

November 26, 2008

H.E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President of the Republic
Malacañang Palace, JP Laurel St., San Miguel,
Manila, Philippines

Dear President Macapagal-Arroyo:

I am writing on behalf of the United Steelworkers in Canada, which represents 280,000 workers, to denounce the continuing persecution of Filipino social and political activists and human rights defenders.

As of November 3, 2008, 72 people in Southern Tagalog, Philippines, mostly leaders and members of people's organizations, have been unfairly accused of multiple murder and frustrated murder, while facing separate charges of arson. Six of them were arrested and detained in October 23, 2008, including labor lawyer Remigio Saladero, bedridden peasant leader Rogelio Galit, who is seriously afflicted with diabetes, Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) party-list local organizer, Nestor San Jose and Bayan Muna (People First), party-list local organizer Crispin Zapanta, labor union organizer Arnaldo Seminiano, and labor NGO official Emmanuel Dionida.

Like in the past, the current multiple murder and multiple frustrated murder charges were filed through highly irregular procedures denying the accused their right to due process.

As of March 2008, human rights group Karapatan -Southern Tagalog has documented 167 victims of extrajudicial killing and 31 of enforced disappearance in the region.

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The United Steelworkers urges you to guarantee the safety of these 72 people and to immediately stop the wave of unjustified abuses, arrests and detention of Filipino activists and human rights defenders. We strongly condemn the vast number of unresolved cases of extrajudicial killings that have targeted mostly political and human rights activists, the abductions, and enforced H.E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo disappearances and demand that your government ends the impunity for these actions.

Sincerely,



Ken Neumann
National Director for Canada

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