

July 2, 2015

H.E. Benigno C. Aquino III
President of the Republic
Malacañang Palace
JP Laurel St., San Miguel
Manila, Philippines

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Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) we are writing today to express our concern regarding the escalating attacks on public sector trade unionists, organizers and national staff working with the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE). We further call for the immediate stop to the harassment and surveillance of COURAGE leaders and members by police agents and the Philippine military.

Beginning April 21, with the most recent occurrence on June 28, 2015, members and officers of COURAGE received letters accusing them of being leaders and members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) operating in their respective agencies through their unions. Others have received visits at work and home from individuals identifying themselves as military personnel who are operating with the clear intent to harass and intimidate.

CUPE supports the work of COURAGE and has travelled to the Philippines on several occasions to meet with workers and their organizers in order to better understand the situation and seek ways to support their pursuit of justice and trade union rights. We are clear, that these activities are likely a calculated attempt to undermine the on-going campaigns of the public sector workers for National Minimum Wage, against contractualization, privatization and in asserting their basic human and trade union rights.

CUPE invited Rosalinda Nartates to Canada in March 2015 where she met with hundreds of CUPE members and various organization and institutions. We discussed with her the human rights situation in the Philippines including the situation of the COURAGE II, Randy Vegas and Raul Camposano. We specifically discussed the importance of the campaign to free the political prisoners in the Philippines and to bring to justice those who are responsible for human rights abuses and violations in recent history.

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It is extremely worrisome that a country, such as the Philippines, that aspires to establish global relations on issues related to development, poverty alleviation and security would allow those who are working to ensure these issues are addressed through economic and social justice to be subjected to threats, harassment and intimidation.

We respectfully request that:

1. The immediate formation of an independent fact-finding and investigation team be composed of representatives from human rights groups, the Church, concerned government agencies, and the Commission on Human Rights that will look into the threats, harassment, intimidation and surveillance against these progressive unionists and activists.
2. The military stop the labelling and targeting of people's organizations as "front organizations of the communists" and "enemies of the state."
3. The Philippine Government eliminate its counterinsurgency program Oplan Bayanihan, which victimizes innocent and unarmed civilians.
4. The Philippine Government be reminded that it is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that it is also a party to all the major Human Rights instruments, thus it is bound to observe all of these instruments' provisions.
5. The Philippine Government recognize they are a signatory to the International Labour Organization Conventions recognizing and protecting the workers' rights to join unions, enter into collective bargaining, against discrimination and many others hence it is duty bound to uphold these conventions.

Thank you very much for your attention to this urgent matter.

In solidarity,



PAUL MOIST
National President



CHARLES FLEURY
National Secretary-Treasurer

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cc: Sec. Teresita Quintos-Deles, Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process; Ret. Lt. Gen. Voltaire T. Gazmin, Secretary, Department of National Defense; Atty. Leila De Lima, Secretary, Department of Justice; ILO Country Office for the Philippines (CO-Manila); embassyofphilippines@rogers.com; attache@philembassy.ca; MP Ed Fast; MP Rob NicholSEN; MP Don Davies; MP Paul Dewar; couragenational@yahoo.com