

batongaw

ISSUE 5

News, Views and Analysis from Migrante Melbourne

BATINGAW; BELL; HERALD; The New Voice of Filipino Migrants in Australia



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by George Kotsakis
Chairperson - Migrante Melbourne

Editorial

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

History repeats itself. The beauty of recorded history is that it can be revisited countless times and be judged according to the norms of the status quo. Humans in the course of their interaction have miserably failed to learn the lesson of history.

Countless tragedies had come and gone, all done by man against man. Nature sometimes has lent a helping hand because man has caused Gaia to respond in kind. Despots and Tyrants had come and gone as well. The brutality, singly or in coalescence, has made each human experience from these tyrants grow in proportion. Each time mankind resolves to rid the inequity, he sells his soul and scruples, makes a fool of himself, repeat history and restart two step backward.

From the annals of history laws have been decreed to prevent abuses from recurring. The Law of Innocents, the first Irish law to protect women, children and the clergy from violence during the barbaric years of 696-7 AD was instigated by St. Adomanan. The Charter of Liberties or the Magna Carta of England is another instrument forcing a king to confirmed feudal rights to barons in 1215 AD. To limit the powers of the Federal government the United States Bill of Rights was enacted in 1791 to protect the basic principles of human liberty which was the embodiment of the Virginia declaration among other rights that the government is the servant of the people. The French Declaration of Man and of the Citizen in 1789 declares that man has a universal right and is valid at all times and in any place. This declaration during the time of the French revolution was a precursor to the international human rights instrument.

The Constitution of the Soviet Union in 1918 has defined the basic rights of its citizen and has enshrined such rights in chapter 10 of its constitution. Other documents have been made and enshrine in history in each crisis. The Nazi Germany's holocaust brought forth the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights to remind us that we need to be vigilant and resolute to respect universal rights of everyone.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 is to ensure that children should not in their frail body and mind be exploited for cheap labor and become young warriors for petty warlords as experienced in civil wars of the world. It embodies that we need to nurture our youth so that the human race can continue.

Our biggest threat now is the violation of our rights from imperialist plunder. Countless lives have been put in miseries through greed and corruption. Capitalism has destroyed the values of human decency. It has made tentacles of usurper that denied basic human rights to its people in the like of Gloria Arroyo and others in the name of capitalist ethos. Imperialism is the modern violator. We do not need to write another document to remind us of our inherent rights, so much has been written. We must assert these rights. We must stand and if needed be, wrench it in the hands of the usurper.

United we stand, divided we fall.



MORE NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM MIGRANTE MELBOURNE ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE

Visit us on the web at www.migrante.org.au

NEWS ROUNDUP

Delegates to ACTU Congress petition on killings in the Philippines

More than 400 delegates to the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Congress on October 24-25 this year signed the petition to the Philippine and Australian government on the political killings and repression in the Philippines. The Congress is held every three years and the delegates come from different unions in all states of Australia.

The delegates condemn the pattern of terrorism by the State against the people of the Philippines and call on the government of the Philippines to stop the killing, stop the repression and bring the perpetrators of the violations of human rights to justice and to immediately release Representative Crispin Beltran from illegal detention. They also call on Australian government to demand that the government of the Philippines ends its attacks on its own people and through all legitimate authorities bring all perpetrators of crimes to the court of justice.

The petition was initiated by Philippines Australia Solidarity Association (PASA) as part of their ongoing campaign for human rights in the Philippines and was presented to the Congress by Len Cooper, State Secretary of Communications Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU), Telecommunications Division.

IR laws behind Filipino workers' alleged exploitation: Labor

The Federal Opposition says the alleged exploitation of 40 Filipino workers in south-east Queensland is the result of the Government's changes to industrial relations laws.

An Ipswich company, Dartbridge Welding, brought the workers to Australia under the Government's Skilled Migration Scheme. Three men claim they were sacked for joining a union and the Immigration Department is investigating the allegations.

Opposition immigration spokesman Tony Burke says changes to industrial relations laws are responsible for the problem.

"We're continuing to see example after example of the worst cases allowed under the new industrial relations laws being made completely legal through the use of 457 visas," he said.

"These are the people least likely to report, because they believe their employer doesn't just have a right to dismiss but also has a right to deport."

Refugee week celebrates

Migrante Melbourne recently participated in the refugee week celebration organised by Hobsons Bay City Council held at Westgate Migrant Resource Centre, Altona North on 27th of October 2006.

The celebration, called "Hobsons Bay Refugee Awareness Day", was supported by Westgate Migrant Resource Centre.

Other participating communities were Somalian Community, Sudanese Community, Karen Community and Vietnamese Community.

As part of the celebration, Migrants Resource Centre's Chairperson, Joe Attard, extended his message to the refugees. He said that Australia is composed of different nationalities that considered a culturally diverse society. He also mentioned that we are all refugees because we came from far away.

Representative from Sudanese Community Ajak Kwai shared her experiences in Sudan before fleeing to Australia and her life as refugee. National General Secretary of Australian Karen Organization, Ganemy Kunoo of Karen Community said that he could not believe he will be a refugee. He talked about the situation of Burma, the military activity and its atrocities.

A Sudanese Dinka singer, Ajak Kwai gave a solo performance. Then, lunch followed after.

Canberra restaurant faces \$250,000 fine in Filipino guest worker case

A hospitality union industry campaign has led to a Canberra restaurant ending up in the Federal Court facing a possible fine of nearly \$250,000 over its mistreatment of guest workers.

Zeffirelli is one of several Canberra restaurants to be charged for failing to properly pay its workers, after a group of about 30 Filipino hospitality workers came to the union complaining about the slave-like conditions they were forced to endure after being brought to Australia.

