

Call to Action

# **Appeal for Solidarity : E-Land irregular workers crushed with the police**

Monday 23 July 2007, by [KCTU](#) (Date first published: 21 July 2007).

## **SITUATION SUMMARY**

### **The Police Break-up of the E-Land Workers will Legitimize the Abuse of the Irregular Workers' Bill**

### **The Irregular Workers Bill has now revealed its ineffectiveness and loopholes to the entire nation**

On 20<sup>th</sup> of July, the Roh Moo-hyun government crushed with police shields the calls on the part of the women irregular workers that "they be allowed to work," and took all of them to police stations. The government, despite being responsible for a bill that expands irregular work instead of protecting the casual workers, used government force to repress the irregular workers' demands for their livelihood. The government has legitimized the incapacitation of what little protective measures existed in the bill by protecting E-Land's abuse of such provisions.

The struggle by the irregular workers at E-Land began when management, in order to evade relevant provisions in the new irregular workers bill that went into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, terminated the contracts for the cash register workers and contracted out the operations. The KCTU has consistently asserted that the new bill would lead to more irregular workers because the law, which was suppose to give permanent status to workers employed as irregular workers for over two years, left open the door to ways to evade such measures, such as outsourcing and termination of contracts. However, the government and the employers have ignored such warnings. The KCTU's predictions are now reality.

E-Land has used weaknesses in the law to lay off contract cash register workers, and have forced them into illicit contracts, and have contracted out their work. The management even breached the collective agreement, which had clearly stated that those who had worked for over 18 months would not be layed off, by unilaterally terminating their contracts. They have also ignored the local government labor committee's decision that it was an unfair dismissal. While E-Land management has not hesitated to engage in illicit and unjust practices, it has used such extreme language as 'terrorism' to denounce the strike and sit-in by the workers, and has sued the union leadership for obstruction of justice. There is no way for the E-Land management to evade criticism, for they are mobilizing all sorts of illicit means to evade resolving the irregular work issue, while they have accused the workers that their desperate actions for their livelihood are illegal.

Even though the root of all the problems is the irregular workers bill, the government has not put forth an earnest effort to resolve the E-Land incident. Despite numerous cases of unfair and illegal labor practices on the part of management being revealed as a result of a special labor inspection, it has not acted to correct them. Labor Minister Lee Sang-Soo, while giving the false impression that he has been doing all that he can to resolve the issue, has constantly threatened the workers at the

sit-in sites that he would send in the police. E-Land management, with the labor ministry's protection, just repeated its position that there would be no negotiations until the sit-ins at the retail stores ended. They even made it seem in the press that their offer to "give permanent status to irregular workers that have worked over 18 months at the company" was a big concession when it was the terms of the original collective agreement which they broke. They blamed the union for the failure to reach an agreement and induced the break-up of the negotiations. For them, as well as the employers association and the labor ministry, the negotiations were solely formalities from the very beginning, and the only way to resolve the issue was through sending in the police.

The repression of irregular workers at E-Land is not an isolated incident. 271 workers were arrested during the past year alone, and 200 of these were irregular workers. 73% of all arrested laborers were irregular workers. Regarding the E-Land incident, the government has already issued arrest warrants for 6 members of the company union, and 7 for the leadership of the other union that has been on strike, New Core.

The number of workers arrested under the Roh Moo-hyun government is now at 958. This is a higher number than the two previous governments (Kim Yung-sam 632, Kim Dae-jung 892). If the government continues to respond to the heartbreaking struggles by the irregular workers across the country with arrest warrants and the use of police forces, then Roh Moo-hyun will go down in history as the most vicious of governments regarding workers' struggles.

#### **Our Demands :**

- We denounce the acts by E-Land management that have led to the loss of jobs for a vulnerable sector and that have threatened the livelihood of these workers.
- We call for the laid-off workers to be reinstated.
- At the same time, we believe that the irregular workers bill, which has now revealed its ineffectiveness and loopholes to the entire nation, needs to be revoked.
- We call for a complete revision to the law, one that implements limitations on the uses of temporary or contract work.

#### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

We are calling for protest letters to the President Roh Moo Hyun at the Blue House, +82-2-770-1690(Fax) or e-mail at [president\\_cwd.go.kr](mailto:president_cwd.go.kr)

Copies should be sent to the Ministry of Labor, Minister Lee Sang-Soo +82-2-504-6708 or e-mail at [m\\_molab@molab.go.kr](mailto:m_molab@molab.go.kr)

*Please be sure to send a copy to KCTU by +82-2-2635-1134(fax) or e-mail at [inter@kctu.org](mailto:inter@kctu.org)*

**Your solidarity would be enormously helpful not only for the E-land workers' struggle but protecting the entire irregular workers' rights.**

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