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European Parliament Acts on human rights violations in the Philippines

Statement by the Council of Global Unions (CGU) 18 September 2020

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The CGU welcomes the adoption by the European Parliament (EP) of the “resolution on the situation in the Philippines, including the case of Maria Ressa”. The resolution provides examples of the degeneration of democracy, gross violations of human rights, and rampant violence and intimidation during the rule of President Duterte.

The Council of Global Unions (CGU) – representing more than 200 million workers from across the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Global Union Federations including the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD join Philippine trade unions in condemning the Philippine government’s continued attacks on democratic institutions and its relentless suppression of the democratic rights of Filipino workers.

The resolution speaks of extra-judicial killings, the repression of independent forces in the media, including Maria Ressa of “Rappler” and the largest media group, ABS-CBN, and persecution of opposition leaders, including elected parliamentarians. It shines a light on trade unionists, saying that “the Philippine trade union movement has complained about the repression of workers’ rights, including through ‘red-tagging’, disappearances and killings of labour leaders and trade unionists.” Independent civil society organisations and indigenous people are also cited as being under attack.

The EP resolution refers to efforts by the UN Council on Human Rights and others, but also calls for action by the European Union. Since 25 December 2014, the Philippines has had enhanced trade preferences under the EU’s Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP+). President Duterte took office in June of 2016. The resolution states that despite “major backsliding in the country’s human rights record, the EU has so far not triggered the mechanism that could lead to the suspension of these trade benefits.”

The carnage that is still taking place in the Philippines, the gross violation of international human rights and labour standards, and the orchestrated creation of a climate of fear to crush independent forces and silence dissenting voices requires an international response. The Philippines under President Duterte has ushered in the most brutal and repressive period in that country’s history since the end the dictatorship of President Marcos in 1986.

The CGU is encouraged by the action of the European Parliament and supports moves to invoke the mechanism of the European Commission to examine the suspension of GSP+ benefits. This action is good news for the people of the Philippines and for all who fight for human rights and democracy. We hope that this resolution will accelerate a better, more decent future when the Philippines can be welcomed back to the ranks of democratic nations.



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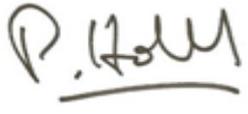
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