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Dear Secretary Bello

I thank you for your response on 15 February to my correspondence regarding the murder of Leonardo Escala, the president of the union for dockworkers, Nagkakaisang Manggagawa sa Pantalan Incorporated (NMPI). It is with deep alarm that I write to you again, following the spate of coordinated arrests and killings of trade unionists and activists on Sunday 7 March. Six were arrested and nine were killed in separate operations in the provinces of Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and Rizal:

- In a raid in the office of labour institution Workers' Assistance Centre, police shot dead Manny Asuncion, Cavite provincial coordinator of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) Cavite;
- In Laguna, two unionists and a human rights worker were arrested;
- Steve Mendoza, Executive Vice President of the Organised Labour Association in Line Industries and Agriculture (OLALIA KMU) was arrested in a dawn raid of his home in Cabuyao;
- Elizabeth 'Mags' Camoral of BAYAN Laguna, and former union President of F-Tech was arrested in the Defend Yulo Farmers headquarters in Cabuyao;
- Nimfa Lanzanas of human rights group Kapatid-Timog Katagalugan, and a paralegal aide of political prisoners was arrested while she was with her grandchild;
- In Rizal, Michael Dasigao and Makmak of Sikkad Montalban were killed;
- Two peasant leaders in Montalban, Rizal were also arrested;
- The whole family of fisherfolk leaders Chai Lemita-Evangelista, Ariel Evangelista, and 10-year-old son Raymart Evangelista were arrested in their home in Nasugbu, Batangas. The bodies of Chai and Ariel were later found, while their son was able to escape.

This 'Bloody Sunday' on 7 March follows the raids and arrests of two union leaders on 4 March: Ramir Edrigo Corcolon, President of the San Pablo City Water District Employees Association (SPCWDEA) and the Water System Employees Response (WATER) Secretary General; and Arnedo Sanggalang Lagunias, Secretary of the Honda Workers' Union.

The Australian trade union movement is outraged at the killings, violence, and harassment faced by trade unionists and labour activists in the Philippines. This latest spate of killings, arrests and attacks adds to President Duterte's atrocious record on human and trade union rights. We believe this constitutes a human rights emergency that requires the attention of the international community.

I urge your immediate intervention to ensure these cases are thoroughly investigated through the Tripartite Monitoring Bodies, and that the perpetrators are brought to justice and the unionists and activists arrested are released. The arrests and raids are in violation of the *Guidelines on the Conduct of the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of National Defence (DND), Department of Justice (DOJ), Philippine National Police (PNP) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Relative to the Exercise of Workers' Rights and Activities*. I urge you immediately convene a meeting of Secretaries of the DILG, DND, DOJ, PNP and AFP to ensure their departments strictly implement the Guidelines and uphold human and trade union rights.

I note your confirmation in your correspondence of 15 February that the Philippines stands ready to accept the ILO High Level Tripartite Mission as the COVID-19 situation improves; we will continue to monitor this situation and note that the situation for trade unionists in the Philippines has considerably worsened since the International Labour Conference recommended the ILO High Level Tripartite Mission.

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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