

AAWL Activities Report

2013 year in review

a day in solidarity

to discuss strategies and future directions
saturday 19 october 11am-4pm fitzroy library
128 moor street fitzroy
aawl open day - all welcome

aawl

international action

for, on the maruti suzuki car workers recent visit to india

global struggle

may

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Melbourne May Day Solidarity Rally
Wednesday 1 May at 5:30pm
State Library Swanston Street Melbourne

global picket line



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2013 year in review



Victories and challenges

This year will go down as the year when the terrible working conditions for garment workers in Bangladesh hit the world headlines in April with the collapse of the Rana Plaza, killing over 1,200 workers.

In March we witnessed a general strike in India that involved tens of million of workers, with unprecedented unity among all major union centres, while in October, Indonesian workers also staged a general strike, with over 2 million workers, in their ongoing fight against casualisation.

One major victory for workers was the Philippines Airlines dispute where, after more than 2 years on the picket line, hundreds of workers were able to win back their permanent jobs. PALEA, the Filipino union representing these workers, was a central partner in the international airline campaign of AAWL against casualisation and outsourcing in the airline industry.

As workers in the globalised capitalist economy, struggles such as these show how we all face similar issues. Organising and co-ordinating our actions at a regional and global level is the way to make our strength count.

This is what AAWL works to achieve.

Highlights of 2013 for AAWL work

- The successful resolution of the Philippines Airlines and Turkish Airlines disputes as part of the Aviation industry campaign
- Supported the solidarity visit by Vilada Phomduangsy from the APHEDA in Laos concerning the ban asbestos campaign and OHS training
- Solidarity visit to the Philippines for the International Solidarity Affair organised by the KMU
- Coordinated the solidarity visit of Saraswathy Subramaniam (Malaysia Electrical Union) Anna Stewart Memorial project at Trades Hall
- Being a founding member of the international co-ordinating committee for Abolish Article 112 (Lèse Majesté) in Thailand
- Co-ordinated the visit of Irene Xavier from Sahabat Wanita (Friends of Women) Malaysia and Asia Floor Wage campaign
- Organised regular meetings with international solidarity partners
- Solidarity visit to Maruti Suzuki activists and workers in Delhi, India

AAWL Trade Union affiliates

Without our union affiliates, the solidarity work of AAWL could not continue. We thank the following unions and labour councils for their support in 2013:

AEU (NT)
AEU (VIC)
AMIEU (VIC)
AMWU (VIC)
ANF (VIC)
ASU - VPS (VIC)
ASU A&S (VIC/TAS)
Ballarat Regional TLC
CEPU - Communications T&S (VIC)
CFMEU - C&G (VIC)
ETU (VIC)
Geelong Trades Hall
Gippsland TLC
MEAA (Vic)
MUA (VIC)
North East Border TLC
NTEU (VIC)
QCU
RTBU (SA & NT)
TCFUA (National)
UCIW
Unions NSW
VTHC

The team at AAWL

Our work would not be possible without the contributions of the Executive, convenors and project co-ordinators. We would also like to thank the people who spend much volunteer time developing our campaigns and materials and distributing our news to a growing audience of labour activists globally.

Campaigns, projects and issues for 2013 included:

International organising

We live in an increasingly global economy with more companies and capitalists operating at a global level. We see this process either via companies that have production, distribution and retail sites situated in many different countries, or industry wide where production and distribution of particular items/goods is carried out in the global marketplace by different companies.

With capitalism operating at an international level, the need for workers to organise and act at a global level is also necessary. AAWL is developing a number of concepts and strategies to build the necessary tools for workers to achieve this. The Global Picketline approach is part of this developmental process.

AAWL, in partnership with relevant unions and worker organisations, worked on a number of disputes that spanned many countries. The common thread to these disputes was that workers were facing common

outsourced!



support the
locked out
philippine
airlines
workers

More than 2000 ground staff at Philippine Airlines need our solidarity. They have spent the last six months on picket lines, having been locked out and then sacked in a major dispute over outsourcing.

The workers were required to reapply for their old jobs, with 'new' companies that have been contracted to supply baggage handling, catering, check in, call centre and ramp services to Philippine Airlines. - In fact these 'new' companies are owned by some of the same businessmen who hold large stakes in Philippine Airlines.

Many workers for the 'new', outsourced companies would see their wages cut by half or more. And under Philippines law, they would lose the protection of their union, the Philippine Airlines Employees Association (PALEA).

On 27 September 2011, thousands of workers were forcibly removed from the Philippine Airlines terminals at Manila and elsewhere. Since then they have maintained protest camps at the

airports of Manila and Cebu, the two largest cities of the Philippines.

