

Philippines: State's terror campaign against teachers must stop

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Education International strongly supports its Filipino affiliate in its struggle to see educators' human and trade union rights respected. It condemns the use of harassment methods and anti-terrorism legislation to eliminate critical legal protections.

In the Philippines, the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) has denounced the harassment of the Secretary of ACT Region IV-B and public elementary school teacher, Maria Cristy Borbe by military personnel. In a press statement dated 24 July, the ACT stressed that, for three consecutive days military personnel harassed Borbe with phone calls, social media messages, and unwelcome house visits.

The military have reportedly asked her to “just confess” and “cooperate” with authorities to have her name cleared. These comments by military personnel implied that the ACT is a terrorist group supported by Borbe — as defined in the Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL) of 2020.

In addition, the union has pointed out that a poster of allegedly “Wanted Terrorist Recruiters”, which included ACT Davao Region Secretary and public high school teacher Pilar Barredo, was published in Davao.



ACT: Duterte regime perpetrating rights violations

“While this comes as no surprise given the past year’s intensified state-instigated terrorist-tagging and harassment of individuals and organisations critical of the Duterte regime, we are nonetheless alarmed at these new incidences as the effectiveness of the ATL further emboldened state forces to perpetrate rights violations,” said the ACT in its statement.

“This only proves the justness of our opposition to the ATL as the Duterte administration unleashes worse attacks against the people, furthering the human rights crisis under Duterte’s rule on top of the raging health and economic crisis. Moreover, these recent cases make the Supreme Court’s ruling of the ATL as unconstitutional even more urgent.”

“We will not cease in pushing back against any and all attempts to reinstate dictatorship in our land.”

The press statement said that ACT members exercised their constitutionally guaranteed rights and took to the streets on 27 July, the day of the presidential State of the Nation Address, to “express their condemnation of President Duterte and his cohorts’ abuse of power and violation of the people’s rights and liberties”.

They demanded that state forces immediately stop the attacks against teachers Borbe and Barredo, as well as against legitimate organisations.

Council of Global Unions: Attacks on jobs and lives of workers must stop

On 20 July, the Council of Global Unions, of which Education International is a member, also issued a [statement on the suppression of democratic rights in the Philippines](#).

In it, the Council of Global Unions joins Filipino trade unions “in condemning the Philippine government’s continued attacks on democratic institutions and its relentless suppression of the democratic rights of Filipino workers”.

It warns against the passage of Republic Act 11479 or the ATL of 2020, as “this law could easily be abused. While human security, the supposed aim of the anti-Terrorism Act, is a real concern, the same should not be pursued through undemocratic means”.

Global unions further underlined that “the situation of workers in the Philippines is beyond appalling. The attacks on the jobs and lives of workers must stop!”

Support for Filipino unions to restore democracy

While calling on the Philippine government to rethink its current priorities and to focus instead on measures that will contain the pandemic and alleviate the lives of those severely affected, they remain “in solidarity with the Philippine trade union movement in its fight against increasing authoritarianism”. They pledged their “continued support for the efforts of Filipino unions and workers to restore democracy and peace in the country”.

The Statement on the Anti-Terrorism Act 2020 of the Philippines of the Asia-Pacific Global Union Federation is available [here](#).

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