Similar proceedings against another Canberra restaurant, Pangaea, were heard recently. In both cases, the Federal Magistrate, has reserved his decision.

"Our members are happy that we have finally got to this stage and will wait with interest the court results - as well as any other prosecutions against other Canberra restaurants," David Bibo, Canberra LHMU Hospitality Union organiser said.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Migrante writes submission on formal citizenship test

Migrante Melbourne has written a submission on the consideration of the merits of introducing a formal citizenship test.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Andrew Robb, released on 17 September 2006 a discussion paper for public reaction to a proposal to introduce a formal citizenship test.

The discussion paper seeks public comments on four key issues:

- Should Australia introduce a formal citizenship test?
- What level of English is required to participate as an Australian citizen?
- How important is knowledge of Australia for Australian citizenship?
- How important is a demonstrated commitment to Australia's way of life and values for those intending to settle permanently in Australia or spend a significant period of time in Australia?

In its submission, Migrante expressed a number of concerns regarding the Government's proposal to introduce a formal citizenship test, including level English language requirement, knowledge of Australia and commitment to 'Australian values'.

In considering the introduction of a formal test, Migrante submitted that "there is no merit in introducing a formal citizenship test to migrants who wish to become an Australian citizen". The group believed that a formal test may have the potential to exclude prospective citizens because of cultural, religious and language differences.

Whilst Migrante recognised that English language plays an important role in migrant's full participation in a wider Australian society, the group submitted that "a language policy should not be focus on the actual language capability of migrants, but a policy that would convince them of its significance and its value".

Migrante argued that forcing migrants to learn English as a way to Australian citizenship is counterproductive and should instead focus on the continuation and increase in funding of programs such as English classes.

In its concluding remarks, Migrante submitted that "the way to achieve basic understanding of Australia and its way of life should not be coercive and self-imposing, such as that of a formal test".

The group believed that knowledge and understanding of one's values, traditions, customs and beliefs are acquired through socialisation and is a learning process, which involves time, engagement and social activities of migrant groups.

(Migrante's submission on formal citizenship test will be available on its website at www.migrante.org.au, or alternatively, you can contact Migrante Melbourne on 1300 3666 74 or via email melbourne@migrante.org.au for a copy)

Get Involved!



Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

I would like to:

- become a member of Migrante Melbourne
- be updated with information from Migrante Melbourne
- donate to Migrante Melbourne

Migrante Melbourne is a voluntary community organisation of Filipino and Filipino-Australian migrants and workers promoting and upholding their welfare, human rights and workers' rights. It also deepens members' awareness of the root reasons of the Filipino hegira to over 180 countries and settlement issues in their adopted homelands.

Visit us on the web at www.migrante.org.au

**SEND TO PO BOX 606, LAVERTON VIC 3028 or
CALL US on 1300 3666 74**

Big business tells Arroyo: Stop the Killings

The Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce (JFC) in the Philippines, an umbrella organization of business groups from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Europe, Japan, Korea and the Philippine Association of Multinational Companies Regional Headquarters called on the government of Gloria Arroyo to stop the killings or risk investments and aid to the country.

A similar plea was made in a letter sent to Ms Arroyo signed by local officials of the US-based apparel companies Gap, Polo Ralph Lauren, Wal-Mart, Liz Claiborne, American Eagle Outfitters, Jones Apparel Group and Phillips Van Heusen.

In their letter to Ms Arroyo, the apparel firms expressed alarm over the murder of Bishop Alberto Ramento inside his rectory in Tarlac City in October and the reports of violent attacks against striking workers at the Cavite Economic Zone (CEZ). They also urged the Philippine government to "take proactive measures to ensure the physical safety" of the workers and work for the protection of the rights of workers and labor rights promoters.

"We are happy to hear the perennial opponent of workers take such a strong position in our behalf, denouncing the killings and asking the government to stop it," said Elmer Labog, chairman of the militant Kilusang Mayo Uno (May First Movement).

Labog also said the call of the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce (JFC) and foreign firms on the government to put an end to murders of left-wing activists and journalists "clearly shows the gravity of killings in this country, that it is unprecedented, and that it has reached the level of madness."

The unprecedented appeal followed a spate of unsolved killings that some government critics point to security forces, which often refer to leftwing and human rights activists as fronts for communist rebels. From the KMU's ranks alone, Labog said 29 have been killed this year and 72 since 2001.

"Such violence has no place in a modern democratic state," said a joint statement issued by the American, Australian-New Zealand, Canadian, European, Japanese and Korean business chambers, as well as an association of multinational companies with regional headquarters in the country.

"This is a welcome surprise because even Wal-Mart, an anti-union business group, came out," he said.



stop the killings of workers in the Philippines free crispin beltran

Crispin Beltran is a militant trade unionist in the Philippines. He is a member of Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) and was elected to the Philippines Congress.

In February Philippines President Gloria Arroyo declared a state of emergency and began a crackdown on political opponents in response to an alleged foiled military coup.

Crispin Beltran was arbitrarily detained by the Arroyo administration on 25 February on charges that he was "part of a conspiracy to commit rebellion." These charges were never substantiated and the warrant used to arrest Beltran was dated back to 1985 - that is during the Marcos dictatorship. The state of emergency was lifted after seven days. The Philippines Supreme Court declared the arrests and bans unconstitutional. But Crispin Beltran is still in detention.

Beltran's detention is just one of many attacks occurring against workers in the Philippines. This year alone, 83 members of workers' organisations have been murdered by death squads.

Workers in the Philippines have been rebelling against starvation wages and conditions. The capitalists hope that by killing and detaining workers and their leaders they will weaken the workers movement and keep wages and working conditions at very low levels.