PALEA members have maintained their protest despite multiple typhoons and attacks by armed thugs. They have had a major impact on the profits of Philippine Airlines, which has recently been forced to bring in a new major shareholder and sack many senior managers. The workers have vowed to continue their protest until they are reinstated, and negotiations are opened for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Employers from Japan Airlines to Qantas to Philippine Airlines are using outsourcing to boost profits at workers' expense. Rather than being picked off one by one, we all know that we are much, much stronger if we stick together.

Support our brothers and sisters at Philippine Airlines.

More info / support / donate:

laborpartyphilippines.org

facebook.com/groups/sulongpaaleans 2010.

workers change the world



australia asia worker links - po box 45 carlton south victoria 3053 australia
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issues and were linked either by being employed by the same company or being part of the same globalised industry.

Airlines Campaign - A Successful struggle

This campaign began in September 2011 with the sacking of 2,700 workers by Philippines Airlines. The workers were sacked so that Philippines Airlines could replace them with contract workers, at lower wages and conditions. The workers union, PALEA, stood defiant against this.

The central issue at Philippine Airlines was the outsourcing of jobs as a way to cut costs. This tactic has been used by many other airlines, including Qantas, to lower wages and weaken us.

One of the strongest partners in this campaign was the Turkish airline union Hava-İş who was fighting its employer over the sacking of 305 of its members due to them taking industrial action.

The campaign involved many international meetings via telephone, solidarity exchanges of the activists involved, co-ordinated joint protests and actions, joint publicity material highlighting the common issues and demands, fundraisers and networking.

After two years of heroic struggle, in November 2013, the PALEA members won their fight against casualisation and were reinstated as permanent employees. Then, in late December, the 305 Hava-

İş members won their dispute when Turkish Airlines agreed to re-instate them.

The airline industry world wide is still continuing its drive to increase profits by attacking workers' wages and conditions.

The car industry campaign

This year saw big developments in the car industry worldwide with workers coming under attack all around the region. The historic strike by workers at the Maruti Suzuki factory in Delhi that started in the middle of 2011 has been defeated with over a hundred workers still in jail. AAWL continued to build solidarity throughout the year and in October we had a solidarity visit to New Delhi to meet with the Maruti-Suzuki support network and workers.

In South Korea we witnessed continued attacks against workers involved in the supply chain of big automakers like Hyundai. The workers have fought hard against these attacks that have targeted job security and the right to organise. Ssangyong workers who took part in the factory occupation in 2009 are also still fighting. AAWL has had meetings with Han Sang Kyun, who was released from jail in 2012, regarding their struggle.

In Australia we have had the announcement of the closure of Holden (General Motors). This was part of a general restructure by GM that saw reduction of production in South Korea as well as relocation in countries where workers are weaker and wages and conditions less. Earlier in the year, the Ford motor

company also announced the closure of its Australian plant as it shifts production to lower wage sites.

The events of this year demonstrated the weakness of a workers' response based only on the national terrain when car companies operate and compete at the global level.

May Day and the Global Labour Movement Charter

The 1st of May is a celebration of the international labour movement and is marked all around the world by demonstrations and activities. AAWL, in collaboration with regional worker organisations and trade unions, also marks May Day. In 2013, we once again organised a rally in Melbourne to mark the day and to highlight the similarities of our struggles worldwide.

The Global Labour Movement Charter has been produced to emphasise the common demands that workers have globally in our struggles for secure and safe jobs. It underpins the Global Picketline framework that is an ongoing effort to develop and put into practice a global organising strategy.

Free our Comrades

Unfortunately many of our comrades are in jail. The reality is that anti union laws are increasingly used to hinder, restrict and criminalise our ability to organise. This trend affects workers in every country and needs a response from us.

Somyot Pruksakasemsuk is a labour activist and journalist in Thailand. He was indicted under the repressive Article 112, otherwise known as the Lèse Majesté law, for allowing the publication of articles allegedly against the monarchy. This law has been used to arrest, or force into exile, hundreds of labour and human rights activists. Somyot was sentenced to 11 years in jail in January. AAWL is part of an international campaigning group working to free Somyot and abolish A112.

Through AAWL efforts, the Victorian Trades Hall Council and the Australian Confederation of Trade Unions have both passed a motion calling for the release of Somyot. In late November, the ACTU took this motion to the International Trade Union Confederation regional meeting that was held in Bangkok, Thailand.

