

# **Organizing Against Fear and Repression: The Case of the Migrants Trade Union, South Korea**

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## **I. Introduction**

One morning in late March 10 Chinese Korean construction workers arrived at the Jugong Apartment construction site in Gyeonggi-do where they had been working only to be told to go home. In one instant they had been laid-off without receiving any prior warning or even written notification, “difficult economic conditions” being the only reason given by their employer. These workers, of the few migrant members of the Korean Construction Workers Union are now fighting to win reinstatement.

Sadly, theirs is not a rare case. Since the economic crisis hit at the end of last year migrant workers in South Korea, the majority of them unorganized, have faced a constant threat of lay-offs in addition to loss of overtime, forced unpaid vacation and an overall reduction in wages as production rates for small and medium-size firms decrease dramatically.

Far from receiving social support in the face of these dire conditions, South Korea’s migrant workers—both documented and undocumented—are also coping with an ever more fierce attack from the government. For undocumented migrant workers, this attack takes the form of immigration raids, which increase in frequency and brutality every day, and a policy of inducing the replacement of undocumented migrant labor with native labor by providing one-time subsidies to small firms who do so. For documented migrant workers it means an attempt at revision of the minimum wage law such that wage-

reductions during training periods are increased and food and housing costs are included in the calculation of minimum wage—the latter measure already in effect through a directive of the Korean Federation of Small and Medium Business despite the fact that the minimum wage law legislation has not yet passed the National Assembly. In addition the South Korean government has announced a drastic reduction in the visa quota for migrant workers this year (from 132,000 in 2008 to 100,000 for 2009), further reducing pathways for legal migration for potential migrants struggling with unemployment in their home countries.

This situation is not unique to South Korea. Rather, it reflects the worsening conditions and increased targeting of migrant workers around the world as a result of global economic recession—one part of the general onslaught against workers which is taking place as corporations and government seek to protect profits by pushing responsibility for the crisis onto the working class.

In this context efforts to unionize migrant workers and protect their labor rights face even greater difficulties, but they have also become all the more vitally important. I am therefore very happy that the Committee on Migrant Workers and Amnesty International have chosen to sponsor this very important roundtable event. My goal today will be to share briefly the organizing experiences of the Migrants Trade Union (MTU)—the successes we have had and the challenges we face—as a way to contribute to a wider discussion of migrant worker unionization and the protection of migrant workers' labor rights.

## **II. Labor Migration to South Korea and Government Policy on Migrant Labor**

There are currently roughly 700 thousand migrant workers in South Korea, of whom slightly less than one third are undocumented. Over half (66.3% of documented migrant workers) are Chinese of Korean decent and the rest come from roughly 100 different countries including Vietnam, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Nepal.

Migrant workers began coming to South Korea in the late 1980s and early 1990s after South Korea became known internationally through the 1988 Olympics. At that time there was no system regulating foreign labor. Rather, migrants entered South Korea on tourist and other short-term visas, and quickly began to fill the dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs in small and medium-size factories that native Korean workers shunned. As a way to regulate this highly needed foreign labor force the government implemented the Industrial Trainee System in 1994. Under this system migrants were employed not as workers, but as “trainees” and were thus excluded from labor law protection, making their labor inexpensive and easily exploitable for business owners. Given the unbearable conditions that followed under the Trainee System, including low and unpaid wages, verbal and physical abuse and confiscation of passports, many trainees left their assigned factories, leading to a rise in the number of undocumented migrant workers in South Korea.

Due to heavy social criticism the government eventually introduced the Employment Permit System (EPS) in 2004, phasing out the Trainee System by 2007. Although under the EPS migrant workers are technically protected by labor law the system preserves the basic intent of the Trainee System by creating a highly unequal

relationship between workers and employer and thus facilitating exploitation and abuse, and by excluding low-skilled migrant workers from chances at long-term residence and citizenship.