Send a letter of solidarity to Migrante. Email: melbourne@migrante.org.au. Send a protest letter to the Philippines Government. Email: corres@op.gov.ph

3 Filipino Welders Sacked in Australia for joining union

By CAESAR BEN BASAN BAROÑA

Three Filipino welders in Queensland, Australia were fired for joining a union.

Roy Yabut, one of those fired, said that what happened to them was meant to intimidate other workers. The three welders were among 40 Filipinos recruited by labor hire company Dartbridge Welding in Ipswich, Brisbane, Queensland more than two months ago.

Before being fired, the workers said that they were underpaid. They were reportedly promised A\$40,000 yearly (US\$31,007.75, based on an exchange rate of A\$1.29 per US dollar) but they only earned A\$27,000 yearly (US\$20,930.23).

Aside from the low pay, they also had to deal with poor accommodation as eight people shared one house. There were also reports that they had to make their beds out of steel frames from their factory.

The company, which has recently changed ownership, denied any wrongdoing. It reportedly underwent downsizing and sacked the three Filipinos without knowing their union membership.

However, Doug Cameron, secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU), said, "The behavior of the company is absolutely abominable. There are, in our view, legal breaches of the act and there are also moral obligations that companies should have in this country."

Coming to the aid of the Filipino workers, the AMWU blamed the new industrial relations (IR) laws for the exploitation of workers and undermining conditions of both foreign and Australian workers. Union leaders called for



an inquiry into the Federal Government's Skilled Migration Scheme. The Filipino workers entered Australia under "457 visas," or temporary working visas.

The Labor Party also issued a statement on what happened to the three Filipinos. Federal opposition leader Kim Beazley said that the temporary visas are ripping off visiting workers and are being used to suppress the demand of Australian workers.

"I will not tolerate this exploitation. And I will not tolerate [457 visas] being used to undercut Australian wages and conditions," he said.

Federal Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone said that the Immigration Department will investigate the claims. "If you want to join a union, you should be able to, and you shouldn't have to pay the price of losing your job for doing so."

The AMWU is helping the affected Filipino workers find new jobs. They will also be involved in government investigations. *Bulatlat*

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About Batingaw

Batingaw is a bi-monthly newsletter expressing views, news and analysis from Migrante Melbourne. An important aspect of developing this newsletter is an intimate knowledge of and close involvement in all aspects of the Philippine and Australian struggles for justice, democracy and fair-go.

Contributing to Batingaw:

Articles, photographs, cartoons, clippings, comments or a few lines are all very welcome. All material should be sent electronically to: melbourne@migrante.org.au. Readers are encouraged to contribute whatever they can by sending donations to the above address.

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Migrante and PASA delegate speaks at Solidarity Conference in Melbourne

A delegate from Migrante Melbourne and Philippines-Australia Solidarity Association (PASA), represented by Reyvi Marinas and May Kotsakis respectively, has been invited to talk on Philippine issues at the "Second Latin American & Asia Pacific Solidarity Gathering" at Trades Hall, Melbourne on 21-22 October 2006.

"Building Bridges, Organising Globally" is the theme of the Conference. Many national and international progressive activists and speakers from Latin America and Asia Pacific have also been invited to share their experiences and thoughts on their different struggle in their home countries and in the region.

Reyvi gave a talk on the issue of militarisation entitled 'US-AUS Aid Militarisation and its Impact on Peace and Democracy in the Philippines' and highlighted the role of foreign aid and military assistance in the Philippine context.

"Aid militarisation has been used by the Philippine government in its anti-insurgency and pacification campaign against the so called 'enemies of the state', which has resulted in gross human rights abuses and political killings in the country", he explained.

A talk on human rights issue and political killings in the Philippines was delivered by May Kotsakis entitled 'Killing and Abduction of Political Opponents - A State's Anti Terror Operation'. In her talk, she emphasised the increasing gross human rights violation in the country and the Philippine government's continuing 'state terrorism' on ordinary Filipino people.

She concluded with optimism. "People are learning day by day that the government and the current system cannot provide them with economic and political security. They are also learning that there is an alternative. Yes, another world is possible, another society is possible. And this can only be achieved through unity and struggle".

(You can contact Migrante Melbourne for a copy of the full version of Reyvi and May's Presentation Paper delivered at the Conference)



MIGRANT RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS!



Dec. 18 • International Migrants Day
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights • www.nmirr.org

INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY

As we celebrate the International Migrants Day every 18th of December, we are saddened by the news on the plight of overseas Filipino workers. The abuse and exploitations they experience start from the day they apply for overseas work. There is the excessive fees charged by employment agencies and government agencies such as the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) who is now brokering labour export to Australia and the Overseas Worker Welfare Administration (OWWA) whose welfare are often directed to the current government officials rather than to the overseas workers.

We read different reports of abuses such as; no day off for domestic helper in Singapore, no food for domestic helpers in some countries in the Middle East and plenty of Filipinos in jail who are wrongly accused of crimes they did not commit. The list of abuses suffered by overseas Filipinos is very long. Australia is no exemption. In 2004, Migrante Melbourne helped Filipino nurses who were abused by their agent. Recently, we heard the news of 3 Filipino welders sacked by their employer for joining the union.

This year, Migrante Melbourne will increase their fundraising activity to support the international work of Migrante International. Their work includes crisis intervention for distressed migrant workers and their families, awareness-building, legal support, temporary accommodation and advocacy for migrant workers' & well-being. Financial support is the least we can do to help our "kababayans" whose reason for leaving our country is financial improvement like most of us.

Killing and Abduction of Political Opponents A State's Anti-Terror Operation

By May Kotsakis

As of November 2006, more than 760 civilians were killed and 182 were abducted in the Philippines. This political slaughter began January 2001 when Gloria Arroyo became Philippine president following the ouster of the corrupt Estrada government.

