

FIREFIGHTERS' AND AMBULANCE WORKERS' NETWORK

消防・救急労働者ネットワーク

Firefighters and Ambulance Workers Network Bulletin is published by Public Services International Asia and Pacific Regional Organisation (PSI APRO). This electronic bulletin circulated particularly to all network members in this region. Should you wish to contribute to this bulletin, please contact the Network Coordinator, Mr. Keita Nakano: res.k-ta@leto.eonet.ne.jp

No Trade Union Rights for Firefighters and Ambulance Workers



Photo (above): Mr. Keita Nakano, Network Coordinator, proposed the Emergency Resolution at the 2012 PSI Congress in Durban, South Africa

Photo (below): The Emergency Resolution was approved with overwhelming support



Japan's firefighters and ambulance workers do not have the right to form trade unions. In other words, they are being completely stripped of trade union rights, which belong to the human rights of workers.

Although Japan ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 87 (Convention concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise) in 1965, the right to organize is not recognized for rescue workers under domestic laws. Of the countries that have ratified this convention (about 150), only Japan has not recognized the right to organize for firefighters and ambulance workers. ILO has repeatedly advised the Japanese government to correct this matter. However, the government has continued to postpone action.

As in Japan, the right to organize is also not recognized for firefighters and ambulance workers in South Korea. The number of firefighters per capita in that country is low compared with the rest of the world. About 40 percent of the personnel suffer from depression due to conditions such as PTSD, and their average lifespan is 58.9 years. Such data show that in South Korea rescue workers face major public health and mental health problems. To address these issues, trade unions are necessary. However, as in Japan, firefighters and ambulance workers in South Korea do not have the right to form trade unions.

The issue of unionization is a problem faced not only by rescue workers in these two countries, but also by their counterparts in many countries in the Asia Pacific region. For more information, please read the Emergency Resolution on basic labour rights of public service workers in Japan, click [here](#)

Discussion on Firefighter and Ambulance Workers at the Quality Public Services Seminar



Public Services International –Japan Council (PSI-JC) organised the Quality Public Services (QPS) Workshop in June 2014. It drew the participation of 80 representatives from ZENKYOSHO and other PSI-JC affiliates. For the session on “**trade union rights of firefighters**,” PSI-JC welcomed Mr. Danilo Zuliani (*photo left*), an Italian firefighter who works as the firefighter’s coordinator in the PSI Head Office. He gave a lecture on the necessity of trade unions from the standpoint of a firefighter who enjoys trade union rights. The conference drew not only rescue workers in Japan, but also from South Korea. The seminar equipped the participants with confidence and conviction for restoring trade union rights.

PSI Asia Pacific Trade Union Rights Seminar



From October 29 to November 1, 2014 the Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Trade Union Rights was held in Seoul, South Korea. General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli and Equality and Rights Officer Sandra Vermuyten from the PSI Head Office participated in this seminar.

Violations of trade union rights in the Asian region are severe. In particular, public sector workers face the harshest environment both in legal and real terms.

Seeing violations of trade union rights as infringements of human rights, the PSI Head Office is also partnering with human rights NGOs and taking global actions, with South Korea considered the top priority country.

Even though ILO Conventions 87 and 98 remain unratified in South Korea, firefighters and ambulance worker in the country, whose right to associate is being deprived, formed the Firefighting Development Conference (FFDC). In 2013, FFDC became a PSI affiliate, an indication of mighty resolve by South Korean rescue workers.

For the sake of all firefighters and ambulance workers in the Asia Pacific region who have been deprived of trade union rights, the PSI Asia Pacific Firefighters and Ambulance Workers Network is strengthening our collaboration with the Emergencies and Disasters Working Group, established in PSI Head Office, and with PSI Firefighters Coordinator Danilo Zuliani and Equality and Rights Officer Sandra Vermuyten. We are expanding our campaign and actions to restore trade union rights to these workers.