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Brussels, December 3rd, 2019

your correspondent :

R. Lamas

Hon. Rodrigo Roa Duterte
President
Republic of the Philippines

Via Silvestre H. Bello III
Secretary of Labour
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Employment
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Dear Mr. President,

The FGTB, representing 1 500 000 workers in Belgium strongly condemns the recent raids and arrests of trade union leaders in the Philippines. The offensive by joint forces of the army and the police has once again targeted trade unions and labour organisations.

State-led stigmatisation of labour organisations for their ideologies has been going on for far too long in the Philippines, in contravention of the principle of freedom of association. Labour organisations are labelled as legal fronts of an underground armed struggle movement and the arrested activists are routinely alleged of possessing firearms and ammunitions implanted by state officers to justify fabricated charges. The recent raids and arrests worsen the existing coercive environment effectively preventing workers from forming and joining trade unions, and unions from pursuing legitimate activities.

It is the duty of all member states of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to promote and ensure a climate free of violence, coercion and threats of any type that are aimed at trade union leaders and their families for the free exercise of the rights and freedoms set out in Conventions No.87 and No.98. This includes ensuring the right to be free from arbitrary arrest and detention, and the right to access fair and independent trials.

The arrests and raids further violated Section V, B (10) and (11) of the Guidelines on the Conduct of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of National Defence (DND), Department of Justice (DOJ), Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP) Relative to the Exercise of Workers' Rights and Activities (the Guidelines) in the Philippines. Acts of the state and national security forces are clearly prohibited to label, intervene in labour relations and coerce people to renounce their trade union membership. Officials are required to respect the role of DOLE in labour disputes and always comply with human rights laws and standards.

We urge the government of the Philippines to:

1. stop the attacks and red tagging of legitimate trade union organisations and labour activists;

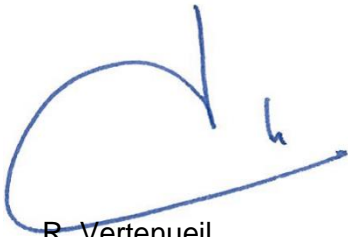
2. implement the recommendations concluded by the Committee of Application of Standards of the ILO in June 2019
3. Accept the High-Level Tripartite Mission of the ILO to visit the country at the soonest possible time.

We support the call of International Trade Union Confederation's affiliates in the Philippines to urge the intervention of Secretary Silvestre Bello of DOLE with the military and police forces for:

1. discussions and investigations at the national and regional Tripartite Monitoring Bodies on the recent arrests and raids, red tagging of labour organisations;
2. expedition of the 43 cases of extra-judicial killings submitted by the trade unions;
3. enforcement of the Guidelines on the Conduct of the DOLE, DILG, DND, DOJ, AFP and PNP Relative to the Exercise of Workers' Rights.

The FGTB stands in solidarity with its affiliates in the Philippines and is closely monitoring the trade union and human rights situation in the country.

Your sincerely,



R. Vertenueil
President