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Secretary
Department of Labour and Employment
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Dear Mr. Bello

I am writing on behalf of the Australian trade union movement to express our outrage and dismay at the murder of Leonardo Escala, the president of the union for dock workers, Nagkakaisang Manggagawa sa Pantalan Incorporated (NMPI) at Manila port operator International Container Terminal Services Incorporated (ICTSI) on 7 February.

According to the police report, Escala was with his four-year-old niece on Sunday evening when unidentified assailants shot them multiple times before speeding off on a scooter. Escala later died in hospital, and his niece is undergoing medical treatment.

This appears to be yet another case of a trade unionist in the Philippines killed by extra-judicial violence because he stood up for workers. Over fifty union members and officials have now been killed by extrajudicial violence under President Duterte's administration. I urge you to immediately commence a thorough investigation into Escala's murder and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Committee on the Application of Standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) requested the Government of the Philippines at the 2019 International Labour Conference (ILC) to take all effective measures to prevent violence against trade unions, and to investigate and punish the perpetrators in the 43 cases submitted by global unions of trade unionists murdered by extra-judicial killings under President Duterte's administration. We deplore the murder of more trade unionists since that time, with Escala's murder being the latest. Little progress has been made to address the persistent impunity for crimes targeting trade union and labour activists, or to ensure a safe environment for them to carry out their work. We call on you to accept the ILO High-Level Tripartite Mission recommended at the 2019 ILC without delay.

The Australian union movement stands in solidarity with unions in the Philippines against persistent attacks, violence, harassment, and murder. We will continue to campaign for justice for Filipino trade unionists and closely monitor the human and trade union rights situation in your country.

Yours sincerely



Michele O'Neil

President

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