

Occupy Wall Street

Media Advisory/Photo Opportunity

For Immediate Release
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Occupy Wall Street Stages Mock Water Cannon Attack on Protesters to Decry Repression of Occupy Seoul Protesters, Job-Killing South Korea-US Free Trade Agreement Part of Multi-City Day of Protest at Korean Consulates

Who: Demonstrators from Occupy Wall Street, Korean Americans for Fair Trade, TradeJustice NY Metro, Global Justice for Animals and the Environment, Health Global Access Project (HealthGAP), New York Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, and Penley Global Law, organizing solidarity with Occupy Seoul and the Korean Alliance Against the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement.

What: As activist masked as Korean President Lee will spray rain-poncho wearing protesters with a mock water cannon as demonstrators rally against the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement and the police violence against Korean protesters. Protesters will show poster-sized photos of police attacks on Korean protesters along with signs explaining why the free trade agreement will harm workers, the environment, people with AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses, family farmers, and our animals, while banning Wall Street regulations necessary to prevent another financial crisis. In addition to New York, actions will also take place at the Korean Embassy in Washington DC and at Korean consulates in cities including Seattle, Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, and San Francisco.

When: Tuesday, November 22nd at 12:30PM

Where: Korea Consulate General of South Korea, 45th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues, Manhattan.

Why: Earlier today, the Korean Parliament passed the controversial Korea-US Free Trade Agreement, despite widespread opposition from the public and the opposition Democratic Party. Occupy Seoul protesters had called for an international day of solidarity protests to support their efforts to stop the ratification of the Korea-US Free Trade agreement and to decry the dangerous water cannons by police against nonviolent protesters. On November 16th, Occupy Seoul issued an International Call for Solidarity and Action:

Free Trade Agreements have a long history of mass protests. The Korea-US FTA is no different. Its official negotiation was kicked off in 2006 and signed five years ago in June 2007. From the outset of the negotiations, thousands of people in both countries have opposed the deal. One Korean labor union member took his own life in protest against the negotiations, and several hundreds of activists have been arrested during peaceful and legitimate demonstrations. They know that the deal only benefits big corporations, not the people. Nonetheless, the U.S. Congress approved the deal last month. Now the ball is in the court of the Korean National Assembly.

However, quite contrary to the expectation of both governments and proponents of the deal, a growing number of Koreans are opposing its approval. Inspired by the Occupy movements around the world, the people in Korea have realized that this deal is not for the 99%, but it is only for the benefit of the 1%.

This agreement is not just limited to trade; it also impacts policies governing public services, public health, environment and the rights of citizens. Under the name of trade liberalization, the agreement is very likely to jeopardize democratic policies that promote economic justice, alleviate poverty, regulate financial services, and promote healthy communities. Negotiated and signed before the financial crisis of 2008, the Korea-US FTA continues the dangerous trend of financial deregulation that allowed fat cats on Wall Street to wreck the global economy. Now, Wall Street wants to export that mistake to Korea, and in turn to other countries through the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement currently being pursued by the Obama Administration. As the U.S Trade Representative has said, the Korea-US FTA will become a model for trade agreements for the rest of the world.

We must stop this flawed deal. We have to bring an end to FTAs that are killing jobs and deepening the social divide. We can do this by asserting our power as the 99%. Since mid-October, we have held a candlelight vigil every night in Seoul. Every day more and more people join the movement. Even young people have started to raise their candles and speak out against the FTA that is bad for their future. As the Korean people's resistance intensifies, the voting of the Korean National Assembly has been delayed, which has embarrassed proponents of the FTA. Meanwhile, the police enforcement against demonstrators has grown more violent. They have aimed high-pressured water-cannons onto protesters, even causing the rupture of a protester's eardrums last Sunday. More and more people are arrested during legitimate demonstrations.

But we will stand firmly against the approval of the flawed deal and never stop our fight. We believe this is the right way to change the world. We are confident that we can make another world. Now, we invite you to join this history-making movement and take action in solidarity with the people of Korea on November 22nd for the International Day of Action against the Korea-US FTA.

The Korea-US Free Trade Agreement, which was voted on in the US Congress in October, but has not yet been voted on Korea, is strongly opposed by unions in both countries. The Economic Policy Institute Estimates that the trade deal will cost the US 159,000 jobs. Environmentalists warn that the trade agreement will also allow foreign corporations to sue the US and Korean governments in international tribunals for unlimited sums whenever the enforcement of environmental laws prevent potential future profits. It will also obligate Korea to import US cars that fail to meet Korean auto emissions standards. AIDS activists oppose the trade agreement because intellectual property rules in the trade agreement will limit access to lifesaving affordable generic drugs. According to Adam Weissman of the Occupy Wall Street Trade Justice Working Group, "Occupy Wall Street stands in solidarity with our comrades in Occupy Seoul. President Lee and his Grand National Party are disgracing South Korea in the eyes of the world by attacking nonviolent protesters with water cannons, a tactic out of the our own country's shameful Jim Crow era. Korean and US citizens agree that the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement is bad for both countries. Unfortunately President Obama sold out his own country at the behest of greedy corporations. We urge President Lee to not make the same mistake."

Media Kit: <http://tradejustice.net/nov22kit>