

“They are not alone in this”

## US autoworkers speak in support of strikes in South Korea and India

Shannon Jones  
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US autoworkers are speaking out in support of their brothers and sisters in South Korea and India, who are engaged in struggles against transnational car companies General Motors, Toyota and Kia.

Earlier this month, General Motors workers in South Korea voted down a sellout deal brokered by their union, the Korean Metal Workers Union (KMWU), which was aimed at shutting down a powerful walkout by thousands of autoworkers. The KMWU proposal would have substituted bonuses for annual wage increases. The workers are seeking to win a substantial raise after wages were frozen in 2018 following economic blackmail by management, which threatened to close down operations and seek cheaper labor elsewhere, possibly in China.

Meanwhile, South Korean Kia workers have engaged in partial strikes aimed at securing a wage increase to augment their inadequate salaries. Like GM workers, Kia has retaliated by threatening workers with job losses. Auto management as well as the government are insisting that workers increase productivity to offset financial losses due to the pandemic.

A member of the Faurecia Gladstone Rank-and-File Safety Committee in Columbus, Indiana, spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site Autoworker Newsletter* in support of the South Korean autoworkers. The Faurecia Gladstone plant produces catalytic converters and complex exhaust systems for all the major car companies as well as for heavy truck manufacturers and farm equipment makers like Cummins and John Deere.

“General Motors is banking on the workers being intimidated by the threat of closing that plant in South Korea, but that will not be so easy. Really, the working class has them by the short hairs because the corporation

needs that production.

“I was thinking about this in relation to the situation at our plant. I think they’re planning something like a move or a shutdown. I have never seen so many parts stacked up inside the factory and out. They treat you so badly, they can’t even find enough people to come in and work.

“General Motors is doing the same thing to them that Trump is doing to us. But we have the power to shut them down. We need to put our foot down and tell these companies that we are not going to be the victims. They have already demonstrated that they cannot run these businesses without putting their employees in jeopardy.

“Trump advocates a law that says that a company cannot be sued by their employees if they cause them to be infected with COVID-19, and Democrats and Republicans are likely to agree to it.

“All the working class needs to take the Korean autoworkers as an example because these companies are not going to do anything for us. We have to do it ourselves.”

A worker at General Motors’ plant in Fairfax, Missouri, also spoke in support of the striking South Korean workers, drawing a parallel with the experiences of the UAW sellout of the 2019 strike by GM workers in the US.

“It’s just another gross display of the union willing to sell out its members and benefit General Motors. By offering bonuses it saves the company from increased pensions, since hourly wages increase pensions and bonuses don’t.

“It’s tiresome that General Motors threatens its employees and doesn’t abide by a legally binding

contract and gets away with it.”

A month-long strike by 3,000 Toyota workers at two plants in the southern state of Karnataka is in imminent danger. Workers are defying a government order to end the strike and accept management’s demands for increased production targets. Now the Karnataka government is threatening to prosecute strikers if they do not knuckle under.

On November 25, tens of millions of workers in India joined a one-day general strike to oppose the right-wing, Hindu-chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government’s pro-investor “labor reforms,” including fire-at-will contracts and the elimination of health and safety regulations.

The Faurecia Gladstone worker commented, “If we all combine together, even 30 percent of the working class, they won’t be able to push us around like that. The unions put it in the contract that the company has the right to fire you if you refuse to work. The unions are getting rid of strikes. They want to get somebody in there that is more compliant.”

Workers at Fiat Chrysler Sterling Height Assembly (SHAP) north of Detroit also spoke in support of autoworkers In South Korea and India. Workers at SHAP defied threats by the United Auto Workers and management to conduct a wildcat job action over the spread of COVID-19 in the plant last March, helping to force a temporary shutdown of North American Auto production.

A member of the Sterling Heights Rank-and-File Safety Committee said, “It is important that they understand they are not alone in this. It is what we are going through in the US. I thought we were alone in this, but we are not, it’s going on around the world.”

Another SHAP worker spoke about the attempts to repress strikes in India and South Korea, saying, “I am definitely opposed to that. Something like that can easily trickle down to the US. I don’t want anyone to force me to work, like I am in prison or on probation.”

The sentiments expressed by US autoworkers in solidarity with their working class brothers and sisters overseas stands in sharp contrast to the nonstop nationalist poison promoted by the UAW, which spreads the lie that American workers share common interests with the auto company billionaire stockholders and corporate owners.

Workers are objectively united in a globally

interconnected network of production, with every vehicle the result of the labor of countless workers internationally. The attempt by employers to increase the exploitation of workers in any area of the world has a detrimental impact on all. Only by overcoming national and ethnic divisions promoted by the unions and uniting as a common force against the transnational conglomerates can autoworkers and all workers secure the defense of jobs, wages and decent and safe working conditions.



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