

Rolando Pango, a farm worker and labor leader killed in Negros (Philippines)

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Group asks UN Special Rapporteur to query Negros labor activist killings

Press Release

December 10, 2014

On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, the Partido Manggagawa asked UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders Michel Forst to inquire on the killings of labor activists in Negros Occidental. “The culture of impunity and extra-judicial killings of labor activists persists under the administration of Benigno Aquino III. In the last two years, two farm worker leaders have been killed while another survived an assassination attempt, all in Negros where agrarian and labor disputes simmer,” stated Renato Magtubo, PM national chair.

Forst is in the Philippines and has expressed interest in requesting the government for an official visit and investigation after meeting with human rights groups over the past several days. Two predecessors of Forst were unable to obtain invitations from the government to inquire into reports of attacks against human rights defenders in the country.

The spate of killings against worker and land rights defenders in Negros happened amidst agrarian and labor disputes between farm workers and sugar planters. Last November 29, Rolando Pango, a PM member, labor leader in Binalbagan town and an organizer in neighboring Isabela town died after being shot in the head by two men. Pango had previously received death threats while he was assisting workers of Hacienda Salud in Isabela town in processing for coverage under land reform and in filing illegal dismissal charges against landlord Manuel “Manolet” Lamata. Lamata heads the powerful Negros sugar planters association.

PM also called on the Department of Labor and Employment, the National Tripartite Industrial

Peace Council and the Department of Justice to take cognizance of Pango's case as they have a mandate to act on labor-related extra-judicial killings.

Since 2011, the labor coalition Nagkaisa!, of which PM is an affiliate, has been engaged in dialogue with the Aquino administration on key labor issues, including some 62 unsolved cases of labor-related extra-judicial killings.

Magtubo added that in December 29, 2012, Victoriano Embang, president of the Maria Cecilia Farm Workers Association (MACFAWA) in Moises Padilla town, was killed amidst another agrarian and labor dispute with the influential Montillano clan. His brother, Anterio, also a leader of MACFAWA, later survived an ambush in February 28, 2013.

Still PM insisted that the most widespread infringement of human rights in the labor front is the violation of workers' right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

"The onslaught of state-sanctioned contractualization schemes have effectively disarmed workers of their ability to defend themselves, through their unions, against many forms of abuse and exploitation" concluded Magtubo.

Wednesday, December 10, 2014



Extra-judicial killings, other human rights violations persist under 'tuwid na daan' - Nagkaisa!

NEWS RELEASE

NAGKAISA!

09 December 2014

A culture of impunity translated into extra-judicial killings (EJK) and other forms of human rights violations against leaders and labor organizers continue under the 'tuwid na daan', a coalition of major trade unions and labor organizations in the country, Nagkaisa!, said in a statement on the eve of the celebration of International Human Rights Day.

Since 2011, Nagkaisa! is engaged in dialogues with the Aquino administration on several labor issues, including some 62 unsolved cases of EJKs involving labor.

Nagkaisa! said the most recent in the cases of unsolved EJKs was the murder of a labor organizer in Negros Occidental. Rolando Pango, a full time organizer of Partido Manggagawa (PM) was gunned down in Binalbagan town in Negros Occidental on November 29, 2014.

“Prior to his death, Pango was deeply involved in both the agrarian and labor disputes in Hacienda Salud, a 135-hectare sugar plantation in Barangay Rumirang, Isabela leased and managed by Manuel Lamata,”said PM Chair Renato Magtubo.

Aside from EJKs, Nagkaisa! is also alarmed at the resurgence of other forms of human rights violations.

Last October, Antonio Cuizon, president of the Panaghiusa sa Mamumuo sa Carmen Copper, was arrested on trumped up charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives. The union and the management were then in the thick of labor dispute when the case was filed against Quizon.

Pango was instrumental in organizing the plantation workers in Hacienda Salud who in June applied the land under CARPER coverage. Salud workers has also filed of a case of illegal dismissal before the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) against Lamata for unlawful termination 41 workers.

PM and Nagkaisa is calling on both the national and local governments to render immediate justice to this case.

Josua Mata, Secretary General of Alliance of Progressive Labor-Sentro, said Nagkaisa will be raising this issue before the Tripartite Industrial Council (TIPC) and the DOJ panel investigating the EJKs.

“Like Ruby, solving cases of EJKs in the country is a slow-grind,” said Mata.

Before Pango, another PM organizer, Victoriano Embang, leader of Maria Cecilia Farm Workers Association (MACFAWA) in Moises Padilla, Negros Occidental was also killed on December 29, 2012. A failed assassination attempt against his brother, Anterio Embang, followed few months later, February 28, 2013.

A Negrense himself, Magtubo said Negros remains a ‘labor hotspot’ because of strong resistance by landlords to agrarian reform and their outmoded serf-type treatment of their laborers.

“Perhaps this regional feudal context has escaped the eyes of the labor department and the national government. Or they simply don’t care” added Magtubo.

But the most widespread of human rights violations, Nagkaisa! said, is the violation of labor’s right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

“The onslaught of state-sanctioned contractualization schemes have effectively disarmed workers of their ability to defend themselves, through their unions, against many forms of abuse and exploitation” concluded Magtubo.



Group condemns killing of labor leader in Negros

Press Release

December 3, 2014

A week to go before the observance of international human rights day, the Partido Manggagawa (PM) condemned the assassination of a labor leader and organizer in Negros Occidental last November 29.

“The culture of impunity thrives in our country and the extra-judicial killings of labor activists continue unabated. We ask the state—the provincial government of Negros Occidental and the national agencies Department of Justice and the Commission on Human Rights—to act with dispatch on the case and make a thorough investigation,” asserted Wilson Fortaleza, PM spokesperson.

Rolando Pango, a farm worker leader in his hometown of Binalbagan and an organizer in the neighboring town of Isabela, was shot dead in the head by two men late in the evening of November 29. Pango on his way home after meeting farm workers who were to attend the Bonifacio Day rally when the motorcycle he was riding was blocked by a black sedan and another motorcycle in the crossing of Hacienda Garrason in Binalbagan.

“For the commemoration of human rights day, we want action not words, reform not speeches from the Aquino administration. The mastermind and perpetrators of the murder of Pango and other labor activists must be brought to justice,” insisted Renato Magtubo, PM chair and a Negrense from Bacolod. A 300-strong workers assembly in Bacolod resolved a day after Pango’s death to seek justice and campaign for a resolution to the killing.

PM believes that Pango’s killing arose from a labor and agrarian dispute that he was engaged in. Pango had received a death threat from an ex-NPA rebel with an alias “Mike” who now serves an armed bodyguard of Manuel “Manolet” Lamata, a landlord who had leased and manages Hacienda Salud, a 135-hectare sugar plantation in Barangay Rumirang, Isabela.

Magtubo called on the Department of Labor and Employment and the National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council to table the case of Pango.

Pango was assisting farm workers in seeking coverage of Hacienda Salud under land reform and also in illegal dismissal cases against Lamata. Since last year, the farm workers had endured successive violent harassment and bribery attempts at the hands of Lamata, who heads the powerful Negros sugar planters group, as the agrarian and labor disputes festered.

Pango’s murder follows the assassination of another farm worker leader in Isabela in December 2012. Victoriano Embang, head of the sugar workers association of Hacienda Maria Cecilia, was ambushed by two men riding in tandem in a motorcycle. Embang’s workers association was also embroiled in agrarian and labor disputes with their capitalist landlord, the Montillanos.

P.S.

* <http://www.partidongmanggagawa2001.blogspot.fr>