In timing with the implementation of EPS, the South Korean government carried out a program of voluntary return and partial legalization in 2003, and then began a brutal policy of detention and deportation against undocumented migrant workers the following year. Since that time detention and deportation has been the only measure the government has employed for handling undocumented migrant workers, despite the fact that this policy has been largely unsuccessful in reducing their numbers and has led to widespread human rights abuses, most notably injury and even death in the process of immigration raids and inhumane conditions inside detention centers. In addition to attempting to stop irregular migration, the crackdown against undocumented migrants also acts as a deterrent against documented migrant workers leaving their workplaces in large numbers, thus contributing to the stabilization of the EPS. For undocumented migrant workers, the insecurity experienced due to fear of the crackdown puts them in an even more vulnerable situation in relation to their employers making them more susceptible to exploitation.

Since the advent of the Lee Myeong-bak administration, crackdowns against undocumented migrants have become all the more severe leading to numerous incidents of injury and death in the course of raids. It is the stated goal of the current government to reduce the number of undocumented migrant workers from 19.3% to 10% of the total foreign population in South Korea in the next five years through arrest and deportation.

### **III. The Seoul-Gyeonggi-Incheon Migrants Trade Union**

#### **A. Founding**

The Seoul-Gyeonggi-Incheon Migrants Trade Union (MTU) is an independent union for migrant workers of all nationalities affiliated with the Seoul Regional Council of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Its current members are both documented and undocumented, come from Nepal, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia and work primarily in the manufacturing sector.

MTU was founded by undocumented migrant workers, the majority from Bangladesh and Nepal, in the wake of a year-long protest against the establishment of EPS and the beginning of intense crackdowns against undocumented migrant workers. From November 2003 to December 2004 migrant worker organizations including MTU's predecessor, the Equality Trade Union Migrants Branch (ETUMB), and Korean labor and civil society activists, carried out a sit-in protest at the historic Myeong-dong Cathedral in downtown Seoul. The sit-in attracted wide public attention, making the plight of migrant workers and the horror of the crackdown known in the media and throughout society. It also provided a certain sanctuary for undocumented migrant workers targeted in the crackdown, a training ground for migrant worker activists, and a compressed experience in the difficulties of solidarity between migrant workers and native Koreans, in particular those that arose from the inevitable inequalities in resources, experience, language skills and social status between seasoned Korean activists and organizations and new migrant worker activists and formations. It was through this experience that migrant workers became convinced of both the necessity of a strong relationship with KCTU and Korean workers and the need for an independent

organization led entirely by migrant workers themselves. When the sit-in protest ended over a year later in December of 2004, its participants committed themselves to local organizing and the construction of such an organization. As such, the Seoul-Gyeonggi-Incheon Migrants' Trade Union, an independent union for and by migrant workers of all nationality and regardless of visa status, was born on 24 April 2005.

### B. Significance

MTU is unique and has great significance for several reasons. As the first union of its kind in South Korea, MTU has demonstrated that migrant workers can and should be unionized and has spread awareness of migrant workers as equal subjects of labor and human rights in the progressive movement and broader society. MTU has also been a leading voice calling for an end to crackdown against undocumented migrants and fighting regressive revisions in labor and immigration legislation affecting both undocumented and documented migrant workers. MTU has also built important alliances with other labor and social justice organizations helping to expand the voice calling for migrants' rights and provides important services such as assistance with wage and overtime claims for its members and other migrant workers.

All of these accomplishments can be seen as successes derived from the dedicated work of migrant activists and the Korean staff who work with them. However, MTU has also faced considerable challenges in its 4 years of existence. These issues are related, in part, to the inherent difficulties of organizing across differences of language, ethnicity, visa status and gender. However, they also arise, to a large extent, from the negative and repressive stance of the South Korean government towards migrant workers

and migrant unionization.

### C. Challenges

#### 1) *Language*

Perhaps the most quotidian challenge MTU faces is one of language. From the beginning, MTU has sought to organize migrant workers from the diverse nationalities represented South Korean migrant workers represented. We have done this by producing outreach material in multiple languages and attempting to build relationships with community organizations. However the fact is that organizing is a person-to-person endeavor and language barriers are significant obstacles to recruitment and retention. Because MTU's founding members were mostly from Bangladesh and Nepal, MTU can only consistently carry out activities in Korean, Bangladeshi, Nepalese and English. While some undocumented migrant workers from other countries can speak a fair amount of Korean, full communication is difficult. This is even more so the case for documented migrant workers, who are only allowed to stay in Korea for 1 or 2 3-year periods. These limitations mean that the majority of MTU's members continue to be drawn from Bangladesh, Nepal, and more recently the Philippines, and our strongest relationships are with community organizations formed by these nationalities.

