

December 22, Illegal Raid on KCTU Office to Arrest Railway Union Leaders!

Today, the 14th day of a strike against rail privatization by the Korean Railway Workers' Union (KRWU), police raided the headquarters of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) in an attempt to arrest KRWU leaders thought to be hiding there. Arrest warrants have been issued for 28 KRWU officers, including the KRWU president and central leadership.

Starting at roughly 8:00am over 4,000 police surrounded the Kyunghyang Newspaper building, in which the KCTU headquarters are located. At roughly 9:20 the police announced their intentions to "execute arrest warrants" against the KRWU officers.

After attempts to opening the front doors were blocked by KCTU members and supporters inside the building, the police called the emergency fire brigade for assistance. Members of the emergency brigade broke the glass front doors, which shattered on the people inside. The police then proceeded to push their way into the building by force, using capsaicin (pepper spray) and arresting those inside who attempted to block their path.

Hearing the news, more KCTU members and supporters gathered outside the building where they were also met with pepper spray and police force. At 4:00pm thousands of workers and community members gathered at Seodaemun intersection down the street marched a short distance before converging near the Kyunghyang Newspaper building for a impromptu candlelight protest.

All the while, the police slowly penetrated the KCTU headquarters arresting resisting workers. In total some 130 people were arrested, including leaders of the KCTU and its affiliated industrial union.

In the end, however, the police did not succeed in arresting a single member of the KRWU leadership. At roughly 8:00pm, they announced that they could not find the KRWU officers, who were not in the building.

The raid on the KCTU building, which was carried without a search warrant and did not lead to the execution of arrest warrants, is clearly illegal. Moreover, it is an affront not only on the striking railway workers, but on the entire Korean democratic labor movement.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) have already denounced the raid in a joint statement. <http://www.ituc-csi.org/korean-police-attack-kctu?lang=en>

The KCTU has announced plans to take legal action. More importantly it has announced plans to escalate its struggle to defend the KRWU strike and call for the resignation of the Park Geun-hye administration. These plans include a partial strike on December 23 and a general strike and mass protest on December 28.

Meanwhile, the KRWU strike goes on unabated with the force of the entire democratic labor movement behind it.

Please support the KRWU and KCTU.

Join the labourstart campaign and send a protest letter to the South Korean government and Korail (employer): http://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=2072

Follow news of the strike on facebook and the ITF campaign page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Support-railway-workers-right-to-strike-in-Korea/623128284413850>
<http://www.itfglobal.org/campaigns/campaigns-3867.cfm>