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| His Excellency Sungnam Lim  Ambassador  Embassy of the Republic of Korea  60 Buckingham Gate,  London SW1E 6AJ | our ref fog/rc/korea  date: 18 December 2013  contact: Rosa Crawford  direct line: 02074671279  email: rcrawford@tuc.org.uk |

Dear Ambassador

KRWU right to strike

On behalf of the British Trades Union Congress and almost 6 million members of our affiliated unions and British workers, I wish to express our deep concern regarding the failure of the Government of the Republic of Korea and the railway employer KORAIL to respect the right to strike of the Korean Railway Workers’ Union (KRWU).

On 9 December 2013, KRWU began taking industrial action due to concerns over KORAIL’s restructuring plans which will cause safety problems, rising fares, reduction of services to poor and rural areas and prepare the industry for privatisation. The strike results from a failure on the part of KORAIL to enter into social dialogue. Now KORAIL is showing worrying disregard for KRWU’s right to strike, with over 8000 striking workers suspended by KORAIL and arrest warrants put out for 10 union leaders on 16 December.

This builds on a history of anti-union tactics by KORAIL. In 2009 the government and KORAIL used tactics such as criminal charges, imprisonments, suits for damages and dismissals and other disciplinary actions in retaliation against a similar KRWU strike. The denial of KRWU workers’ right to strike undermines the Republic of Korea’s obligations to international labour standards. The right to freedom of association and collective bargaining are core conventions of the ILO which the Republic of Korea is bound as a member of the ILO to uphold and affirmed it would commit to and effectively implement as part of its signing of the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement in 2010. Furthermore in 1996, the Republic of Korea made a commitment upon its entry to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) “to reform existing laws on industrial relations in line with internationally accepted standards, including those concerning basic rights such as freedom of association and collective bargaining.”. Yet, in the last year, the ILO has made urgent interventions on two occasions to raise concerns that the government is not respecting freedom of association.

I look forward to receiving confirmation from you that our concerns have been conveyed to

your government.

Yours sincerely

FRANCES O’GRADY

General Secretary