



INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA – UAW

RAY CURRY, *PRESIDENT*

FRANK STUGLIN, *SECRETARY-TREASURER*

VICE-PRESIDENTS: CHUCK BROWNING • TERRY DITTES • CINDY ESTRADA

October 15, 2021

His Excellency Moon Jae-in
President of the Republic of Korea
Blue House
Seoul, Korea

Dear Honorable President Moon:

On behalf of the one million active and retired members of the International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW), I am writing to demand the immediate and unconditional release of Brother Yang Kyeung Soo, President of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). The UAW condemns his September 2 arrest for exercising his right to free speech. We condemn the September 15 decision to hold him in jail pending trial.

We see no merit in the charges against Brother Yang - obstruction of general traffic through demonstration, violation of the Act on Assembly and Demonstration, and acts relating to infectious disease control. The charges stem from a July 3 rally, at which the KCTU demanded a moratorium on layoffs and dismissals as well as protection for the lives and livelihoods of South Korean workers.

South Korean trade unionists suspect that the motive behind the charges against President Yang is to blame trade unions for the fourth wave of COVID-19 in the country. However only three positive cases of COVID-19 were identified among the 4,000 rally participants tested. Although the government claims it banned rallies to prevent the spread of infectious disease, thousands of people have been permitted to crowd into baseball stadiums, soccer matches, and even indoor concerts.

The timing of the arrest may be intended to intimidate union members before the KCTU's October 20th general strike demanding labor law reform to protect fundamental trade union rights and to abolish precarious work. The UAW is fully supportive of the general strike and its demands. In addition, we demand that the government of South Korea stop its crackdown on freedom of association and assembly immediately. We support the KCTU in its demands for full implementation in domestic law and in practice of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association as well as Convention 29 on forced labor that South Korea recently ratified. We call on multinational companies operating in South Korea to respect freedom of association.

Brother Yang is not the first KCTU leader arrested during your presidency. In December 2017, then KCTU General Secretary Lee Young-joo was arrested and charged with traffic obstruction and violation of the Act of Assembly and Demonstration. The UAW condemned her arrest and worked to obtain her freedom, as well as that of KCTU President Han Sang-gyun, who had been arrested on similar charges under the

government of President Park Geun-hye. We were very pleased that your government released both Lee and Han, and we look forward to the release of President Yang.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Curry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ray Curry
President

Cc: His Excellency Lee Soo-hyuk, Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the United States
2450 Massachusetts Avenue NW Washington, DC 20008

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