



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Support South Korean National Workers' Rally

written by Korean American Support Committee for KCTU
November 16, 2022



Los Angeles rally to support South Korean workers, Nov. 5. Photo: Insook Lee

We strongly support the Korean National Workers' Rally which will bring down the hammer on the Yoon Soek-Yeol administration's anti-worker and anti-democratic actions!

We mourn the tragic loss of life in the Itaewon disaster.

"We cannot live like this anymore!"

Soaring inflation and the destruction of the social security net, unstable employment

and low wages: This is the anguish of working people who are shackled to long hours and murderous conditions in their workplaces.

Working people who suffered in the last foreign exchange crisis continue to face the brink of disaster in an unstable economic climate within a country where the profits of the wealthy always come first.

Recently a young woman working for Paris Baguette, part of the SPC group, and a construction worker in Anseong both lost their lives in terrible accidents. Miners in Bonghwa are still trapped after a tunnel collapsed, 14 hours after it was reported. Even though 2,400 workers lose their lives at their worksite annually, no companies are punished.

The Yoon Seok-Yeol administration is trying to dismantle the Workplace Accident Penalty Act, which is already incredibly weak. Ignoring the working conditions that put workers to death is a form of murder. The Workplace Accident Penalty Act, which currently allows for the pockets of companies to be lined by the blood of workers, should be strengthened to include workplaces with less than five employees.

Strengthening the public sector, such as expanding public medical facilities and caring for the underprivileged, is a social demand and a responsibility of the state. However, as we experienced throughout the pandemic, with each crisis the wealth of the rich grows daily while working people sacrifice and suffer. The Yun Seok-Yeol administration, which gave special favors to the wealthy through deregulation and tax cuts, is planning on the privatization of railways, medical care and education.

By drastically reducing the budget for jobs, public rental housing, youth, the disabled and social welfare, they are destroying the quality of life for working people and by reducing personnel in the public sector they are endangering the safety of all. They cannot stand to breathe and live with working people. The privatization of

the public sector, which places suffering upon working people to fill the coffers of the wealthy, must be stopped.

Temporary employees and subcontracted employees are not recognized as employees, so they are not protected by the Occupational Safety and Health Act in case of industrial accidents. They are also denied the right to collectively bargain with their employer. Subcontracted workers work under the supervision of an employer, but employers hide behind the contracted company and mobilize public authorities to oppress the workers, making it illegal to fight against unfair treatment and dismissal.

And as we see in the recent struggle of subcontractors of Daewoo Chosun, a company which demanded 47 billion won in financial damages from workers who earn 2 million won a month, employers demand absolutely unrealistic amounts of financial compensation from workers.

Unless everybody who works is recognized as a worker, and unless the justified right to strike is restored, this vicious cycle will continue.

The pain and anguish of workers who have protested against this system, going as far as self-immolation and death, is hard to describe with words.

It is a terrifying reality in which workers must fight to defend their constitutionally guaranteed right to collectively bargain and take collective action.

There is an urgent need to revise Articles 2 and 3 of the Labor Union Act, which deprives workers their rights to unionize, bargain and go on strike, squeezing dry the blood of workers to fill the stomachs of corporations.

They say that the Vigilant Storm War Exercise, which preemptively targets the North, will continue. These nuclear war exercises target North Korea by land, sea and sky. North Korea has launched missiles in response.

The risk of the recurrence of war is increasing endlessly due to these exercises that the Yoon Seok Yeol government is engaging in with foreign powers.

In conclusion, we cannot live like this anymore. There is only one way to achieve national peace and reunification and restore the legitimate rights of the working people, and that is to win the struggle against the forces which are anti-unification and anti-democratic.

Stop privatization of the public sector!

Strengthen the Workplace Accident Penalty Act!

Amend Articles 2 and 3 of the Labor Union Act!

Stop the ROK-U.S. Combined War Exercises!

Dismantle the ROK-U.S. Alliance!

Korean American Support Committee for KCTU (Korean Confederation of Trade Unions)

November 5, 2022

