

1. COURAGE has been at the forefront of the struggle to increase the salaries of government employees through a campaign for a National Minimum Wage of P16,000.00/monthly (US\$334.00) and an end to the practices of contractualization and other precarious work arrangements. Under the administration of President Benigno Aquino III, workers in the public sector bore the brunt of depressed wages and job uncertainty due to various forms of contractual work arrangements. The benefits of supposed economic growth under the neo-liberal globalization program claimed by the two past administrations of Presidents Arroyo and Aquino were never felt by Filipino working people. Thus, in recent surveys, the two most immediate changes Filipinos have sought are the increase in salaries and a stop to contractualization.
2. At present, there are currently 1.3 million government employees in the Philippines. The minimum monthly wage is currently pegged at less than US\$200 (PhP9,478.00). For local government employees this may even be less (equivalent to only 65% of their counterparts in national government agencies) or even lower if revenues are insufficient. According to the 2010 Inventory of Government Personnel of the Civil Service Commission, of the total number of government employees, around 120,000 are classified as casual and/or contractual employees who have no security of tenure and are classified as precarious work. Not included in this figure is the more than 281,000 job order and/or contracts of service personnel who are also considered precarious work. More recent figures released by the CSC claimed that this figure has risen to more than 500,000.
3. The current socio-economic condition of the public sector workers (which is no different from the private sector workers) has pushed COURAGE to mount the general campaign for salaries, jobs and rights. Specifically, COURAGE, together with other workers in the private and agricultural sectors, launched the campaign for a National Minimum Wage and the campaign against contractualization.
4. The salaries of a majority of the rank-and-file employees are less than the Constitutionally-mandated "family living wage" which is computed at more than US\$683 (PhP32,670.00) a month. There is actually no single national minimum wage as there are more than 1,000 various levels and classifications of wages in the private sector. A different Salary Standardization Law fixes salaries for the public sector.
5. Alarming too is the increase of contractual/precarious workers to 25% of the government workforce in 2010 as compared to around 5% in the 1990s. Other than no job security, majority of the contractual workers have lower salaries and benefits, no social/insurance

protection, no right to unionize and collectively bargain, despite some having served the government for decades. The campaign against contractualization aims to stop this exploitative practice and to regularize incumbent contractual personnel especially those who have already worked for several years.

6. Other socio-economic campaigns of the government employees concern the struggle for public sector union rights and welfare and solidarity with the people's demands. These include:
 - a. the struggle for the right to strike which government workers have been denied despite the Constitutional guarantees;
 - b. full recognition of the right to collective bargaining and negotiations which have been curtailed due to numerous government restrictions;
 - c. job security which has been threatened with lay-offs due to reorganization, "rationalization", privatization and other austerity measures;
 - d. genuine socio-economic development through national industrialization and genuine land reform.

HARASSMENT CASES

7. The campaign of COURAGE for genuine public services has made the union a target of those in government who benefit from corruption and maladministration in the delivery of services. COURAGE has been subjected to trade union repression under previous administrations, including that of Pres. Aquino, and such repression also continues into the present. International and national laws on the human rights of workers to self-organization, collective bargaining and negotiation, and the right to peaceful concerted activities including the right to strike, the right to a living wage and job security, among others, have not been respected¹. Workers in exercising their legitimate rights have been met with state-sponsored harassment and repression.
8. Though there were several incidents of political repression and harassment of government employees in the past which involved extrajudicial killings and other forms of harassment, these continued and worsened during the administration of President Aquino. Consistent with the previous US-sponsored "counter-insurgency program" dubbed Oplan Bantay Laya², the Aquino administration established "Oplan Bayanihan" which had the same objectives of

¹The Philippines is a signatory to the ILO Convention 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention and ILO Convention 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention

²Operation Plan Freedom Watch

supposedly addressing insurgency and terrorism, but actually targeted legal and democratic organizations such as COURAGE.