Due to overwhelming public and international pressure, the government willy-nilly created "Task Force Usig (Persecute)" and the Melo Commission to investigate the killings. To date none of the perpetrators have been identified, caught or convicted. Nor did the victims' families get justice.

Two conclusions stand out from this dismal situation: One: that the task force and commissions are not serious and incompetent in plumbing the depth of human rights violations under the Arroyo administration. Second, and the more likely, is that they were created as smokescreen to placate the Filipino people's and international community's concern and criticism. This only indicates that the Arroyo government has no real intention to solve and stop the killings and gross human rights violations in the Philippines.

Gloria Arroyo and the military have accused those people who were assassinated as supporters of communists. These people were critical of the government's anti people policies and they exposed systemic corruption. They campaigned for and helped the poor and the oppressed people in the Philippines. They have been branded as supporters of Communists, working for the communists or are communist themselves and thus it's open season to kill them. Labelling political and human rights activists, crusading journalists, conscientious church workers, staunch labour leaders, workers, farmers and students as Reds, provides a licence to kill. Advocacy and activism for people's rights become crimes in the regime's view.

Gross violations of human rights in the Philippines continue unabated. The latest documented victims were both church leaders. On October 8, Pastor Dionisio Estrada was shot and stabbed to death. On October 3, Bishop Alberto Ramento also was stabbed to death. Both of them are members of the IFI (Iglesia Filipina Independiente or Filipino Independent Church), a progressive Christian church who had its roots in the Philippine Revolution against Spain.

"The international outcry against human rights violations in the Philippines has been loud and massive..."

The IFI has been critical of the Arroyo Government's anti-people policies, the proposed charter change (which would guarantee Arroyo's extended tenure) and the corruption of various government officials. During the struggle of the Hacienda Luisita farm workers, the IFI pastors and leaders were at the forefront with the striking workers. They had been advocates of workers' rights and of the rights and welfare of poor Filipinos. Hence, in the twisted logic of the war against terrorism, they are considered enemies of the state.



In some towns of Central Luzon, communities are terrorised by the members of the Philippine Armed Forces. Community members who are found not carrying their "cedula" - or residence certificate- are punished with beatings, humiliation by making them walk on the street naked or are asked to swallow their expired certificates. Military personnel barge into their homes any time of the day without warrant or warning. They count the dining plates used by the family and if

the number of plates does not correspond to the number of the family members, they are accused of providing for extra people like the NPA (New People's Army) and are subject to further abuse, even death. Members of the community are also required to register their mobile phones with the military.

Striking workers are violently dispersed and leaders are thrown in jail. In Cavite's export processing zone last month, police blockaded all the streets around the picketing workers to stop delivery of food, water, or any supply to the workers and supporters until they can no longer last the heat, thirst, and hunger and thus leave the picket line. Strikers are accused of terrorising capitalists and so they are again considered enemies of the State.

Report



Students are harassed, picked up, detained and interrogated. Students are believed to be future destabilizers of government and are branded as the emerging threat to the establishment and therefore need to be “disciplined”.

In Visayas, the central islands of the Philippines, children as young as 12 are suspected as supporters of the revolutionary forces, are beaten and detained. Lynlyn Labitag of Catbalogan, Samar, a 12-year-old girl is being detained and held hostage by the military. Her parents are suspected members of the New People’s Army. The Philippine military forces have no regard to the rules of war and international humanitarian law. The children in the countryside are among the worst abused in the government’s all out war conducted through the “Oplan Bantay Laya” or Operation Freedom Watch - a rather Orwellian terminology, to say the least.

Operation Bantay Laya was drafted by the military to eradicate opposition to government. Since its implementation in 2003, more than 500 civilians had already been murdered and only very few combatants who are members of the New People’s Army had been reported killed by the military.

The international outcry against human rights violations in the Philippines has been loud and massive. The Amnesty International reports on Human Rights (HR) in the Philippines clearly identify the members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines as perpetrators; International church groups have condemned the killings and violations of civilians; the parliaments of Belgium, Norway, England and other countries have raised the issue of HR in the Philippines; the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), at their session last month, has tabled the reports on Human Rights in the Philippines; in the session this week of the IPU in Geneva, a caucus headed by Senator Gavin Marshall, will also discuss the human rights situation in the Philippines and many other international groups are addressing the same.

The Philippine government, with the support of countries like the US and Australia are ignoring these calls from the international body. Obviously, the international indignation has been ignored and treated with contempt to stop the ongoing slaughter of Filipino activists, human rights advocates, journalists and people’s advocates.

Excerpts from speech delivered by May Kotsakis at the recent Latin American and Asia Pacific Solidarity Gathering on 21 October 2006



STOP THE KILLINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES

From 2001 when Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the Philippine presidency, Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People’s Rights) has documented more than 760 political killings. Of this number of victims, 298 belonged to cause-oriented organizations and the rest were civilians who have been accused of being active in or supporting the people’s democratic movement.

Join Us in Demanding

Justice for the victims and the end of killings, abduction and harassment of human rights and community activists in the Philippines

AUSTRALIA-RP RELATIONS

Enter Our Aussie Military Mates

BY CAESAR BEN BASAN BAROÑA

A report in an Australian national newspaper alleged that 20 soldiers from the elite Australian Special Air Service (SAS) unit were involved in a joint military operation hunting alleged terrorists, including two suspects in the 2002 Bali bombing, who are believed to be hiding in Mindanao.

The report said that the joint operations, involving the use of high-speed inflatable boats, were also being conducted to prevent the infiltration and exfiltration of alleged terrorists in the waters of southern Philippines.

