

Teacher Unionism, Labor Rights and Democratic Struggles in Asia

Thursday, July 25; 12:30-1:30 PM; MR215

DISCUSSANTS

HYUNSU HWANG, Vice President, Korean Teachers and Education Worker's Union (KTU), South Korea

Mr. Hyunsu teaches 10th grade English in South Korea. He is the international director of the Korean Teachers and Education Worker's Union (KTU), which was founded thirty years ago. He is also a member of Education International's Asia-Pacific Regional Committee. He holds a Master's degree in Labor and Global Workers' Rights from Penn State University. Mr. Hyunsu is one of the leaders of the KTU's fight to regain the union's official certification. The KTU was outlawed by the conservative Park administration because nine out of some 60,000 union members still retained their union membership even after leaving their jobs – a government maneuver that was seen by many as a transparent ploy to decertify the entire union. The KTU has been battling on the legal front through six different legal rulings over the past six years, all the way to the Supreme Court, using ILO guarantees of freedom of association as a principle defense.

TIN FONG CHAK, Vice President, Hong Kong Professional Teacher's Union, Hong Kong

Mr. Tin is a secondary school teacher in Hong Kong, at the Wong Tai Shan Memorial College, teaching Liberal Studies and Civic Education. He has Master's degree in Education, and a Bachelor's degree in Sociology. He also holds a Post-graduate Diploma of Education from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. During the recent pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong, when literally millions took to the street in protest, HKPTU members withheld their labor for a day in support of the protesters. The AFT, in a recent resolution, has affirmed its long-standing ties with the HKPTU, and its support for freedoms in Hong Kong not enjoyed in mainland China, including the freedom to protest and an independent judiciary.

PIYA KRITAYAKIRANA, Program Manager, Solidarity Center Thailand

Piya Kritayakirana began working with the Solidarity Center in 2014. His work, in coordination with several trade union partners, focuses on strengthening workers' rights in Thailand through union organizing and campaigning for Thailand to recognize and adhere to international labor standards. Primary concerns include the rights of migrant workers, combatting human trafficking, improving safety conditions for factory workers, and calling on the government to observe ILO worker standards in the lucrative fishing industry. Prior to working with the Solidarity Center, Piya worked in the U.S. resettlement program of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and had an internship in the Political Section at the European Union Delegation to Thailand. He holds a Master's Degree in International Relations from the Political Faculty of Thammasat University.