In addition, communication between members of different nationalities is often difficult and limited. Meetings must be carried out in Korean because it is a common language and because Korean staff do not speak the native languages of members. Despite our best efforts, translation is often not satisfactory. The result is a privileging of native Korean-speakers in decision-making spaces, a problem that hampers the

development of migrant leadership. While MTU's goal of multi-national organizing is commendable for its adherence to the principle of worker solidarity, on a practical level it creates difficulties which are avoided in different organizing models such as that represented by the migrant unions in Hong Kong who organize within rather than across national groups.

### *2) Difference in Visa Status*

Similar issues arise from attempts to organizing undocumented and documented migrant workers in the same union. While MTU's first members were all undocumented we have recently started to organize documented migrant workers as well. (I will discuss these efforts later on.) Documented and undocumented migrant workers share some of the same problems. Each group also has separate concerns, which appear insignificant to the other group unless there is strong analysis of the ways in which they are related. For instance, one of the main concerns of documented migrant workers is the difficulty of changing employers. Undocumented migrant workers do not have to navigate this legal process because of their status, yet their movement is restricted because of the crackdown. These differences of experience create obstacles to mutual understanding and solidarity. Nonetheless MTU has had considerable success in educating documented migrant workers about the specific issues faced by undocumented migrant workers and visa versa and has also succeeded in mobilizing each group to support the other's protests and demands.

### *3) Relationships with Korean Workers*

Beyond these challenges within the union, MTU faces continued difficulties in winning support from Korean workers and the established labor movement. MTU is a member of the KCTU and has been successful in building solidarity with certain KCTU-affiliated unions, especially the small irregular workers unions whose members face similar conditions and marginalization within the mainstream labor movement as migrant workers. However, many Korean workers do not see the issues of migrant workers as their own and some, particularly those working in the construction sector, view migrant workers as taking their jobs. This problem has increased in response to the economic crisis and has been fueled by the rhetoric of the government and right-wing anti-migrant groups.

These tensions have meant that Korean industrial unions who seek to organize migrant workers, such as the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions, often face apathy or animosity from some Korean officers and rank-and-file members. Moreover, the inability to 'own' migrant workers issues by the wider labor movement has meant that solidarity remains weak and Confederation support inconsistent. MTU thus often lacks the material resources it needs to adequately deal with the challenges mentioned above and, most importantly, to confront government repression, an issue to which I will now turn.

#### *4) Organizing in the Midst of Immigration Crackdown and Government Repression*

By far the greatest challenge MTU face comes from the vulnerable status of the majority of its members and officers, who are undocumented, and the repression of

union activities by the South Korean government.

In addition to practically restricting their mobility, the constant threat of immigration raids creates a condition of constant fear and insecurity for undocumented migrant workers and even those with documents, who may be stopped on the street and harassed at any time. In a situation where having to hiding from immigration officers on a regular basis can be consider a condition of labor, migrant workers often do not venture far from their homes and factories. This makes meeting current and potential members very difficult. Rather than calling union meetings at our central office, it is often necessary for MTU to hold small meetings in local areas and even seek out members at their homes and workplaces. Such efforts are very time consuming, especially because MTU's members are spread throughout the Seoul-Gyeonggi-Incheon area. Thus, maintaining regular contact with members is a persistent challenge. In addition, as the crackdown has intensified, members have become more and more tentative about attending mobilizations and speaking in public. This hesitance has necessarily had an impact on MTU's public presence.

The threat MTU members feel does not arise simply from the everyday reality of immigration raids. While the raids are definitely part of the reason, their fear is also the result of the years of direct attack the government has carried out against the union, using its members' vulnerable status as a means of labor repression. This repression has come in two forms: 1) refusal to acknowledge MTU's legal union status and 2) targeted arrests and deportation of union leadership.

Since our founding the South Korean government has refused to acknowledge MTU's legal union status, claiming that undocumented migrant workers do not have the

same legally protected labor rights as native workers. After the Ministry of Labor refused to register MTU, the union initiated a legal battle, suing for recognition. The Ministry of Labor's position was initially upheld in a district court decision on 7 February 2006, but then overturned by the Seoul High Court on 1 February 2007. In a precedent setting decision, the Seoul High Court ruled that migrant workers, regardless of visa status, have full rights to freedom of association under the ROK Constitution and Labor Relations Law. Nonetheless, the Ministry of Labor has appealed this decision to the Supreme Court, where a final decision is still pending. It is not possible to say when a ruling will be made and it appears that the Supreme Court is stalling given the sensitive nature of the issue.