Some of the glaring incidents are as follows:

9. On December 3, 2012, two union organizers of COURAGE based in Metro-Manila, Randy Vegas and Raul Camposano, were arrested separately based on trumped-up charges of having participated in an ambush of military soldiers in Camarines Norte, resulting in the death of five soldiers. A few months after, two more cases involving ambushes of military soldiers in other incidents (Lagawe, Ifugao and in Infanta, Quezon Province) were filed against them. They remain in jail in Camarines Norte for the past several years while the court hears their case.
10. Emmanuel Mulawan, an employee of Cagayan de Oro Water District in Mindanao and a Board Member of the water district union, was arrested on June 11, 2014, on charges of rape which supposedly occurred in Cavite in Luzon. At the supposed date of the incident on June 21, 2013, he had proof of having reported to work at his office in Cagayan De Oro. The union was fighting against the privatization and graft and corruption of a multi-million bulk-water project which the union suspected was the reason for the false allegations. Suspiciously, the accuser is also somehow connected to the owners of the private bulk water project. Mulawan remains incarcerated at the Cavite jail to this day.
11. During the first quarter of 2015, the COURAGE National Office was observed to be under surveillance. Suspicious looking men were seen lurking in the corner of the street where the COURAGE office is located. Vehicles were also parked just outside the gates for days, sometimes with two or more unidentified men just inside the parked vehicles. Bolder ones took photos of the staff or organizers who frequent the office.
12. Starting April 2015 and a few months after, COURAGE was alarmed with more than 20 cases of harassment by alleged military agents and police officers against government union officers, members and staff workers based in Metro Manila and other areas. They complained of stalking, surveillance, receiving poison letters and visits at their homes or offices by men who introduced themselves as military agents and accused them of links to the communist revolutionary movement and warning them of dire consequences unless they cooperated. Poison letters and unwelcome visits followed the same pattern branding the leaders and staff as “communists” giving them numbers to call if they wish to cooperate and leaving them with threats if they failed to do so.

THREATENING LETTERS

13. Among those who received the letters were: Rosalinda Nartates, Consolidated Employees Union-National Housing Authority (CUE-NHA) National President and COURAGE Secretary General, Santiago Dasmaringas Jr. National Food Authority Employees Association (NFAEA) National Adviser and COURAGE 1st Vice President, Roman M. Sanchez NFA employee and NFAEA National President, Evelyn P. Garcia NFA employee and NFAEA National Assistant Secretary and Manuel Baclagon Social Welfare Employees Association of the Philippines – Department of Social Welfare and Development (SWEAP-DSWD) National President.
14. From among those who received the letters, Mr. Baclagon's was the most threatening for it mentioned they knew his residence, his family background and other personal circumstances. It warned that he should immediately cooperate by calling the cellphone number listed on the letter before "it's too late".

UNWELCOME VISITS OF MILITARY AND POLICE AGENTS

15. On April 21, 2015, a certain Sgt. Borres who introduced himself as a liaison officer of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) entered the National Food Authority (North Ave., Quezon City) premises looking for Mr. Hilario Tan, a retired NFA employee and former vice president of the NFA Employees Association. He was stopped by the lobby guard and brought to the Security Service office of the NFA for questioning because he was carrying a .45 calibre pistol. The security personnel asked Borres for a mission order but he could not produce one, so he left.
16. Ms. Elvira Prudencio, an employee of the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) and President of the NWPC Employees Association and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Employees Union National President, reported that on April 27, 2015, an unidentified person went to the NWPC office, Manila, and looked for her through the NWPC's security guard. When Ms. Prudencio proceeded to leave the office, she was approached by the unidentified man just outside the office. The man said he knew her and that she occupied a high position in "the organization". He added that he can help her in all her problems provided that she help him. He only said that he was from the "OP" (possibly meaning Office of the President). He gave her a small note indicating his name and number.
17. On April 27, 2015, at the MMDA Main office two unidentified men looked for Ms. Theresa Gonzales, an employee of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and President of the union KKK-MMDA. On the same day later in the afternoon, another employee of

MMDA and the union's Education Committee Steward Josephine Delloro was approached by a man who identified himself as from the Department of the National Defense in a store near her house. He said Delloro should cooperate with them because she was doing activities not related to their office and union work. She was given a cellphone number to call and an assurance that he will protect her should she cooperate with them.

18. On June 16, 2015, employees of the National Housing Authority in its District Office in Sta. Mesa, Manila said a policeman went to the office and took pictures of them which they protested. The policeman said it was allegedly "because of their participation in rallies".
19. On June 19, 2015, Erwin Lanuza, an employee of the Quezon City Hall and the union President, was met by a man again who claimed to be a military soldier along the corridors leading to his office. He also claimed to know Mr. Lanuza's connection with the communist movement and that he should stop and insisted that he report his activities to him. He also left a cellphone number.

