

# International Labor Rights Forum BUILDING A JUST WORLD FOR WORKERS



- [WOMEN'S RIGHTS](#)
- [SUPPORTERS](#)
- [TRADE UNION VIOLENCE](#)
- [CHILD LABOR](#)
- [ABOUT ILRF](#)



TAKE ACTION NOW

## End Violence Against Trade Unions PHILIPPINES

### End Violence Against Trade Unions

Zimbabwe

Colombia

**Philippines**

Policy Connection

What You Can Do

Publications & Resources

**News Archives**

Search

Search this site

## RP is now 2nd most dangerous country for labor unions

*Inquirer (Philippines)*

May 4, 2006

By Marlon Ramos, Jerome Aning

CALAMBA CITY, Laguna -- The Philippines is fast becoming the most dangerous place for labor unions after Colombia, a US-based labor rights advocacy group said Tuesday as members of a 12-nation International Labor Solidarity Mission fanned out to various provinces to investigate killings, abductions and other attacks on labor leaders and supporters.

Brian Campbell, an officer of the International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF), said his group and the others were alarmed over the attacks on trade union leaders in the country, some of whom worked in factories owned by multinational corporations from the United States and Europe.

ILRF is a group of lawyers based in Washington, D.C., which helps families of murdered union leaders file criminal cases against corporations suspected of complicity in the killings.

### Spate of killings

The spate of labor killings in the Philippines now matches the notoriety of Colombia, which is the most dangerous country for labor unions, Campbell told the *Inquirer* shortly after he arrived here as part of a group that is looking into recent attacks on labor leaders in the Southern Tagalog region.

"The Philippines is becoming one of the worst countries that I've (visited). What is more disturbing is that it takes less and less to provoke the killings," he said.

Last week, Gerry Cristobal, president of a union in a semiconductor firm in Cavite province, was critically wounded in a shooting involving an intelligence operative in Imus town. Militant groups said that, contrary to what the police had earlier reported, it was Cristobal who was ambushed.

Campbell and the other members of the solidarity mission hope to increase pressure on the Arroyo government to act swiftly on the murders of labor leaders.

Campbell said the ILRF was currently involved in at least 12 cases where it represents workers on a banana plantation in Guatemala and a German-owned coal company in Colombia.

### Dark side of globalization

Campbell said in some countries he had visited, corporations with mother companies in the US and Europe were suspected to have been involved in ordering the slayings of union leaders.

"The people in the US don't have a full understanding of how it is like to be a worker in the Philippines," he said. "It is important that they know what the companies, which they believe are good citizens, are doing here. They should understand that there is a dark side to this globalization and capitalism."

Among the countries with representatives on the solidarity mission are the United States, Belgium, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The mission was organized by the local Center for Trade Union and Human Rights, the Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research, and the Alliance of Concerned Teachers.

Some of the other teams have already arrived in Bulacan, Tarlac and Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), while others were on their way to Compostela Valley and the island of Negros, according to mission spokesperson Daisy Arago.

"They will talk to the victims and survivors of politically related incidents of

violence including those who experienced harassment, abduction and torture because of their trade-union and political activities in their factories and communities," added Arago, who is also executive director of the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights.

#### Unmasking the killers

The delegates will visit the families of those who were killed and gather first-hand information on the circumstances around the killings.

"We aim to unmask the perpetrators of these heinous crimes which killed more than 60 unionists, labor leaders and advocates since 2001," Arago said.

Arago said the success of the mission would depend on the cooperation of the authorities.

"We expect harassment from local military and police forces but we are determined to push through with the work," she told the inquirer in a telephone interview.

Aside from the killings, disappearances and abductions, the mission members will also document torture and violations of privacy and intrusions into the workers homes and families.

The mission is expected to present its report in Manila on May 7. Mission members and local labor rights advocates are to meet with the Commission on Human Rights the following day, Arago said.

In Tarlac province, the killings to be investigated are those of Ricardo Ramos, former president of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union; Tirso Cruz, a leader of the United Luisita Workers' Union; Bayan Muna-Tarlac secretary general Florante Collantes; and Tarlac City councilor Abelardo Ladera.

#### Christmas Day torture

In Bulacan province, the mission will investigate the murders of Federico de Leon, provincial chair of the Anakpawis Party; Rogelio Concepcion, union president of Solid Development Corp.; and Francisco Paraon, who was illegally detained, interrogated and tortured on Christmas day last year.

In Calabarzon, the delegates will focus on the killings of Nestlé Philippines union president Diosdado Fortuna, Alliance of Concerned Teachers national council member Napoleon Pomastoro and Honda Workers' Union president Romeo Legazpi.

In Negros and southern Mindanao, the mission will study the plight of sugar and banana plantation workers, respectively.

They will also look into the murders of at least four leaders of the National Federation of Sugar Workers, a Kilusang Mayo Uno affiliate in the sugar industry.

---

[About ILRF](#) [What You Can Do](#) [Publications & Resources](#) [News](#) [Contact](#) [ILRF Blog](#)

Copyright © International Labor Rights Forum, 2008 [Sitemap](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Privacy](#) [Site Credits](#)