Beyond the Ministry of Labor's refusal to acknowledge MTU's union status, the South Korean government has also used an abuse of the authority to arrest and deport undocumented migrant workers granted under the Immigration Control Law in order to directly attack the union's leadership. The government has used a tactic of "targeted crackdown"—premeditated arrest, detention and deportation- against migrant worker leaders since even before MTU was formed, targeting leaders of ETUMB. Directly after MTU was founded, our first president was also arrested in the middle of the night and kept in detention for close to a year before finally being released for medical reasons.

The Immigration Authorities attacked again on 27 November 2007, arresting our second President, Vice President and General Secretary all at the same time in 3 separate locations in Seoul. In each case multiple immigration officers had laid in waiting, hidden near the homes or workplaces of the union leadership as early as the night before the arrests. All three men were transported to and detained at Cheongju Foreigners' Detention Center 2.5 hours outside of Seoul.

On December 13th they were taken from their cells in the middle of the night, through a hole cut in the fence at the back of the detention center in order to avoid supporters keeping watch at the front gate and deported early in the morning—this despite a National Human Rights Commission investigation still underway.

Only 5 months later MTU’s newly elected President and Vice President were arrested, detained and deported in exactly the same manner on 2 May 2008. They were deported less than two weeks later despite the fact that the National Human Rights Commission made a decision in favor of a stay of detention and issued an urgent appeal calling on the Ministry of Justice and Immigration Authority not to deport the two until the investigation of their arrests was completed.

The targeted crackdown against MTU leaders is clearly an abuse of state authority and an act of blatant labor repression. Nonetheless, it also demonstrates one of the challenges of organizing undocumented migrant workers; because of the vulnerable legal status of undocumented migrant activists, it is extremely difficult to stop this sort of attack against them. Indeed, the Lee Myeong-bak administration has become more and more blatant in its repressive stance. A government plan for regulation of the migrant labor force released at the end of last year explicitly proclaimed an intensified crackdown against MTU’s membership, making the absurd claim that the “formation of an extra-legal union by illegal residents” is part of the tendency towards neglect for the law brought about by undocumented migration.

The government repression against MTU intensifies the difficulties caused by other challenges in organizing a multi-national independent migrant workers union with documented and undocumented members. Lack of legal union status also means that MTU has not been able to carry out collective bargaining. In addition to restricting MTU’s effectiveness in protecting

workers' rights and improving labor conditions, this limitation also impairs organizing efforts, which depend to a great extent on short-term winnable campaigns that have direct and immediate impact on workers lives. While the political struggles MTU engages in (for immigration law reform, for migrant workers' freedom of association rights, etc.) are vitally important, members have also begun to grow weary of these long-term struggles, which do not easily yield visible 'wins.'

Moreover the continuous attack against MTU's leadership in combination with the overall strengthening of the crackdown against undocumented migrant workers has left many union members afraid, drained the union of its leadership and made it difficult to train new migrant activists. This has led to a 'Koreanization' of union activities, where Korean staff increasingly dominate the work and decision-making and migrant workers' voices recede into the background.

#### D. Responses to Repression

Despite these very significant challenges, MTU has forged ahead with its organizing and other work. An important part of these efforts is directly resisting government repression, winning recognition of MTU's legal status and the right of migrant workers, regardless of visa status, to freedom of association.

In this struggle, support and solidarity from international unions and human rights organizations have been very important. Organizations such as the Global Unions, Amnesty International, Migrants' Rights International and others have sent countless statements protesting the arrest of MTU's leaders and supporting migrant workers' right to freedom of association to the South Korean government and Supreme Court. With the cooperation of these

organizations, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions and South Korean human rights groups, we have also utilized UN and ILO rights mechanisms to the maximum extent possible. These efforts have involved complaints to the Special Rapporteurs on the Human Rights of Migrant Workers and Human Rights Defenders, inclusion of information on MTU's case in civil society reports to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on Civil and Political Rights and a complaint to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) regarding the governments' repression of union activities. In all cases we have been very thankful for the high-level of interest in MTU's case.

