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The Delegation of the ILO  
High-Level Tripartite Mission  
6819 Ayala Avenue  
Makati City, Philippines

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.  
Malacañang Palace  
644, San Miguel  
Manila, Philippines

January 27, 2023

To the Delegation and the Government of the Philippines:

We welcome the International Labor Organization's High-Level Tripartite Mission, which finally arrived in the Philippines this week after much delay. This visit presents a vital opportunity to address the extrajudicial killings, judicial and social harassment, and state-sponsored forced disaffiliation campaigns that have struck to the core of the freedom of association in the Philippines. We urge the Philippine government to seize this opportunity and implement the recommendations of the High-Level Mission.

The Mission must address a wide array of urgent threats to the freedom of association. The agencies that have pursued forced disaffiliation and red-tagging campaigns or maintained "union-free" economic zones require urgent reform. The Philippine authorities must cease interfering in trade union affairs and begin protecting the rights of trade union leaders and their rank-and-file members. The Philippine labor code, too easily circumvented and too cumbersome to facilitate the freedom of association, requires broad changes to restore these crucial freedoms to Philippine workers.

The Mission, we hope, will accept the need to impose accountability and end impunity after trade unionists have endured so many years of violence and state-sanctioned ostracism. The workers and trade unionists who have been victims of extrajudicial killings await justice, as do the twenty-seven trade unionists languishing in jail on trumped-up charges. The High-Level Mission, we hope, will support workers' organizations and families as they seek the release of the unjustly imprisoned and accountability for the extrajudicially slain.

The rights violations Philippine workers currently face are as tragic as they are familiar. We hope, however, that the Philippines, with the guidance of the Mission, will seize this opportunity to establish a new course, fully implement Conventions 87 and 98, and protect the entire freedom of association.

Sincerely,

Jennifer (JJ) Rosenbaum  
Executive Director  
GLJ-ILRF