The situation for workers in Iran continues to be very hard. Independent union organising is basically illegal while long working hours, insecure employment and starvation wages affect millions of workers. Many unionists are in jail. This year we lost **Mr Afshin Osanlou**, who died in jail while serving a five year prison sentence for trade union activities.

AAWL is focusing on the situation of **Mr Reza Shahabi**. Reza is a founding member of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company and in 2010 he was sentenced to six years in prison.

we need a
**global labour
movement
charter**

The right of all workers to organise collectively without being subjected to violence, intimidation or legal harassment

The right to organise unions and take collective action including industrial action and solidarity actions

Secure employment

Health & Safety at work, compensation, rehabilitation

A living wage for all workers in all industries

Decent work, with appropriate hours of work proposed by workers, paid leave and paid holidays

Full rights for women workers

Indigenous workers' rights & Land Rights

Permanent residence with full employment rights for all refugees and all migrant workers in all countries

No child labour

Education, housing, health and childcare provisions

Social security and adequate welfare benefits

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abn: 82 920 590 967 inc abn no: A1318 aawl march 2010

Free our comrades in Thailand

We have witnessed the harsh sentence of labour activist Somyot on 23 Jan 2013, to 11 years jail, under Article 112. We have witnessed the continued use of Article 112 to charge, sentence and imprison activists and civilians in Thailand. This is a sign that human rights and democracy in Thailand are worsening. A democratic country does not have political prisoners, and it does not use draconian laws to suppress freedom of expression.

We renew our call upon all comrades and friends in the labour movement worldwide to pledge their support for international working people's solidarity and for the continuing struggle for democracy in Thailand.

We will continue to make our voices heard until all political prisoners are free in Thailand.

We pledge to use the occasion of the International Labour Day / May Day too.

- Demand the immediate release of Somyot
- Demand the immediate release of all political prisoners in Thailand
- Demand the abolition of Article 112 (The Lese Majeste law)

We ask the ACTU to take up these demands - by sending a delegation to Bangkok, to make direct representation to the government of Thailand, and to visit Somyot in prison. We also ask the ACTU to invite representatives of Global Union Federations to participate in this.

We say to Somyot, to the other political prisoners, and to our comrades and friends in Thailand: We are still with you and we will be continuing to struggle for your freedom and for the abolition of Article 112.

text of vthc motion carried 12.04.2013



★ ★ ★ may day 2013 ★ ★ ★



- Supporting and publicising the Rana Plaza fundraising event in Melbourne
- Presenting the Global Picketline organising concept to a number of working class audiences
- Supporting the visit of a union representative to highlight the human rights abuses of an Australian mining company in the Philippines and El Salvador.

Communication and media

AAWL has continued to publicise workers' issues in our region through a variety of platforms. Our public meetings have featured report back issues that affect the workers movement in the region. The meetings are a forum for workers and activists to discuss how to develop and implement international solidarity.

AAWL hosts a weekly radio program, Asia Pacific Currents (APC), on local community radio station 3CR. The program is streamed live internationally over the internet, and is available as a podcast on both the 3CR radio website as well as Rabble, a Canadian independent news website.

AAWL continues to develop our social media presence via:

- Mini News e-bulletin - a weekly electronic news service that is a summary of news, actions and assessments on the state of the workers movement. It has tens of thousands of subscribers and the bulletin is regularly distributed via other email lists.
- Facebook - AAWL's page features our mini news items, our APC podcasts as well as other news that affects workers internationally
- Twitter - is also distributing AAWL's information and news to a different audience

Documents produced

AAWL routinely produces leaflets on working class issues that remain available on the AAWL website. During 2013, leaflets/statements were produced on the following topics:

- Permanent Residency for all temporary migrant workers
- We need a global picketline
- May Day solidarity rally
- Free our comrades in Thailand

General workers' issues

There were a number of major issues in our region that AAWL supported, including:

In April, in Hong Kong, a historic strike by hundreds of dockworkers lasted almost a month. This was not only the first major strike at a Chinese port in the last few decades but also saw the workers win improvements to their pay and conditions. This strike was also significant as it highlighted the interconnectedness of maritime transport and the

The **Maruti Suzuki** struggle in India has been particularly tough, with thousands of workers losing their job and 147 arrested in September 2012. As of the end of 2013, all these **workers are still in jail**, awaiting trial, but denied bail.

The situation is even worse for the **Faisalabad 6** in neighbouring Pakistan. These are six power loom trade union activists who were organisers of major protests in 2010 for better wages and conditions in the garment sector. They were charged and falsely convicted under Pakistan anti-terror laws and each worker is serving 80 year sentences.

