



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada

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December 17, 2008

Her Excellency Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President of the Republic of the Philippines
Malacañang Palace, JP Laurel St.,
San Miguel, Manila, NCR 1005

Dear President Macapagal-Arroyo:

I am writing on behalf of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, which represents 170,000 federal public-sector and other workers across Canada, to denounce the continuing persecution of Filipino labour, political and human rights activists in the Philippines.

It has come to our attention that 72 labour and community activists in Southern Tagalog have recently been accused of multiple and frustrated murder and charges of arson in connection with an armed rebel ambush and a separate attack on a telecommunications site. Six of them have already been arrested and are being detained in a provincial jail in Oriental Mindoro, including labour lawyer Remigio Saladero; peasant leader Rogelio Galit, who suffers from diabetes and was bed-ridden on the day of his arrest; Anakpawis party-list local organizer Nestor San Jose; Bayan Muna party-list local organizer Crispin Zapanta; labour union organizer Arnaldo Seminiano, and labour educator Emmanuel Dionida, who was stricken with polio as a young child and has had a disability since.

The national president of one of our union's components and a PSAC staff member visited these six prisoners and their legal advocates in November. They learned that the circumstances of the arrests were highly irregular and that due process was not followed. They also discussed these cases with the Commission on Human Rights chairperson, Leila De Lima, but have so far seen no progress.

We are gravely concerned with what seems to be a new tactic of political suppression by the military and police under the anti-insurgency campaign, Oplan Bantay Laya II, while extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of labour and community activists continue. UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions Philip Alston has directly blamed the counter-insurgency campaign for the more than 900 extrajudicial killings of activists since you assumed presidency in 2001. We are dismayed

that none of his recommendations have so far been seriously implemented by your administration.

In light of our concerns on these matters, the Public Service Alliance of Canada urges you to order the dropping of all these dubious criminal charges against the 72 Southern Tagalog labour and community activists, the immediate release of Attorney Saladero and the five activists named above, and an end to the persecution of labour activists and people's organizations in the Philippines.

I look forward to receiving your positive response and immediate action on this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Gordon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being more prominent than the last name "Gordon".

John Gordon
PSAC National President

cc Mr. Jose Brillantes, Ambassador for the Philippines
Ken Georgetti, President of the Canadian Labour Congress
Prime Minister Stephen Harper
Lawrence Canon, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mario Silva, Liberal Foreign Affairs critic
Denise Fraser Bevington, NDP Foreign Affairs critic
Jean Dorion, Bloc Québécois Foreign Affairs critic, Dorion
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ILRF
WAC
Hon. Leila De Lima, Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights