

South Korea's General Strike against Park Government and Corrupt "Chaebol" Conglomerates

By [International Trade Union Confederation](#)

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Korean national trade union centre KCTU held a general strike on November 30 to protest the government's labour policies, as opposition to embattled President Park Guen-hye grows.

The other main national centre FKTU held a national rally November 19. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets on 12 November, demanding that Park, whose Presidency is under siege over allegations of corruption including illicit payments by Korean "chaebol" conglomerates including scandal-ridden Samsung. The national parliament has now appointed a special prosecutor to investigate the allegations. Samsung and other chaebols, with opaque governance practices and riddled with nepotism, are coming under intense scrutiny, including for their covert relationships with Park's entourage.

Park's term in office has been marked by aggressive repression of trade unions, with KCTU President Han Sang-gyun imprisoned for five years in the Seoul Detention Centre for helping to organize previous public protests. Han, who is one of twenty union leaders currently in prison, met a delegation of global union representatives which was present in Seoul during the weekend protest.

"The Park government's crackdown on legitimate union activity is having terrible consequences for Korean workers. Workers are being forced to do up to 100 hours of overtime per month, threatened with dismissal if they don't comply, and employers frequently sack workers who try to join unions. In many companies, health and safety standards are appalling, sexual harassment is rife and workers are treated with total contempt by their bosses," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

Korean companies such as [Samsung](#) and LG are well known for their opposition to unions in their supply chains, with supplier companies closely monitored for any sign of workers organizing. Suppliers know that if a union is formed, their company faces exclusion from the supply chain. Hyundai too has [engaged in union-busting](#) in its supplier companies.

The government has already decreed the KCTU's planned strike to be illegal.

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