Other international activities

AAWL was involved in a number of events and visits that were part of our international work but not necessarily ongoing campaigns. In addition to the points listed in the highlights section on the first page, these were:

- Organising public meetings with international speakers via Skype connection
- Participating and publicising activities for the Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured at work
- Activities and demonstrations in support of migrant workers
- Meeting activists from Taiwan Youth Labour Movement about the conditions for workers in Foxconn and HTC factories

global integration of companies like HIT, Hutchinson and Cosco. This global power allowed the companies to weaken the strike by re-routing goods at nearby ports and absorb losses internationally. Co-ordinated global actions by workers against these companies around the region would have magnified the effects of the strike.

The tragedy of the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in April not only highlighted internationally the conditions that garment workers have to endure, but has spurred on the organising efforts by workers themselves. There have been strikes and demonstrations by garment workers in Bangladesh since then, with growing awareness of the tactics used by companies to force down wages and conditions.

In Cambodia, garment workers have also been very active this year with many protests and strikes in support of a living wage.

In conjunction with workers in India and Pakistan, there are growing links between worker organisations in different countries in an attempt to counter the companies 'race to the bottom' strategies. AAWL will continue to work on this issue.



Korean railway strike: What is at stake?

On 31 December railway workers returned to work after a three week strike against government plans to set up a subsidiary company to operate a KTX bullet train service in competition with the state run carrier Korail.

This was the longest railway strike in South Korean history. Korail management and the Park Geun-Hye administration cracked down on the strike with full force. Arrest warrants were issued against the Korean Railway Workers Union leaders and almost 8,000 workers had their positions suspended or terminated for their involvement in the strike. On 22 December 6000 riot police raided the Korean Council of Trade Unions headquarters in Seoul. After a siege lasting for 12 hours the police smashed their way through the building and arrested 130 people.

The railway strike ended with an agreement to set up a parliamentary committee. But the fight is not over. The government refuses to drop its plans to set up a subsidiary and Korail refuses to drop disciplinary action and wants to sack 490 workers. Korail is also pursuing a law suit against the union for AU\$8 million.

Government claims that privatisation is not on the cards are difficult to believe. The high speed KTX line between Suseo Gangnam and Pyeongtaek is a major part of Korail's revenue. If Korail drops further into debt this can be a justification for privatisation. Private railways in the UK, Japan and Australia demonstrate that privatisation leads to the degrading of public assets. The government knows that privatisation is unpopular so they are cutting Korail's revenue and attempting to smash the militant KRWU.

The KRWU is a union with a proud heritage of struggle. If the government is able to destroy the KRWU it will be possible to force down wages and conditions across the board.

The KRWU and the KCTU are major centres of working class struggle in the Asia Pacific region. This attack damages the organised strength of all workers. We need to stand up and fight together, we have a world to win!

단결-투쟁!

국제연대힘내라 철도파업!
이제 우리 모두가 민주노총입니다

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In South Korea, the year has seen a succession of tough struggles in the electronics, health, transport, manufacturing, education sectors as well as against the use of precarious employment practices. The use of prolonged aerial protests by workers has been a feature of this year. The year was capped off by a prolonged strike by the railway workers in late December. In response, the South Korean government instituted an unprecedented raid by thousands of police officers on the headquarters of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, arresting over a hundred unionists. This raid was at the end of a very tough year for workers in South Korea who have had to endure many physical and political attacks against them and their organisations. But there were also many solidarity rallies around the world for the railway workers in January 2013 - including in Melbourne and Sydney.

Workers in Indonesia are experiencing a new growth in mobilisation and organisation that first began in 2011. Indonesian workers have won significant wage increases and are demanding restrictions on the use of casualisation and outsourcing. The general strike in late October saw over two million workers take part throughout the Indonesian archipelago. In response, the government has passed new laws restricting the right to organise and right wing thugs attacked some workers during the last general strike.

The situation in West Asia, and in neighbouring Egypt, has seen continued unrest and repression. Unfortunately the situation for workers in countries such as Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Turkey and Egypt remains grave. Organising in these countries is very difficult, and many activists have died or are in prison. The situation for migrant workers is also very poor, with millions of workers enduring terrible conditions, are prevented from forming independent unions and are subject to periodic government crackdowns. Similarly, the situation for Palestinian workers has not improved, with Israeli occupation continuing to maintain millions of Palestinians in destitution.

Thank you

This is a lot of work for an organisation without any paid staff. It all happens thanks to you: the members and affiliates of AAWL, working together to build international organising and solidarity.

Our struggle continues.
Workers change the world.

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