The campaign, which is in its second month, was directed against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Jolo Island. The ASG is allegedly giving refuge to Indonesians Dulmatin and Umar Patek, suspected members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

Believed involved in the operations were about 100 U.S. Special Forces, including Green Berets, Navy SEALs, CIA counter-terrorism specialists, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Those involved in the military operations were operating in groups led by highly-mobile intelligence teams, the report said.

The Australian government through Defense Minister Brendan Nelson denied the report but admitted that Australian SAS troops were providing "training and logistics" support to counterterrorism operations of the AFP. AFP officials have also strongly denied the report.

The Philippine Constitution specifically bars foreign troops from engaging in combat operations in Philippine soil. But human rights groups and people's organizations suspect that Philippine authorities have been allowing American and Australian forces to be involved in combat operations. There were reported sightings of U.S. troops in areas where AFP soldiers were conducting patrols and combat operations especially in Mindanao. U.S. officials denied this saying that their troops were involved only in training and providing intelligence support to the AFP.

After the September 11 attacks, the Philippines was declared as the "second front in the war against terror" by U.S. President George W. Bush. U.S. officials also said that Mindanao replaced Afghanistan as a terrorist training base and a "sanctuary of terror." Every JI-linked bombing since



"It is no small coincidence that the newly-appointed Philippine ambassador to Canberra was formerly a vice-admiral who helped craft the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement with U.S. forces in 2002."

2000 allegedly involved graduates of "terrorist training camps" in Mindanao.

The main targets of the U.S. "global war on terror" in Mindanao are JI and ASG members, along with Islamic converts like the Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM). Both the U.S. and Philippine governments said that these groups have followers in Metro Manila and Northern Luzon. The declared aim of the "war on terror" in Mindanao is to close down "terrorist sanctuaries."

But the "war on terror" and the presence of U.S. troops in Mindanao are being viewed with resentment and cynicism by the Bangsa Moro people. U.S. troops were involved in a bloody war of pacification directed against local Muslims during the American colonial period at the turn of the 20th century. The "war on terror" has also resulted in massive displacements of Moro communities in Sulu.

Enter Australia

Australia has been pushing for a NATO-type treaty with the Philippines. Like the Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States, agreements like the Memorandum of

Feature

Understanding (MoU) and the Caracha program aim to increase Australian participation in counterterrorism operations.

Australia's Defense Ministry has been working to develop a 30-boat army watercraft capability for riverine and marshland operations, along with training support. Australian-made Rigid-Hulled Inflatable boats with Kevlar armour are already being supplied to the Philippine Navy for border control.

Canberra is proposing to further boost Australian involvement in Philippine counter-terrorism operations, a move that is welcomed by the Philippine government. It is no small coincidence that the newly-appointed Philippine ambassador to Canberra was formerly a vice-admiral who helped craft the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement with U.S. forces in 2002.

What is seen as a painful thorn on the side of the proposed agreement is the Philippine Constitution with its prohibitions on the stationing and operations of foreign troops in the country. The Australian government also notes that nationalist sentiments recently stirred by the Subic rape case, involving four U.S. soldiers, could complicate the approval of the treaty.

On the other hand, it has also been observed by political

focus groups that the Philippine Senate approved the Visiting Forces Agreement following Chinese incursions in the disputed Mischief Reef. There are speculations that renewed "terrorist bombings" would push the Philippine government to approve another military treaty, this time with Australia.

Australia is a close ally of the United States, deploying a military contingent in both Afghanistan and Iraq. This was despite a recent poll which revealed that 84 percent of Australians opine that the war in Iraq has not diminished the threat of terrorism. The same poll also showed that 91 percent of Australians believe that the reputation of the United States has been damaged in the Muslim world.

Australia has moved from a layered continental-wide defense strategy to a more "forward-looking" one, in consonance with its investments abroad. To project its regional-power status the Australian government has been deploying troops in several Pacific islands but is being accused of arrogance and neocolonialism. Australia has trade, mining, and other economic interests in the Philippines, making it a favourable site for deployment and operations of Australian troops. - BULATLAT

Philippines Australia Solidarity Association
Migrante Melbourne and
Gabriela Australia invite you to:

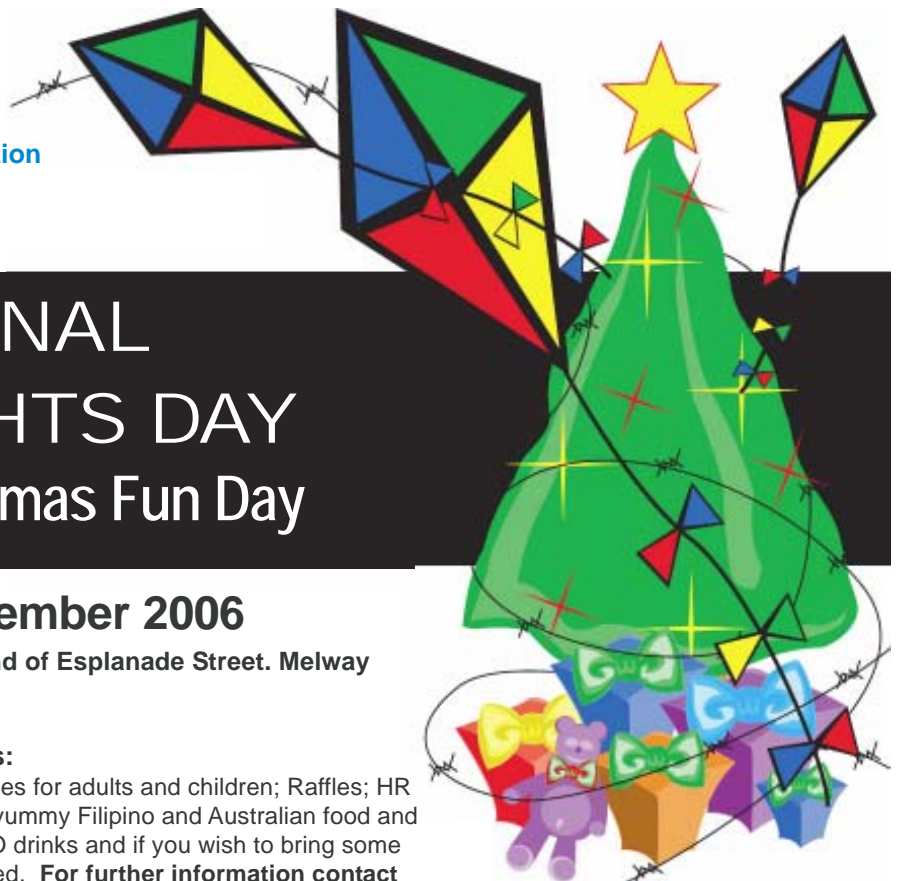
INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY Celebration & Christmas Fun Day

