

Philippines: Arrests and political assassinations

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The Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) Labor Center condemned the arrest of Ricardo Bellamia, 47 years old, union organizer for the National Federation of Labor in Cebu. Bellamia was arrested last November 2, 2007 by police and soldiers at his house in Casay, Dalaguete, Cebu. He is being illegally detained at the Guadalupe Police Station in Cebu City.

"We were not surprise Bellamia has been accused as an New People's Army (NPA) leader since this is the tactic being used by the military and police to give credence to their continued suppression of the trade union rights. Last May 2007, Vincent "Bebot" Borja, National Council Member of the KMU and union organizer of the National Federation of Labor Unions-KMU (NAFLU-KMU) in Leyte suffered the same as he was also arrested on the same allegations that he is an NPA leader," said Elmer "Ka Bong" Labog, National Chairperson of the KMU.

According to Labog, the vilification of unionists and labor leaders and activists is the strategy of the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to decapitate the leadership and organization of KMU and other labor organizations. "When we filed a complaint with the International Labour Organization (ILO) against the Arroyo regime, one of the first reasons the regime's representative said was that KMU is a front of the NPA and so that our complaint should be dismissed. When the police and military massacred at least 7 workers during the Hacienda Luisita almost 3 years ago, the police and military accused the workers of being infiltrated by NPA members. This is the Arroyo regimes' mantra"

The labor leader stressed this analysis is shared by many observers. Prof. Philip Alston, United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions said in his report to the UN General Assembly said that "Many in the [Philippine] government have concluded that civil society organization are 'front' for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and...the NPA" and that counterinsurgency operations have resulted in extrajududicial killings of leftists activists. He also noted that "...leaders of leftist organization are systematically hunted down...and they are often killed following a campaign of individual vilification designed to instill fear into the community."

According to Labog, both the case of Bellamia and Borja will be highlighted during the International Day of Action against Trade Union Repression in the Philippines scheduled this November 16, 2007, exactly 3 years after the Hacienda Luisita Massacre.

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