

For immediate release

Human Rights organizations call to stop harassment of Toyota's trade union leader in the Philippines

New York, 11 June 2014. The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) sent today a letter to the President of The Philippines and the President of the Toyota Motor Corporation, to express serious concern about the ongoing harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders in the Philippines. The letter is available at <http://www.escr-net.org/node/365528>

The letter raises particular concern about the intimidation and harassment of trade union leader, Ed Cubelo who serves as the President of Toyota Motor Philippines Corporation Workers Association (TMPCWA). Mr. Cubelo also serves as Education Officer of Defend Job Philippines, an organizational Member of ESCR-Net that works to protect and defend human rights in the Philippines.

ESCR-Net's letter followed recent reports that allege that, on 18 March 2014, Mr. Cubelo was approached at his home by four men who, after stating that they were from the National Bureau of Intelligence, menaced the trade union leader. Earlier, on 5 March 2014, four men were also seen conducting surveillance during a protest action of TMPCWA and Defend Job Philippines at the Department of Labor and Employment, Intramuros, Manila. A few days later, another group of men who introduced themselves as members of CID (Criminal Investigation Division) went to Mr. Cubelo's house and asked for his whereabouts, stating that he needs to report to their office in the Makati Police Station. Following this recent event, Defend Job has made repeated efforts to clarify whether there are criminal charges pending against Mr. Cubelo, to which police and court officials have responded that there are none.

ESCR-Net's letter, signed on behalf of 270 Members, expressed concern that this incident is consistent with the ongoing trend of harassment, intimidation and criminalization of organizers in the Philippines who work to defend the rights of workers and the urban poor. It suggests that such threats and harassment against human rights defenders have been perceived as an effort to impede the growing solidarity amongst workers who have faced similar situations at several national and international companies operating in the Philippines, and calls for the implementation of the decision of the International Labor Organization to take decisive action to resolve the longstanding labor dispute between Toyota Motor Corporation and the Toyota Motor Philippines Corporation Worker's Association. Further indicative of this trend, other human rights defenders including Renante Gamara, Roy Velez, Amelita Bravante, Randy Vegas and Raul Camposano, have experienced similar threats of criminalization in recent months, leading to earlier Urgent Actions issued by ESCR-Net.

Mr. Cubelo has reportedly experienced threats, harassment and intimidation as a result of his activities to promote the right to organize in a union, and concern has been expressed that Mr. Cubelo and other union leaders could be targeted with extrajudicial killings, 11 of which have been reported in the Philippines since the beginning of 2014.

ESCR-Net called on the Government of the Philippines, which is Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to respect the rights of all people to life, liberty and security of person, as well as the right of free expression and assembly.

Furthermore, as a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Philippines has obligations to respect and protect the right to work; to the enjoyment of just and favorable conditions of work which ensure, in particular, remuneration which provides all workers with a decent living for themselves and their families, safe and healthy working conditions, equal opportunity for promotions and a reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay; and to form and join trade unions.

Finally, ESCR-Net recalled the obligations of the Philippines to uphold UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which recognizes the right of each person to promote the realization of human rights and provides protection against any violence, threats or retaliation as a consequence of work to defend and promote human rights.

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, a non-profit organization drawing attention to the human rights impacts (positive & negative) of over 5100 companies, has invited Toyota Motor Corporation Japan to publicly respond to reports raising serious concerns about the harassment and intimidation of union leaders in the Philippines, and is currently awaiting a response. For more information on this case at the Business and Human Rights Resource Center, please visit http://business-humanrights.org/Links/Repository/1027951/link_page_view

About ESCR-Net

The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) connects more than 250 NGOs, social movements and activists from 70 countries around the world, offering a strategic exchange and collective advocacy to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all. More information www.escr-net.org

About Defend Job Philippines

Defend job values dignity of work as recognition and respect for the dignity of every human person and his life. It was established on July 19, 2009 as a wide network to defend jobs initiated by women workers of Triumph International fought against illegal and unjust lay-off and closure. Now, it has wide network of displaced workers, unions, women and informal sectors united for better working and living condition. More information <http://defendjobphilippines.wordpress.com/>

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