

Monday 30 November 2020

Australian unions join a global day of action to stop trade union repression in the Philippines

The Australian union movement stands with unionists in the Philippines who have become the target of frequent attacks, with 50 union members and officials killed in extra-judicial violence during the period of President Duterte's administration. The ACTU is participating in a Global Day of Action today to draw attention to the treatment of unionists in the Philippines.

The International Trade Union Confederation consistently ranks the Philippines as being one of the worst ten countries in the world for workers' rights. Unionists and other activists have been labelled as terrorists and enemies of the state. The enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Act in July 2020 further threatens the rights of workers to organise.

Australia has a long-standing bilateral military relationship with the Philippines, including providing counter-terrorism capacity training. Despite the many reports of attacks by the armed forces of the Philippines against their own people, from 1 December 2019, Australia increased its support of Duterte's military through the new Enhanced Defence Cooperation Program.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil,

"We are taking part in this global day of action on Human Rights Day to demand that the Philippines government, led by President Duterte, stop violence against union members and activists.

"The Duterte administration has used the COVID-19 pandemic as cover to further repress trade unions, with the passing of the Anti-Terrorism Act. The Philippines Government should repeal this undemocratic law, which threatens freedom of speech, expression and peaceful assembly.

"More than a year has gone by since the International Labour Conference recommended the Duterte administration accept a High-Level International Labour Organisation (ILO) mission to investigate the workers' rights violations – we call on the Philippines Government to accept the mission as a matter of priority.

"We are also calling on the Morrison Government to stop enabling human rights violations in the Philippines – no Australian taxpayer money should be spent supporting a regime that routinely violates the rights of trade unionists, journalists and human rights activists."

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