One important fruit of these efforts came recently on 25 March 2009, when the ILO Governing Body adopted an interim CFA recommendation on MTU's case. In this report the Committee stated:

**The Committee recalls... the general principle according to which all workers, without distinction whatsoever... should have the right to establish and join organizations of their own choosing [Digest, op. cit., para. 216]. The Committee further recalls that when examining legislation that denies the right to organize to migrant workers in an irregular situation – a situation maintained de facto in (the MTU) case – it has emphasized that all workers, with the sole exception of the armed forces and the police, are covered by Convention No. 87, and it therefore requests the Government to take the terms of Article 2 of Convention No. 87 into account in the legislation in question [Digest, op. cit. para. 214]. The Committee also recalls the resolution concerning a fair deal for migrant workers in a global economy adopted by the ILO Conference at its 92<sup>nd</sup> Session (2004) according to which “[a]ll migrant workers also benefit from the protection offered by the ILO Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up (1998). In addition, the eight core ILO Conventions regarding freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, non-discrimination in employment and occupation, the prohibition of forced labour and the elimination of child labour, cover all migrant workers, regardless of status.**

In addition, the Committee made the following recommendation to the South Korean government:

**The Committee request to the Government to avoid in the future measures which**

**involve a risk of serious interference with trade union activities such as the arrest and deportation of trade union leaders shortly after their election to trade union office and while legal appeals are pending.**

These statements demonstrate unequivocal support for undocumented migrant workers' right to freedom of association by the most authoritative international voice on labor rights. What is more, they make it clear that use of tactics such as the arrest and deportation of union leaders in order to interfere with union activities is a violation of international labor law regardless of the immigration status of the union leaders in question. The CFA recommendations, therefore, set important precedents, which have meaning for migrant workers seeking to organize all over the world.

While the CFA report does not make a final recommendation specifically with regard to MTU's legal union status, it does affirm the Committee's right to examine this issue before "the exhaustion of national procedures"—that is before the Supreme Court decision is issued—and states that the Committee intends to do so at its November 2009 meeting.

Although there are subsidiary issues involved in the Supreme Court case, we believe the central question concerns whether undocumented migrant workers have the right to form and join unions. Thus, we are hopeful that based on the principles state in this report the CFA will recommend that the South Korean government recognize MTU's legal union status after its November meeting. Whatever the outcome, however, it does not detract from the statement of support for undocumented migrant workers' rights to unionize in the March 25th report.

While rulings such as this one by the ILO and attention to MTU's case given by the UN Special Rapporteurs and treaty-based bodies are very important in the long-

term struggle for migrant workers' labor rights in South Korea, and indeed around the world, they have limitations when it comes to stopping government repression in the immediate. Interventions by the ILO and UN only have an effect on the actions of the government in as much as the government is willing to respect their findings or are shamed into doing so. Unfortunately, the current administration has already proven its capacity to completely ignore ILO and UN recommendations, in what appears a mockery of the prestige afforded the country by the appointment of Ban Ki-moon as UN Secretary-General. In spite of overwhelming international support, MTU continues to struggle in the face of unrelenting government repression.

#### E. New Organizing Efforts

MTU's traditional membership base among male Nepalese and Bangladeshi undocumented migrant workers has been weakened by immigration raids and the governments attack. In the last year and a half we have sought to deal with this challenge by expanding our organizing to include different demographics, in addition to continuing to organize in the Nepalese and Bangladeshi communities. We have attempted to do this in ways that address the atmosphere of fear created by raids and repression.

By offering counseling and advocacy targeted specifically to the issues faced by documented migrant workers, such as workplace transfers, we have steadily increased the number of documented migrant members. Many of these workers have come from the Filipino community such that our membership is now more diverse in terms of nationality as well as visa status. In addition, the legal status of these new members makes them less vulnerable to government pressure. As such continuing to organize in

this direction holds the potential of increasing MTU's mobilizing capacity and making it possible to have a greater public presence, although currently the percent of documented members is still small.

