

Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo  
President of the Republic of the Philippines  
Malacanang Palace, JP Laurel St.  
San Miguel  
Manila / NCR 1005  
PHILIPPINES

Fax: 0063-2-736-1010

17 December 2008

Your Excellency,

Being the development agency of the German Catholic Bishops' Conference, MISEREOR has been cooperating with many catholic and other project partners in the Philippines for 50 years and we also try to support our partners in their struggle for justice and humanity. Recently, we have again heard of scaring events in the Philippines which have raised our concern.

One of our partner organisations in the Philippines, the Workers Assistance Center (WAC), an NGO concerned with protecting the rights of workers and labor rights promoters in the Cavite Export Processing Zone, has informed us of the case of several ordered arrests of labor activists of peoples' organizations in the Southern Tagalog region by the Calapan City Regional Trial Court in Mindoro Oriental by virtue of a warrant of arrest issued by Judge Tomas Leynes. Among these are:

- Emmanuel „Manny“ Asuncion, labor organizer and member of WAC, charged of multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder based on the amended information filed by the Office of the Provincial Prosecutor on September 26, 2008 at the Calapan City RTC in relation to the March 3, 2006 assault on elements of the Philippine National Police (PNP) by alleged members of the New People's Army (NPA) in Puerto Galera, Mindoro Oriental.

The WAC described the charges of multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder against Manny Asuncion as an outrageous and blatant lie. Moreover, the charges were filed and the warrant for his arrest was issued without conducting any preliminary investigation, thus denying him of his right to a due process. On his part, Manny Asuncion denounced the charges as fabricated and baseless adding he has never set foot in Mindoro in his life..

Other maliciously charged labor activists include:

- Atty. Remigio Saladero, chief counsel of *Kilusang Mayo Uno* (May First Movement), arrested.
- Romeo Legaspi, chairperson of Pagkakaisa ng mga Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan (Alliance of Workers in Southern Tagalog-KMU) and national president of Organized Labor Association in Line Industries and Agriculture (OLALIA-KMU)

- Jojo Bernardino, secretary general of the Alyansa ng mga Manggagawa sa Probinsya ng Laguna (ALMAPILA, Labor Alliance in Laguna Province)
- Luz Baculo, secretary general of Pagkakaisa ng mga Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan (Alliance of Workers in Southern Tagalog-KMU) and national council member of KMU
- Rolando Mingo, president of Southern Tagalog Region Transport Sector Organization (STARTER)
- Lucio Amarante, staff and organizer of STARTER-PISTON
- Henry Halawig, paralegal staff of the Banzuela Law Office and former member of the Board of Directors of OLALIA-KMU
- Garizaldy Constantino, labor leader of the union of Nestle Philippines.
- Arnaldo Seminiano, member of Ilaw at Buklod ng Manggagawa (IBM, Enlightenment and Solidarity of Workers), arrested November 6, 2008
- Emmanuel Dionida, executive director of Laguna-based Labor Education Advocacy Development Research Services, Inc. (LEADERS), arrested November 13, 2008
- Agaton Bautista – organizer of sugarcane farm workers and sugar mill workers in Batangas province
- Other known activists in Cavite included in the criminal charges are: Rogelio Galit who was arrested on November 3, 2008, Amelia Sto. Tomas and Sheryl Villegas.

The WAC has not yet recovered fully from the pain of losing his dear chairperson Bishop Alberto Ramento, who was killed on October 3, 2006 because of his unwavering advocacy to the cause of the poor people; and, also, from the killing of labor leaders Gerardo Cristobal and Buth Servida, who were both ambushed by unknown assassins on March 10, 2008 and December 11, 2006, respectively.

**In this regard, we urgently demand you to arrange for the following:**

1. Unconditionally drop all the criminal charges against Emmanuel “Manny” Asuncion and to all other labor activists and leaders of people’s organizations in Cavite;
2. Immediate and unconditional release for Atty. Remigio Saladero, Arnaldo Seminiano, Emmanuel Dioneda, Rogelio Galit, Nestor San Jose, and Crispin Zapanta.
3. Stop persecuting activists and leaders of people’s organizations.

We at MISEREOR strongly believe that individuals working in factories or farms should have the opportunity to work and live in an environment free from the threat of physical violence or harm. It is important that we as a development agency and also companies doing business in the Philippines remain confident in the government’s commitment to freedom of expression, freedom of association and the rule of law.

We would appreciate your attention to these concerns and look forward to receiving a response on the actions taken by your government to ensure the safety and rights of workers and labor rights promoters.

Sincerely,

Dr. Martin Bröckelmann-Simon  
 Managing Director, International Cooperation

cc:

**Honorable Tomas Leynes**

Presiding Judge  
Regional Court of Justice, Branch 14  
Calapan City, Oriental, Mindoro

**Secretary Raul Gonzales**

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**Hon. Leila De Lima**

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