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Mr Lee Myung-bak
President of the Republic of South Korea
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File Reference:PW/CDT/rights
Contact Name: Peter Waldorff

27 October, 2010

Dear President Lee Myung-bak,

Korea campaign for Freedom of Association

Public Services International is calling for the Korean government to finally honour its international commitments and respect workers' rights.

For many years, PSI has repeatedly been obliged to write to your government to protest serious violations of fundamental workers' rights. The anti-union activities of your government are well documented, and the number of arrests and severity of prison sentences as well as physical violence is increasing.

When Korea joined the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development in 1996, it was on the proviso that your government would take the necessary measures to bring Korea's labour law in line with international standards.

Korea has failed to adhere to or ratify ILO conventions No. 87 (right to freedom of association) and No. 98 (right to collective bargaining) and your government has repeatedly refused offers of technical assistance from the International Labour Organization to bring your legislation into line with international standards or to comply with recommendations made by the Committee of Freedom of Association.

Your government routinely uses criminal sanctions under Article 314 of the criminal code to arrest and imprison trade unionists for exercising their legitimate right to conduct trade union activities.

The Korean law denies workers in precarious or irregular employment the right to join a trade union and bargain collectively. Employers systematically engage workers on precarious employment contracts specifically to prevent them from forming and joining trade unions.

Public sector workers are subjected to anti-union discrimination and disciplinary measures and their collective agreements are unilaterally cancelled by the government. Whole categories of

government workers are prevented from organising through an overly broad definition of “essential services”.

PSI, together with the ITUC, TUAC and the other Global Union federations IMF, BWI, EI, ICEM, IFJ, ITGLWF, IUF and UNI are calling on affiliates to take action in solidarity with Korean workers ahead of the G20.

It is time that the Korean government honours its international commitments and respects workers' rights.

I look forward to your immediate response and positive action to address this request.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Waldorff', written in a cursive style.

Peter Waldorff
General Secretary