

# Labor group calls on US Congress to condemn killings of workers and peasants

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Partido ng Manggagawa [Labor Party-Philippines]

The labor group Partido ng Manggagawa called on the US Congress to issue a statement condemning the spate of extra-judicial killings of worker and peasant leaders in the Philippines. The Partido ng Manggagawa issued this appeal as the foreign relations committees of both the US House of Representatives and Senate are set to conduct hearings on political killings in the Philippines on March 14.

A representative of the Partido ng Manggagawa in the person of Pastor Israel Alvaran of the United Methodist Church is lobbying on behalf of the appeal of labor group. The US congressional hearings come on the wake of critical statements by US Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenney and the US State Department on the human rights situation.

Pastor Alvaran carries a letter of appeal from Member of Parliament Rep. Renato Magtubo of Partido ng Manggagawa calling on the US Congress to speak against repression of human and labor rights. Rep. Magtubo stated that "We are willing to work in the belly of the beast in order to stay the iron hand of repression by the Arroyo regime and its fascist military. We ask our fellow American legislators to stand for labor rights and civil liberties in the Philippines. It is in the common interest of the peoples of America and the Philippines. The killings of activists must stop. The urban communities must be demilitarized. The harassment of militant party-lists must end."

US Congressman Tom Lantos (California) will hold a briefing in the House Foreign Relations Committee on the Philippine human rights issue at 10:00 am on March 14 in Washington DC while Senator Barbara Boxer (California), chair of the East Asia Sub-Committee of the Senate, will also hold a hearing that afternoon at 2:30 pm.

The US congressional hearings were the result of grassroots lobbying by Filipino-American organizations that included the United Methodist Church. Pastor Alvaran said that "We would like the US Congress to take note of the fact that the iron hand of repression is bearing down heavy on the working class movement in the Philippines. Just from the ranks of the Partido Manggagawa, three labor union presidents plus Ka Popoy Lagman have been assassinated since the assumption to power of Gloria Arroyo. Another union president and leader of the Partido ng Manggagawa was ambushed but survived during retired General Palparan's tenure in Leyte." ###