



DATE
2009-07-30

OUR REFERENCE

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Mr. Lee Myung-bak
President of the Republic
Blue House
Seoul
Republic of Korea

Police violence against striking workers

Dear President,

On behalf of LO, The Swedish Trade Union Confederation and IF Metall, we are extremely concerned with the escalating violence by riot police against the striking workers of the Ssangyong Motor Pyeongtaek plant.

Since July 16, management at the plant has blocked all food from entering the factory. On July 19, it began to disallow medical doctors and nurses from entering the compound.

At 10:00 am on July 22, riot police entered the factory compound with court officials and creditors who tried to deliver a forced eviction order. The police surrounded the paint factory where 800 workers are sitting in on the 63rd day of their strike. Over 3,000 riot police and around 30 vehicles including water cannons, ladder trucks and helicopters have been mobilized for this operation.

After news came in that police had started to advance into the compound, it was learned that the wife of the Korean Metal Workers' Union's Ssangyong Motors Branch policy director had committed suicide. She was the 28-year old mother of an 8 months old baby and of a four-year old child. She suffered stress and anxiety from receiving subpoenas and a warrant for her husband's arrest.

We are deeply concerned about the blockade on water, food, access to medicine and medical treatment for the workers as well as the constant battery with chemical substances including teargas concentrate dropped from helicopters. These represent violations against basic human dignity.

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The Swedish Trade Union Confederation

Violence and repression on this scale cannot lead to constructive industrial relations.

We urge you, as a matter of urgency and before further blood is shed, to end the brutal attack against the Ssangyong Motors Branch workers, withdraw all pending arrest warrants and release all imprisoned union leaders related to this strike.

We strongly urge your government to immediately begin negotiations with the Korean Metal Workers' Union to promote a peaceful resolution through dialogue.

Yours sincerely,

Ulla Lindqvist
Vice President
LO

Anders Ferbe
Vice President
IF Metall

LO is the central organization for 14 national trade union affiliates which organize workers within both the private and the public sectors. The 14 affiliates together have about 1.700.000 members.

IF Metall, one of the national trade unions affiliated to LO, has about 440,000 members at nearly 13,500 workplaces all over Sweden.