

Stop the trade union repression and political killings in the Philippines

Over 750 trade unionists, farmers, human rights workers, priests, church activists, lawyers, journalists and political party organisers shot down, and over 185 disappeared since January 2001 under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

***12 noon - 1.00 pm -
protest at
Philippine Consulate***

Cnr of Wentworth Ave & Goulburn St

***4.30 - 7.00 pm -
Town Hall Square -
vigil***



- Filipino workers are fighting for an increase in their daily minimum wage (just \$7.60 a day in Manila), for job security, and for their basic right to strike, to collectively bargain and not be subjected to targeted assassination.
- This is why so many Filipino workers can be recruited by unscrupulous agents to come to Australia under Visa 457.
- The Howard government has this year privately complained to the Arroyo government about the killings, but at the same time is trying to make a military cooperation agreement with the Philippines Army, who have been repeatedly connected to the killings.

Global Day of Action - Nov 16 2006

2nd Anniversary of Hacienda Luisita massacre

Organised by: Philippines Australia Union Link, Philippines Australia Women's Association, Migrant
Philippines - Australia, Action for Peace & Development in the Philippines.
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A DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE FILIPINO WORKERS AND PEOPLE

(A CALL TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION AGAINST TRADE UNION REPRESSION AND POLITICAL KILLINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES ON NOVEMBER 16, 2006)

Trade union and human rights violations have increased in the Philippines under the government of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Since assuming power on Jan. 20, 2001 until June 30, 2006, 66 leaders, members, organizers and supporters of trade unions and informal workers organizations have been killed. They are but part of the more than 750 victims of political killings under the Arroyo regime as of September 30, 2006.

Aside from killings, other violations against workers include assault in the picketline, illegal arrest and detention, grave threat, intimidation, abduction and harassment.

The manner of the killings is utterly despicable. Some were killed in broad daylight, in front of their families, were stabbed to death, assassinated or massacred. The majority of the killings were carried-out by motorcycle-riding gunmen in ski masks or helmets – an apparent deliberate design to make them practically impossible to identify.

Independent investigations revealed that most of the cases were premeditated, i.e. victims were under surveillance by suspected elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) or Philippine National Police (PNP) before their deaths. Among those killed were union leaders in multinational corporations and local big business establishments whose interests the Arroyo government protects. Notable of them are **Diosdado “Ka Fort” Fortuna**, union president in Nestle Cabuyao Philippines and **Ricardo “Ka Ric” Ramos**, union president of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union (CATLU). The Nestle workers under the United Filipino Employees-Drug Food and Allied Industries-Kilusang Mayo Uno (UFE-DFA-KMU) have been on strike since January 14, 2002 due to Nestle’s refusal to include the workers retirement benefits in the collective bargaining negotiation. Meanwhile, CATLU is one of the two unions in Hacienda Luisita Inc. that went on strike for more than a year from Nov 2004 - Dec 2005.

‘Factory Terrorism’

Alongside its neo-liberal policies of deregulation, liberalization and privatisation, the Arroyo government is trying to project an environment of industrial peace to entice more foreign investments and gain continued access to more foreign credit. It trumpets a “growing” and “stable” economy amid a worsening economic and political situation.

In a speech before newly-elected barangay officials in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, Southern Tagalog on September 22, 2002, Pres. Arroyo said: “Let us fight against criminals, gambling lords, drug lords... and those who terrorize factories that create jobs.” It is an obvious reference to trade unions and a vulgar attempt to de-legitimize workers’ strikes and other forms of concerted actions.

The Arroyo government has thus included legitimate trade unions and informal workers associations in its ‘war on terror’ campaign, branding them as communists, communist supporters, terrorists or “enemies of the state”. Strikes and other concerted activities of workers, aimed at airing legitimate workers demands and grievances, are being regarded as factory terrorism and are met with violent attacks and repression. Those in opposition to the government’s neo-liberal policies are being arrested and/or detained. Most prominent is KMU Chairman Emeritus and Anakpawis Congress Rep. **Crispin “Ka Bel” Beltran** who was arrested on Feb. 25, 2006, a day after Pres. Arroyo declared a state of emergency. Ka Bel was arrested without warrant on the basis of trumped-up charges dating back two decades ago and already quashed by the Philippine courts. Later, the government through the Department of Justice accused Ka Bel regarding an alleged failed attempt to overthrow the Arroyo government. There is no evidence to back this allegation. Ka Bel is detained in hospital at the moment, owing to his failing health.

International Day of Action

We call on you – our comrades, friends, compatriots and advocates – in the trade unions, informal workers organizations, migrant organizations, support groups and other associations in various sectors to participate in this International Day of Action on Nov 16, 2006. **Please join us on this historic day.** Together, let us call on the Arroyo government to recognize and respect the most fundamental right of the Filipino workers to live and to live with dignity, to organize and fight for just wages, regular jobs and to exercise their trade union and democratic rights. Let us condemn the systematic, widespread human rights violations that destroy the life and livelihood of the Filipino workers and people. Let us call a stop to the extra-judicial killings in the Philippines victimizing workers, peasants and other social justice activists. Let us demand the Arroyo government to stop the culture of impunity, which drives authorities and its armed minions to kill people like chicken. Together, let us reclaim our right to life.

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