



International Labor Rights Fund

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November 16, 2006

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

H.E. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo
President
Republic of the Philippines
E-mail: corres@op.gov.ph / opnet@ops.gov.ph

Dear President Arroyo,

We, as US human rights organizations, express our grave concern regarding the rampant trade union and political repression in the Philippines.

In particular, we are outraged that 64 of our colleagues in the trade union movement and informal workers association have been killed since 2001. They are part of the more than 780 victims of political killings in the Philippines recorded as of November 2006. We strongly condemn and denounce political killings as the worst form of political repression. It is an outright violation of an individual's right to life. Political killings violate all norms and international standards for the respect of human rights and have no place in a democratic society.

We are equally alarmed about other cases of trade union and human rights violations such as abductions, harassment, intimidation, grave threats, illegal arrest and militarization in the workplaces and communities. Workers who assert for their democratic rights and fight for social justice and transformation are being branded as terrorists, communists and "enemies of the state" and are being attacked with impunity under the guise of counter-terrorism.

We are deeply concerned at the continued illegal detention of KMU Chairperson Emeritus and Anakpawis Rep. Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran who was arrested without warrant on Feb. 25, 2006, a day after a state of emergency declaration. Ka Bel was arrested without warrant on the basis of trumped-up charges dating back two decades and already quashed by the Philippine courts. We demand that Ka Bel be given justice and that he be freed from his illegal detention.

As a signatory to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, to the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to the International Labor Organization Conventions 87 and 98, the Philippine government must ensure that the Filipino workers right to organize, to bargain collectively, to exercise his or her other democratic rights and to live a life with dignity is recognized and respected.

We then call on you, as the President and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, to take concrete steps to stop the political killings, harassment, intimidation and all forms of trade union and political repression committed against leaders, members, organizers and supporters of trade union organizations and informal workers associations as well as other legitimate organizations in the Philippines. Independent investigations into the participation and collusion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police in the killings must commence at once. Only by doing this can the people of the Philippines live in a free, prosperous, and empowered society without fear. Justice and due process of the law must become the cornerstone of a strong Philippine society.

We will continue to monitor the situation in the Philippines and will be urging the US government to withdraw support and stop giving financial aid to the Philippine government, until political killings and other forms of human rights violations in your country are stopped; independent investigations commence; and the perpetrators of these heinous crimes are brought to justice. We refuse to use our money to aid the Philippine government and become an instrument to attack and kill our Filipino brothers and sisters who are fighting for social justice.

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully yours,

Katrina Abarcar
Katarungan: Ad-Hoc Committee for Peace,
Justice and Human Rights in the Philippines

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