admitted to a hospital for treatment for his injuries and illnesses. Hossain had been in jail since 14 May 2005, when more than 30 police savagely beat him as he was heading home, and then dragged him off to jail.

Still no recognition for police trade union: The National Police Agency Employees’ Trade Union continued to be refused recognition by the police, or an opportunity to dialogue with the government.