

## One year of labour struggles & solidarity



*Activities report presented to the AAWL Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 3 March 2010 by Christine Filiamundi, AAWL Co-ordinator.*

In 2009 the concurrent crises facing the human race built at an alarming pace.

The global financial crisis has left billions struggling to maintain their wages and living conditions. As the environment changes, climate refugees seek to flee their increasingly unlivable lands, and join the tide of people desperate for life, security, home. Pollution of land air and sea is devastating the health of millions and poisoning our world.

Only the genuine workers' movements around the globe can achieve the necessary changes.

AAWL consistently supports the right of all workers to organise in unions and take industrial action. Workers have a right to belong to genuine democratic unions, and to refuse to support undemocratic or "yellow" unions. AAWL has campaigned for an international approach to workers' struggles, for workers to combine against their bosses for the good of themselves, their co-workers, and all workers.

An injury to one, anywhere in the world, is an injury to all. This is an overview of the work we did in 2009.

Union Affiliates. We thank the following unions and labour councils for their support in 2009: AEU (Vic), AMIEU (Vic), AMWU (Vic), ANF (Vic), ASU-VPS (Vic), ASU A&S (Vic), Ballarat TLC, CEPU P&T (Vic), CEPU T&S (Vic), CFMEU C&G (Vic), ETU (Vic), Geelong THC, Gippsland TLC, MEAA (Vic), MUA (Nat), MUA (Vic), NSWTF, NTEU (Vic), TCFUA (Vic), QCU, Unions NSW, Union of Christmas Island Workers, VTHC.



ssangyong solidarity rally - korea trade centre, melbourne - 11 august 09

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AAWL thanks all its affiliates for their support and extends special thanks to those who in the past year have provided valuable assistance for AAWL activities, above and beyond their subscriptions.

Executive. AAWL is run entirely on the free time of the Executive, Coordinators, and other AAWL members. I would like to thank all of them for their enthusiasm, their generosity, their hard work and their wisdom. The Executive has been meeting on the last Wednesday of the month, and all AAWL members and affiliates are welcome to attend.

Public meetings. AAWL Public meetings continue to be held on the first Wednesday of the month at Trades Hall. Public meetings are a platform for gathering opinion, information and experience from a range of speakers on issues faced by workers in the Asia Pacific region. Some of these meetings, including the Annual General Meeting, are general meetings with decision-making powers.

Topics of public meetings in 2009 were :

- February - Defend Gaza, Free Palestine
- March - AGM, Global Labour Movement Charter
- April - Indigenous Struggles in Australia today
- May - Fight to win: Global capitalist crisis
- June - Sri Lanka: The war is not over
- July - Solidarity with workers in China
- August - Philippines economic crisis, workers struggle
- September - Defend Ssangyong workers in Korea
- October - Target companies
- November - Minimum wages

Asian Workers Organising.

In September, AAWL re-introduced its monthly publication, Asian Workers Organising with reports on AAWL public meetings, solidarity visits, and workers' struggles.

Copies of all issues can be downloaded at the AAWL website, [aawl.org.au](http://aawl.org.au)

Website and email news. AAWL has an informative website, with regular updates on labour action news from the Asia Pacific region.

It has downloadable copies of all our documents as well as music and some videos, and has links to unions in Australia, the Asia Pacific region and International Labour Federations.

*At the AGM on 3 March it was decided that AAWL will consult with solidarity partners and affiliates on the feasibility of jointly organising a global labour movement meeting. The purpose of such a meeting would be to: Discuss a global labour movement charter of industrial and social demands; Discuss strategies to coordinate international industrial action and solidarity to achieve workers' industrial and social demands.*



The Free our comrades page is up and running, and features campaigns to free activists such as Mansour Osanloo, Li Wangyang, Lex Wotton and others.

The AAWL Mini News is a regular email news service to subscribers, mailed out to interested unionists and solidarity activists worldwide.

Radio 3CR – Asia Pacific Currents (APC) once again allowed AAWL to broadcast its news and events to a wide audience. With the increasing expansion of multimedia technologies, it not only allows APC easier access to contacts and struggles in the Asia Pacific region, but via webstreaming and podcasting, can be heard all over the world.



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**D**uring 2009 APC covered diverse issues including: The war in Gaza; The campaign to free imprisoned trade unionists in Iran; Strikes in Pakistan and India; The political conflict in Thailand; The impact of the economic crisis on workers in China; The Ssangyong dispute in South Korea; The continued repression of trade unionists in the Philippines; The re-organisation of unions in Indonesia; Workers and globalisation in the Pacific; The fight for indigenous rights in Australia. In 2010, we are planning to expand our international reach via linkages and multimedia co-operations with partners overseas.

**APC is on Saturdays at 9:00am on 3CR Radio  
855 on the AM band  
For webstreaming & podcasting:  
<http://www.3cr.org.au/>**

**T**he Global Labour Movement Charter  
The discussion on a Global Labour Movement Charter emerged from the final day of the International Solidarity Forum on 14 October 2007. The evaluation discussion covered the concept of a global minimum wage and added social issues as well.

**T**he proposed Charter has become a stronger and better document as it has developed in consultation with our international partners, and continues to evolve.