Since last year, MTU has also made a concerted effort to recruit women migrant workers. Although there are no accurate statistics, women are thought to make up roughly 30% of the total migrant worker population in South Korea. Unlike some other countries where a large proportion of women migrant workers find employment as domestic workers, in South Korea they usually work in small manufacturing firms, as well as in service and agriculture. MTU began organizing these workers out of recognition that their voices are even further marginalized than those of male migrant workers and that there is to need address the particular forms of exploitation and oppression they face as women and as migrants in South Korean society.

Our approach to organizing women migrant workers is to first invite them to a safe and comfortable space in which they have an opportunity to meet one another and female union staff and discuss the issues they face in their lives, without the burden of joining the union, about which they may have reservations especially given the repression MTU faces. This space has taken the form of a "women migrant workers' group," which meets at least once a month. At each meeting we carry out education on workers rights, with a particular emphasis on the rights of women workers, eat together and discuss the individual problems of group members. After the group stabilized, we also introduced discussion about the importance of unionization and began conveying union news at each meeting. Most recently the group has carried out an educational campaign about workplace sexual harassment, an initiative inspired by the personal experience of some of

the members.

The women's group has been instructive in many ways. First, the fact that most of the workers who participate in it eventually become MTU members and gradually become more and more involved in union activities demonstrates that informal, non-threatening, personally meaningful spaces can be used effectively as intermediary steps in the process of unionization. Second, the fact that women migrant workers have encouraged male friends to participate in the group suggests that it is not always necessary to deal with 'women's issues' in segregated spaces, even within the highly male-centered Korean labor movement. Rather, addressing these issues with supportive male union members present in such a way that prioritized women's voices can be mutually educational. Finally, the participation of many LGBT migrant workers in the group has made us aware of the particular discrimination these people face, and the need to address these issues as well as those of women migrant workers.

Following a similar organizing strategy, MTU has also recently begun to carry out regular Korean-language classes for migrant workers, as a means of meeting a wider range of migrant workers and slowly introducing them to union activities. These classes are carried out in cooperation with student groups who have shown an interest in learning about the situation and experiences of migrant workers in their country. Due to the enthusiastic participation of these students, instruction in classes in which as many as 40 migrant workers participate at one time, is almost 1 to 1. While many undocumented members and non-members fail to come out for union events, citing fear of the crackdown as the main reason, they seem not to have the same hesitance about attending these classes, which provide a fun, useful and unthreatening experience. With such high

turnouts the classes are becoming an effective avenue for relaying union news and even conducting discussions on union-related issues. While only a few months old, Korean-language classes promise to be an important organizing tool for MTU, given the challenges presented it by the crackdown and government oppression.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

MTU's story carries a lesson about what it means to organize in the midst of immigration raids and government repression. In addition to demonstrating the hardships that union members and activists must endure—including everyday fear, brutal arrest, detention and deportation—this is a lesson about the need for flexibility and creativity in organizing strategy. MTU's women's group and Korean-language classes are two examples of such flexibility and creativity, both of which are bearing fruit by bringing new members who are diverse in terms of nationality, visa status, gender and sexual orientation. As these new members join we become inspired to expand our understanding of and sensitivity to their different experiences at the same time as the union is vitalized and its work taken in new directions.

The fact remains, however, that even though we have begun to develop new means for organizing, MTU cannot become truly effective in protecting migrant workers' rights until our basic right to freedom of association is respected. ILO Convention No. 87 the ICESCR, the ICCPR and ICERD all protect the right of all workers, including migrant workers and including those without legal status, to freedom of association. This right was affirmed unequivocally in the CFA's interim recommendation on MTU's case. The CFA recommendation also recognizes that the arrest and deportation of union leaders

as a means of obstructing union activities is a violation of the right to freedom of association no matter the visa status of the leaders in question. Until the South Korean government respects these clearly explicated international standards MTU will face unjust and repressive restrictions in its ability to fight for an improvement in migrant workers' conditions in South Korea.

MTU's story, therefore, also carries with it a grave message about the importance of international attention to the labor and human rights standards applicable to migrant workers and to the cases where these standards are violated. If we are to create an environment truly conducive to migrant worker unionization, the international labor and human rights community must be fully aware of migrant workers' right to freedom of association and keep pressure on the South Korean government and the many other governments who violate it. Today's discussion, I believe, is an important part of this endeavor.