



Sep 27, 2022

HON. BIENVENIDO E. LAGUESMA
Secretary
Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)
Republic of the Philippines

Dear Secretary Laguesma:

Greetings from the Coalition of Agricultural Workers International (CAWI).

It has come to our attention through our member in the Philippines, the Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA), that your office has formally asked the International Labour Organization (ILO) to move the High-Level Tripartite Mission (HLTM) to the Philippines to look into the violations to ILO Convention 87 to early 2023.

We find this concerning as moving the HLTM delays the HLTM by three and a half years. Meanwhile, we bring to your kind attention on our concern on the Filipino trade union leaders and organizers continue to get killed, arbitrarily arrested, red-tagged, or disappeared. We are alarmed that the political environment seems to disregard the Filipino agricultural workers' civil liberties, human and trade union rights.

Instead of using the budget deliberations as a reason to delay the HLTM, we urge the Labor ministry to maximize the Mission to enlighten Philippine legislators on the severe violations of the state to ILO C. 87. In fact, the HLTM can even serve as leverage to ask Congress for more resources for the Labor and Justice ministries, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), and other related agencies for activities that address the violations of ILO C. 87 including labor inspection, investigation, and prosecution of those responsible and making them accountable without impunity.

The Philippine government will host the ASEAN Senior Labor Officials Meeting (SLOM) in late October, thus making it even more critical to conduct the HLTM now. It will set an excellent example for the rest of ASEAN on the importance of ratifying core labor standards, how to implement them, and how to appropriately act on and submit to the ILO's Supervisory Mechanisms grievances for violations of ratified international labor standards.

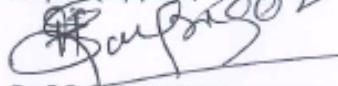
We also learned that your office would soon draft the Philippine "Labor and Employment Plan." This process will undoubtedly benefit from the HLTM, which can inform and guide the labor officials on the policy gaps and necessary programs to implement ILO C. 87 in the Philippines effectively.

Finally, as you act on the recommendations from the Tripartite Virtual Meeting with Filipino labor groups in September 2021, let us bring to your notice of the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) Conference Recommendations to the Philippine government in 2019, namely:

- Take effective measures to prevent violence concerning the exercise of legitimate activities by workers' and employers' organizations
- Immediately and effectively undertake investigations into the allegations of violence against members of workers' organizations to establish the facts, determine culpability, and punish the perpetrators
- Operationalize the monitoring bodies, including by providing adequate resources, and provide regular information on these mechanisms and progress on the cases assigned to them
- Ensure that all workers without distinction can form and join organizations of their choosing per Article 2 of the Convention

We hope the Labor ministry will be more proactive in addressing these concerns amid persistent allegations of labor rights abuses. The Philippines has been on the list of the Ten Worst Countries for Workers to live in per the International Trade Union Conference (ITUC) Rights Index for the past six years. Allowing the HLTM to push through without further delays could help resolve these reported violations against Filipino agricultural workers.

Respectfully yours,



Dr. P.P. Sivapragasam

Secretary-General

Coalition of Agricultural Workers International (CAWI)