11am, Sunday 10th December 2006

Apex Park, Altona near the beach and end of Esplanade Street. Melway map 206 D 1.

Join and enjoy various activities such as:

Kite making and kite flying contest; Various games for adults and children; Raffles; HR commemoration ceremonies and "salo-salo" of yummy Filipino and Australian food and BBQ. BBQ and some food will be provided. BYO drinks and if you wish to bring some dessert or any dish to share, it will be appreciated. **For further information contact Migrante Melbourne 1300 366674**



GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION - 16 November 2006

Australia wide protest actions on second commemoration of the Hacienda Luisita Massacre

MELBOURNE



Melbourne commemorates Hacienda Luisita massacre

In commemoration of the 2nd anniversary of the massacre of farm workers and supporters at Hacienda Luisita, Philippines, the Philippine Australia Solidarity Association (PASA) and Migrante Melbourne organised a film showing and lantern vigil held in Melbourne on 16 November 2006.

A documentary film "Sa Ngalan ng Tubo" (In the Name of Sugar Cane) was shown at the New Council Chambers, Trades Hall. The film revealed the struggle and the massacre of the striking mill workers and farm workers of the sugar refinery and plantation owned by the Cojuangco family. Seven people died and many were wounded from police and military forces' gunfire.

Amongst other things, the workers demanded a salary increase and benefits, more working days, reinstatement of victimised workers, scrapping of Stock Distribution Option (SDO) and to stop the land use conversion.

After the film showing, there was question and answer portion. PASA Co-Chairperson, May Kotsakis, said that the workers of Hacienda Luisita has already won and met their demands.

A lantern vigil followed after and was held in front of State Library of Victoria. With a red banner "STOP THE KILLINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES", PASA members lined up the placards of the names of the members from various progressive movements who have been assassinated, tortured and abducted under Macapagal-Arroyo regime from January 2006 up to date.



A lantern vigil followed the film showing 'Sa Ngalan ng Tubo' was held in front of State Library of Victoria to highlight political killings in the Philippines.

They also lit their candles to express their sympathy to the victims and demanded justice to end the political killings, abduction and harassment of human rights advocates.

Statement on human rights campaign was also distributed by PASA members and supporters to the passer-by.

The campaign was supported by various organisations and unions in Victoria.

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION - 16 November 2006

Australia wide protest actions on second commemoration of the Hacienda Luisita Massacre

SYDNEY

On 16 November 2006 at 12 noon, Philippines Consulate in Sydney - over 60 Australian trade unionists braved inclement weather to call on the Philippine Government to stop trade union repression and political killings in the Philippines.

Trade unions present were Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU), Construction, Forestry, Mining and Electrical Union (CFMEU), Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU).

Migrant Filipinos, most of them are members of trade unions were also present and representing Migrante-Australia, Philippines-Australia Youth Organisation (PAYO), Philippines-Australia Women's Association (PAWA). Members of the Action for Peace and Development in the Philippines (APDP-Solidarity Group) PAUL joined the rally.

Mark Lennon, Unions New South Wales' Assistant Secretary spoke and read a letter of protest to President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo [GMA] from Sharan Burrow, President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU),

Tom Uren, former Minister of the Hawke Government and Australian Labour Party Deputy Leader in the 1980s addressed the rally and emphasized the importance of workers and unions working together and supporting each other all over the world.

Greg Maniego, Filipino, and member of AMWU thanked all the trade union members and all who joined of the rally and expressed support for the trade union and workers in the Philippines. Greg and the rest of the workers at the Trafalgar Building Construction Company are still on strike and fighting for rights at their workplace. There are 8 Filipino workers at Trafalgar who joined that strike and 4 of them were at the rally. Greg called on all Filipinos and workers in Australia to support the Philippine trade union movement.

Other speakers were Roger Jowett, PAUL Chairperson (former National Secretary of RTBU) and Robyn Fortescue - AMWU NSW Branch Assistant Secretary and representatives of CFMEU and MUA, Mal Washer, from the CFMEU. All the speakers urged the Philippine president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (GMA) to release the labour leader and Philippine Congressman Crispin Beltran immediately. They expressed their solidarity and support to the families and workers at Hacienda Luisita. Speakers mentioned the inspiration they drew from the courage and strong will of those affected by the massacre on 16 November 2004.

The Philippine Vice-Consul, Ferdinand Victoria came down to receive the letters to GMA from ACTU and all trade unions present. The Philippine Consulate will send the letters to the office of GMA.



Australian trade union and community groups rally at the Philippine Consulate, 16 November 2006, Sydney.