The AAWL public meeting in November on the Asian Floor Wage exposed new elements that are likely to be incorporated into the Charter.

**T**arget companies. For our October public meeting we conducted a great deal of research on a number of companies that have been aggressively anti-union, but which are significantly unionised in a number of countries in the region. We had presentations on four such companies - Toyota, Unilever, Nestle and Posco - and international labour movement responses.

**L**eafllets. AAWL produces a range of leaflets for distribution at rallies and events, at Trades Hall, union offices and elsewhere. They can be downloaded at the AAWL website at [aawl.org.au](http://aawl.org.au).

This year AAWL leaflets produced included:  
Defend Gaza,  
Global Labour Movement Charter,  
May Day,  
Fight to Win,  
Solidarity with Ssangyong Workers.  
May Day Rally

**R**allies. AAWL built a solidarity rally on 1 May with our affiliates and other genuine labour movement organisations, to coincide with international May Day events. The Melbourne May Day Committee, which organises the traditional Sunday May Day march, endorsed this rally.



indigenous solidarity rally - melbourne 16 october 09

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**A**AWL participated in other important labour movement protests including:

6 & 8 March: International Women's Day Rallies

13 March: Peace & Justice for Colombia

2 April: Campaign for OH&S

28 April: Workers Memorial Day

6 June: AAWL Planning Day, GSPB Indonesia report

11 August: Support for Ssangyong workers

19 August: Trades Hall Delegates Rally

1 September: OHS National Model Laws

25 September: Justice for Palestine

28 October: Health & Safety Reps Conference

16 November: Hacienda Luisita Forum

5 December: Palestine Solidarity Rally

10 December: International Human Rights Day Rally

**L**abornet. We participated in the Labornet webmaster training and a regional websites development conference in Korea. Also during the solidarity visit to Korea we participated in the May Day program in Seoul and Osan and met with the KCTU, KMWU and KFCITU. AAWL was elected on the executive committee of Labornet Asia to support the development of regional labour organising through websites and video news.

**U**SA Indigenous solidarity visit. Judith Le Blanc, a member of the Native American Caddo Tribe from Oklahoma, and the National Organising Coordinator of United for Peace and Justice visited Melbourne in July.

AAWL supported the visit and organised radio interviews and a number of meetings with unionists and solidarity activists for Judith.

This included a meeting discussing Indigenous Project with apprentices at the ETU, and a meeting with the Indigenous Liaison Officer of the NTEU.

**C**onferences for Latin America. We participated in the Latin American Solidarity Conference in August and gave a presentation on the Global Labour Movement Charter proposal.

**W**e also attended the Third Latin American and Asia Pacific Solidarity Gathering at Trades Hall in October and gave three presentations: on Asia Pacific Struggles and resistance, on Transnationals and strategies against them, and on methods of organising in the region.



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**N**orthern Territory Intervention Tour. In mid-October AAWL organised a one-day program for Northern Territory indigenous community leaders who were in Melbourne to talk about the Intervention, and co-hosted a solidarity dinner. The next day AAWL gave support to the rally against the Northern Territory intervention that was held on the steps of parliament.

**T**he Ssangyong dispute, South Korea. In May of 2009, the Ssangyong Motor Company in South Korea announced a major restructuring plan that included the dismissal of over 2,500 workers. This led to one of the toughest confrontations seen in South Korea in recent years, involving workers, the company and government.

**T**he dispute ran for 77 days. Riot police and company-hired security guards, equipped with the latest equipment including helicopters, were deployed against around 1,000 workers who occupied the factory. Hundreds of workers and supporters were injured and many more arrested.

On August 11, AAWL organised a rally, endorsed by the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the Korean Metal Workers Federation, in support of the striking workers at the Ssangyong car factory.

**I**ndonesian Solidarity Visit. Vivi Widyawati from the Unity of Workers Solidarity Struggle (GSPB) visited the Australian east coast in September and October. She is a member of a factory level workers forum and has been involved in feminist activities.

AAWL organised an industrial tour for Vivi. She visited various sites and met with a number of Australian unions including the TCFUA.

**M**oving forward. AAWL is engaged in continuing self-evaluation and improvement, and two planning days were held last year for members to consider how we should organise and what should be done.



2009 saw the introduction of new operating guidelines that specify how members of AAWL have a say in the establishment and progress of activities and campaigns, to make sure our activities are moving and developing in harmony with AAWL principles.

**I**n September AAWL members voted in a complementary procedure which set out how each campaign was to be defined and how campaign co-ordinators would be chosen.

It also defined a clear pathway for members to become campaign co-ordinators, with the goal of empowering new members to step up into active AAWL organising.

**M**embership of AAWL. Our public meetings are open to all and are held on the first Wednesday of every month except January and December at Trades Hall, corner of Lygon Street and Victoria Street, Carlton South.

Membership forms are available at meetings or on our website.

**A**AWL invites people who support the workers' movement and international solidarity to join us and participate in this important work.

**email news: [aawl.org.au/subscribe](http://aawl.org.au/subscribe)**

**podcasts: [aawl.org.au/radio](http://aawl.org.au/radio)**



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# 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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