

President Jae-In Moon
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Dear President Moon,

I am writing on behalf of the Australian Union movement to call for the immediate release of Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) President Yang Kyeong-soo, who was arrested on 2 September.

President Yang was arrested following a peaceful demonstration held by the KCTU on 3 July to demand a moratorium on dismissals during the COVID-19 crisis and the enactment of measures to protect workers' lives and livelihoods.

We join the global trade union movement in condemning President Yang's arrest as an attempt to suppress workers' freedom of association and the right to peaceful assembly, ahead of the nationwide strike being organised by the KCTU on 20 October.

Unfortunately, we note there is a history of the Korean Government criminalising trade union leaders for exercising their right to freedom of association. Despite recent progress, including the ratification of Conventions 87 and 98 that will come into effect in 2022, Korea is ranked by the International Trade Union Confederation as among the worst countries in the world for workers, with no guarantee of rights.

We are concerned that the authorities are using the pandemic as an excuse to unduly restrict the fundamental rights of freedom of association and freedom of assembly, conducted in line with public health measures such as social distancing and mask-wearing.

The ACTU stands with President Yang and the KCTU in their struggle for rights and protections for all workers. We urge your Government to release President Yang without delay and drop the charges against him, and to respect the right of Korean workers to freedom of association.

Yours sincerely



Michele O'Neil
President
ACTU