

# South Korean protesters in Squid Game outfits defy coronavirus curbs in Seoul

- Thousands of Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) members demonstrated across the country for more jobs and better conditions
- But the Seoul city government filed a police complaint, saying the protest was illegal under Covid-19 restrictions



**Reuters**

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Members of the South Korean Confederation of Trade Unions wear masks and costumes inspired by the Netflix hit as they attend a rally in Seoul demanding job security. Photo: AP

The Seoul city government said on Thursday it had filed a police complaint against members of South Korea's main labour group who defied Covid-19 curbs to protest for more jobs and better work conditions while wearing outfits from the TV megahit *Squid Game*.

Thousands of members of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) staged a nationwide demonstration on Wednesday, according to the group.

In downtown Seoul, dozens of members dressed up in flamboyant jumpsuits and masks worn by actors in the Netflix show.

Made in South Korea, the nine-part thriller, in which cash-strapped contestants play deadly childhood games in a bid to win 45.6 billion won (US\$38 million), became a worldwide sensation for Netflix when it premiered in September.



Members of the South Korean Confederation of Trade Unions wearing masks and costumes inspired by the Netflix series protest in Seoul. Photo: AP

Union members in *Squid Game* outfits were seen beating drums to loud music and dancing.

Some held flags and signs reading “Inequality Out” and “Safe Youth Employment; Quality Youth Employment”, footage from the group’s YouTube channel showed.

“About 80 youth union members dressed up in costumes that parody the *Squid Game*, which bitterly satirises the bare face of our society,” KCTU said in a statement.

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Seoul city has filed a police complaint against the group for staging illegal protests violating the infectious disease prevention law, the local government said.

KCTU spokesman Han Sang-jin said in response that the restrictions violate the basic rights granted by the Constitution and it is unfair that outdoor rallies are seen as more dangerous than sporting events, where more spectators are allowed.





Trade union members wear Squid Game outfits during a protest demanding job security. Photo: AP

With about 1.1 million members overall, the KCTU represents workers at some of the biggest conglomerates in the country, including Hyundai Motor, LG Chem and government-owned Korail Railroad Corp.

The union workers have increased their power, gaining stronger benefits over the years.

South Korean trade unions have a long history of activism but their recent rallies have led to confrontation with authorities trying to enforce curbs to stop the coronavirus, with protests being blamed for a surge in Covid-19 cases.

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Only one-person protests are allowed in the capital and surrounding areas under current social distancing rules.

South Korea reported 1,441 new Covid-19 cases on Wednesday, bringing the tally to 347,529 infections, with 2,709 deaths.