THREAT AGAINST COURAGE NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF AND ORGANIZERS

20. On June 16, 2015, a man who introduced himself as Joey from the military approached Mr. Benny Angeles. Mr. Angeles is a retiree of the MMDA and former union leader of the KKK-MMDA and now works as a volunteer organizer for COURAGE. The man said he knew Mr. Angeles as a member of the CPP-NPA and all the other members in the union as well. He gave a note with his name and a cellphone number and instructed Angeles to call him should he decide to "return to the fold".
21. On the same day, Mr. Bob Reyes, a COURAGE National Organizer for more than 15 years and a former contractual employee of the Caloocan City Government was alone in his house with his youngest son. A man who introduced himself as a military soldier but in plain clothes said he knew him and his involvement with the CPP-NPA. The man gave him a cellphone number and warned that he should "call me or blame yourself if something bad happens to you".
22. The same thing happened to Ms. Generosa Manilag. She volunteers for COURAGE for its welfare assistance program in Taguig City before COURAGE finally made her a fulltime member of its administrative staff.
23. Chito Juliano and Romeo Manilag were tailed by a man in a motorcycle from the rally at the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process. The same man supposedly took photos of the staff during the said rally.

24. Husband and wife Oliver Rosales and Rowena Rosales, COURAGE organizer and chief of Staff, respectively, complained of heightened daily surveillance to and from their homes, the COURAGE Office and union offices assigned to them. A former colleague who now works in the private sector informed them that military men also visited him looking for the whereabouts of Oliver. A union leader from a union assigned to Oliver also received a text message from a man claiming to be him asking for an urgent meet-up.
25. On June 28, 2015, just before COURAGE was preparing for the filing of complaints for the second batch of cases, two unidentified men visited Ms. Raquel Toquero COURAGE National Staff at her home in Silang, Cavite, and claimed to be soldiers. The men said they knew her and what she had been doing and that she should contact them if she wants to change. They left a note with a cellphone number and a certain name on it and left hurriedly.
26. On July 14, 2015, Ms. Antonieta Dizon, a member of COURAGE council of Advisers, former COURAGE Deputy Secretary General and former director of Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) sought refuge in the premises of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP). She noticed a vehicle that had been tailing her after she joined colleagues who filed a petition for writs of Amparo and Habeas Data before the Supreme Court. The said vehicle had been tailing her for days. Since then, her stalkers maintained a round-the-clock stakeout of the IBP Building using shifting teams of watchers and several suspicious vehicles and personnel were noticed in the vicinity. There were also two attempts by unidentified men to enter the building. She stayed at the IBP for almost two weeks.
27. On August 17, 2015 COURAGE National Office discovered fake Facebook accounts of the victims. The said fake accounts contained malicious comments and statements.
28. On April 8, 2016 during the 30th National Congress of COURAGE held at Teacher's Camp in Baguio City, at least 2 suspicious personnel were seen near the venue. They were seen monitoring the rally which was held at the People's Park, Session Road, Baguio City and even tailed the staff to the Baguio General Hospital when one of their members sought medical services. They were confronted but denied that they were following the staff.
29. These COURAGE staff and organizers are men and women who have chosen to live simple lives so that the workers may get their rightful share of their labor and truly serve the people. The political and union harassment has to stop.

Recommendations

For the UN Human Rights Council to Call on the Philippine Government to:

1. Put a stop to union rights violations and free detained unionists/organizers.
2. Assist families where members have been victims of extra-judicial killings to seek justice
3. Scrap the counter-insurgency program *Oplan Bayanihan*, which has resulted in the victimization of innocent and unarmed civilians.
4. Ensure that conventions of the International Labour Organization, to which the Philippines is a signatory, are recognized, observed and upheld, especially the protection of workers' right to join unions, enter into collective bargaining, and seek redress against discrimination. The Philippine must also ratify ILO Convention #151 (Convention concerning Protection of the Right to Organise and Procedures for Determining Conditions of Employment in the Public Service).
5. Respect and guarantee the right of workers to a living wage which should in part, immediately implement the National Minimum Wage (US\$334 or Php16,000 monthly for public sector workers and US\$15.70 or PhP750 per day)
6. Stop the policy of contractualization and regularize the current contractual employees.
7. Guarantee the basic union rights to self-organization, collectively bargain and right to strike.
8. Stop the neo-liberal policies of privatization, deregulation and liberalization.
9. The on-going armed conflict involving the National Democratic Front, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Moro National Liberation Front and the Government of the Philippines, the peace talks should resume to address the root causes of the rebellion and to genuinely pursue peace based on justice.