



IEPALA, SOLIDARIDAD con más de 140 trabajadores electrónicos en Korea del Sur quienes han desarrollado cáncer y otras enfermedades ocupacionales serias (más de 1/3 de los cuales ya han muerto)

IEPALA SUPPORTS TO 140 electronics workers in South Korea who have developed cancer and other serious occupational diseases (more than 1/3 of whom have already died).

October 3, 2011

Honorable Minister Lee Chae-Pil
Ministry of Employment and Labor
Republic of South Korea
Dear Honorable Minister Lee Chae-Pil,

We are writing to express deep concern about the recent actions of Korea Workers' Compensation and Welfare Service (KCOMWEL), an important part of the Ministry of Employment and Labor directly involved in compensation for worker injury.

As you know, in recent times more than 140 workers in the electronics sector have been diagnosed with serious occupational diseases including cancer, and at least one third of them have already died. Most of them worked for Samsung. Twenty injured workers filed for compensation by KCOMWEL due to the occupational origin of their illnesses. We were surprised and disturbed to hear that KCOMWEL rejected their claims. We believe that KCOMWEL's rejection does not reflect the agency's mission to, ".contribute to the improvement of workers' quality of life." nor does it offer a, ".working hope and dream for workers" as stated by Mr. Shin Young-Chul, the President of KCOMWEL.

On June 23, 2011, the Seoul Administrative Court overturned KCOMWEL's erroneous judgment, finding the agency to be wrong in rejecting the link between leukemia and the workplace of two workers. This raises further questions about how KCOMWEL is operating with respect to its mission.

The process became even more disturbing when KCOMWEL decided to appeal the court's decision, effectively seeking to refuse worker compensation for injury in the workplace. When a public interest non-governmental organization (Supporters for Health and Right of People in Semiconductor Industry) pressed KCOMWEL about their decision to appeal, they were told that the Prosecutor made the decision to appeal and that the agency must obey their decision. However, Mr. Shin Young-Chul stated that he would re-exam the appeal and notify the injured workers if it would go forward. This turned out to be deceptive.

During the recent National Assembly audit, Mr. Chung Dong Young (a lawmaker from the Democratic Party) revealed that KCOMWEL had already submitted a document actively proposing an appeal to the Prosecutor three days before promising injured workers he would investigate the matter and stating that KCOMWEL was just following the wishes of the Prosecutor. The investigation by Mr. Chung Dong Young revealed that KCOMWEL actively worked to undermine the court judgment and indicated that KCOMWEL coordinated with Samsung on the matter. Apparently, KCOMWEL actively worked to avoid workers' compensation and even lied to injured victims about the entire process.

We find KCOMWEL's actions to be dishonorable and not in keeping with the agency mission or the



standards of the Korean Government. Therefore, in the short term we urge the Ministry of Labor to withdraw the mistaken court appeal of the two injured Samsung workers. We also believe that the agency should be held accountable for its dishonorable actions. In the mid-term, we believe that there should be a careful examination of KCOMWEL operations with an eye towards improving workers' quality of life, starting with full

disclosure and transparency of agency research and actions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Sanjiv Pandita, Executive Director

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CC: Shin Young Chul, Chairperson, KCOMWEL
Assembly members of the Environment and Labor Committee
Dr. Jeong-ok Kong, SHARPS

Additional Signatories

- Ted Smith, International Campaign for Responsible Technology USA
- Amanda Hawes, Worksafe USA
- Juan Carmelo García, IEPALA (SPAIN)

... and more