The Philippines-Australia Union Links' (PAUL) Secretary - Peter Murphy had worked with trade union leaders to organize the protest. In the morning, prior to the protest, a video of the massacre was shown to union leaders and workers at the auditorium of Unions NSW, to remind everyone of the awful tragedy that was to be commemorated, and the issues at the heart of the protests.

The protests continued with an evening vigil outside the Sydney Town Hall in George Street, Sydney, for a period of 2 hours from 5 to 7 pm.

Over 20 protesters displayed photographs of some of the murdered victims of the Arroyo regime. Memorial candles and lights illuminated the memory of those lost to the people and the future of the Philippines. The protesters included workers, Filipino-Australian migrants, students and academics.

Thousands of people passed by this busy intersection in the heart of Sydney's central business district, and several hundred stopped to read the testimonies of the victims featured in the display. Three hundred flyers with the statement of the organizers of the rally were distributed.

There was strong reaction from passers-by. More and more of Australia's diverse population are aware and concerned about the state terrorism in the Philippines against the Filipino people.#

[Report from the Philippines Australia Union Link (PAUL)]

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION - 16 November 2006

Australia wide protest actions on second commemoration of the Hacienda Luisita Massacre

A HISTORIC DAY FOR PERTH

In Perth, the Philippine-Australia Caucus for Peace (PACP) and Unions WA held a prayer vigil in front of the Philippines Consulate on Nov 16 from midday until 8pm.



The vigil went well despite slight rain. The afternoon program from 12 - 2pm and evening program 6-8pm centred around a Cross on the island opposite the Consulate. An altar have been set-up with lighted candles and wreaths. The photos of victims of killings in the Philippines were placed around the altar and along the parameter of this island, with 6-metre high banners "Stop Political Killings in the Philippines". Photos of the victims included their names at the bottom, dates and location of their deaths.

The procession around the Island which started the programs with women in black veils (in the evening with lighted candles) and holding pictures of the victims was led by the playing of gongs (gangsa) - in the afternoon by Diokno Pasilan (another Migrant artist, well-known Filipino ethnic instrumentalist, founder of "Pinikpikan") and in the evening led by another Migrant member Francis Lopez.

As the location of the protest was on a grassed island with a road on each side, many motorists slowed down to look closely at the photos of those slain in Arroyo regime's war against the people and their names and dates/place of death, many car and bus drivers hooted their horns, passersby stopped to listen to the prayers and speeches. The 6 metre-high banners "Stop Political Killings in the Philippines" could be seen from afar (2), placards with the similar messages were held up or rested against the trees, the CFMEU giant blue and white banners were also there and at one stage the State School Teachers Union's (SSTU) banner.

PRAYERS & WREATH-LAYING

Fr. Robert Carilio (Catholic parish priest for Canning Vale) and Dr. Alex Jensen, Anglican Church and Principal of Perth Theological Hall, Murdoch University conducted prayers for victims and their families in the afternoon. Prayers in the evening were led by Rev. Dr. John Evans, General Secretary of the Uniting Church and Mel Baltazar, Deputy Chair Migrant Perth.

Wreaths were laid at the foot of the Cross for victims and their families by Unions WA, Jo Valentine for the Quakers Peace Committee, members of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Unions (LEHP) WA Branch, Swan Greens Party WA, CPSU/CSA & CPSU/PSU (State and Federal public sector unions) and the CEPU (Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Unions). The Filipino-Australian Club of Perth Inc. (FACPI) laid flowers at the altar.

Rev. Dr. John Evan spoke on the need to do something about the killings in the Philippines referred to the Uniting Church Report "Getting Away with Murder: Impunity for those targeting Church Workers in the Philippines". He was saddened by the appalling human rights violations in the Philippines. He referred to the murders and abductions conducted by the state's security forces there as inhumane. He praised the prayer vigil and led prayers for the victims and their families.

Dave Robertson - Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council (TLC), peak union body representing 17 unions in Western Australia cited latest statistics on the attack on union leaders, workers and civilians in the Philippines, the mode of operation in the way these assassinations are carried out and evidence that Arroyo's government and security forces are responsible for these assassinations. He said the TLC will push for the monitoring of the \$20 million Australian dollar development assistance from the Australian government to the Philippines last year.

Jane Hutchison, Research Fellow at the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University who lectures on politics and international relations there and is an active member of the National Tertiary Education Union spoke of her experience during her recent research trip to the Philippines. She pointed out that when she was there, at the same time as there was constant and frequent reporting on human rights victims in the newspapers and accounts of political violence, Jovito Palparan was constantly being honoured by Arroyo as a top military personnel for Tarlac Central Luzon and garnering awards from Arroyo for his consistent operations in Central Luzon (where Palparan has been held culpable for gross human rights violations, torture of community leaders, unionists and their abductions and murders). Jane urged the audience to take notice of what is happening in the Philippines as she said the conditions there for human rights are much worse now than under the Marcos regime.

Dr. Amir Ali, immediate past president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (national body of Islamic communities in Australia) and Chairman of the

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION - 16 November 2006

Howard government - appointed Moslem Reference Group - which finished in Sept '05 - spoke against Arroyo's adoption of the US' global war on terror to justify repression of the Filipinos, especially the Moro or Islamic Filipinos. He said the Filipinos will not be fooled. He has just returned from Mindanao where he met with local community leaders and confirmed in his conversation with PACP the "all-out" US sponsored/Arroyo/Philippine military offensive in the Sulu Archipelago displacing hundreds of thousands of Islamic Filipinos and destroying their villages/communities and sources of livelihood under the guise of anti-terrorist operations against members of Jemiah Islamiyah, 2 of whom are supposed to be in Sulu.

Gavin Richards, member of the International Committee of Unions WA (UWIC) reiterated Dr. Ali's statements that Arroyo's government is conducting these killings, abductions and gross human rights violations under the guise of anti-terrorism against which the people's movements are united in opposition. He demanded that Arroyo's government stop the killings and uphold the democratic rights of the people of the Philippines.

Gino Lopez, Chair of Migrante Perth, and former organiser of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) called on the Arroyo government to stop the killings, that as a Filipino and Australian he was appalled by the killings in the Philippine and as Australians, the loss of democratic rights in the Philippines should be of concern to us.

Mel Baltazar read the solidarity message from KMU Chair Elmer Labog praising the efforts of the West Australians in supporting the struggle of workers in the Philippines. Mel also read a message from the president of the Filipino-Australian Club of Perth Inc.

Marino Salinas in his message said that workers in the Philippines have a right to a decent life, enough food, a decent education and sufficient wages. Marino expressed concern about the human rights violations in the Philippines and said that the democratic rights of Filipinos need to be respected.

UnionsWA Secretary **Dave Robertson** expressed UnionWA's support for the KMU and workers' struggle in the Philippines, reiterating the TLC's (UnionsWA) position in their Petition to Arroyo's government.

Judith Andrew, Co-convenor of PACP said that the establishing of basic industries and economic infrastructure to develop the Philippines has not materialised nor has the

impoverishment of Filipinos changed under Arroyo's regime. Instead Arroyo's policies have helped increase unemployment in the Philippines with an economy reliant on the repatriated earnings of 10 million overseas workers. Arroyo's government has failed to protect its own people and continues to be in power with US support.

Vinnie Molina, UnionsWA International Committee member and CFMEU organiser read Jose Maria Sison's address for the ILPS (International League of Peoples Struggle). On that speech, Prof. Sison urged that the public be made aware of what is happening in the Philippines through specific actions such as protest in front of the Philippine Embassy.



The afternoon prayer vigil drew around 35 people, the evening's candlelight vigil around 70-80 people. Officials and members came from: Australian Metal Workers Union (AMWU), Australian Workers Union (AWU), Maritime Union of Australia (MUA); Construction, Forestry, Mining and Engineering Union (CFMEU); State & Federal Public Sector Unions - the CPSU/CSA & the CPSU/PSU; the Communications, Engineering, Plumbing Union (CEPU), the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Unions (LEHU) WA Branch, The National Teachers Education Union (NTEU) and the State School Teachers Union (SSTU).

Filipino overseas contract workers, members of Amnesty International and other members of the Filipino-Australian community were also present.

CULTURAL ACTION

UnionsWA Choir sang 3 songs, including an Aboriginal Nyoongar welcoming song as the Island where the protest was in Nyoongar land. The Choir also led the finale singing of "We Shall Overcome".

Migrante Perth individual members and other Filipinos sang "Bayan Ko" and **Froilan Gloriani** also Migrante Perth member played the guitar for this song.

Ruth Lopez, Migrante Perth member read a Tagalog poem (passed on by KMU Chair Elmer Labog) and its English translation was read by Gino Lopez, Migrante Perth Chair.

Our prayers go for all those who continue to struggle for the people and workers in the Philippines, our prayers for the workers in the Philippines.#

[Report written by Anibeth Desierto, Migrante Perth and Philippine-Australia Caucus for Peace (PACP) Co-Convenor]

Events Calendar - Mark your Diary

26 November 2006: AAWL Open Day

DESCRIPTION:

9.30 am TradesHall, corner Lygon and Victoria Streets, Carlton. Australia Asia Worker Links holds its open day with activities including forum on "Race to the Bottom"; issues on Migrant workers under 457 visa; refugee, occupational health and safety and other issues affecting Australians and migrants. There will be international visitors from Philippines and other countries. For more information and to book, contact Jiselle at 96637277 or May 0411406700.

24-25 November 2006 - Annual Philippine Fiesta

DESCRIPTION:

Philippine Community Centre, corner Thomas and Armstrong Streets, Laverton. - All day.

30 November 2006: National Community Rally against Howard's Industrial Relations Law

DESCRIPTION:

Melbourne Cricket Ground from 9.00 A.M. The national rally is organised by ACTU, Unions and community groups to protest against the Howard Government's workplace laws.

9 December 2006: Opening of Laverton Community Garden

DESCRIPTION:

1.30 pm at Laverton Community Garden in McCormack Park behind Laverton Secondary College, Bladin Street, Laverton. Opening of the garden and unveiling of garden mosaics - a project of the Laverton Community Garden committee and the Hobsons Bay City council. The activities include skate competition, sausage sizzle, jumping castle and visit from father Christmas. RSVP by 6th December 2006, Jacque Phiddian tel. 9932 1124

10 December 2006: International Human Rights Day

DESCRIPTION:

A family activity is being organised by Migrante Melbourne, PASA and Gabriela Australia to commemorate the International Human Rights Day. The activities will include, kite and balloon flying, performances and BBQ -salo-salo. Everyone is welcome.

For further details contact Andrew of PASA at 0415365109; Malou of Gabriela at 0433216548; Charo of Migrante at 93277554 or Migrante Melbourne at 1300366674.

10 February 2007: Migrante Melbourne's "Tipanan" - 6.30 p.m., Laverton Civic Centre

DESCRIPTION:

A celebration and a venue for the whole family to dance, eat, perform, watch and enjoy together. A fundraising activity for Migrante Shelter Philippines as beneficiary. For further information and tickets contact Danny at 93693158, Reyvi at 0421119776 or Migrante Melbourne at 1300366674.



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To: _____



Migrante Melbourne : : PO Box 606, Laverton, VIC 3028