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April 21, 2009

H. E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President
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Dear President Macapagal-Arroyo

The Ethical Trading Action Group (ETAG) is a Canadian-based coalition of faith, labour and non-governmental organizations advocating for government policies, voluntary codes of conduct, and purchasing policies that promote humane labour practices based on accepted international labour standards.

As member organizations and supporters of ETAG we, the undersigned, represent ten major Canadian faith, labour and non-governmental organizations.

We vehemently protest the on-going human and labour rights violations and repression perpetrated by state authorities in the Philippines, especially the recent order of arrest of 33 labour activists in the province of Cavite.

Thirty one of these 33 activists are members and leaders of two unions that were active in export processing zones. The members of these unions had been on strike in 2006 against their employers Chong Won and Phils Jeon for their refusal to negotiate collective agreements. The workers' picket lines were violently dispersed later that year by security forces and police, who caused serious injuries and psychological trauma to workers who were legally on strike.

We are deeply troubled to hear that the harassment by state authorities continues with the laying of criminal charges against the workers.

On behalf of our members, we strongly urge your government to intervene to ensure:

**ETAG member groups: Canadian Auto Workers • Canadian Council for International Cooperation
Canadian Labour Congress • Canadian Union of Public Employees • KAIROS Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Maquila Solidarity Network • Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation • Oxfam Canada
UNITE-HERE • United Steelworkers**

1. all charges against the 33 labour activists are immediately dropped and the union members' grievances against their employers are settled;
2. the security and police forces involved in the violent dispersal of the picket lines and who caused serious injuries to striking workers are held accountable and are duly charged and prosecuted;
3. your government respect and abide by your own labour and human rights laws and ILO conventions; and
4. the implementation of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association's recommendations in response to a complaint filed by the Kilusang Mayo Uno in October 2006, including allowing a high-level ILO mission to visit the Philippines to study the labour situation in your country.

Sincerely,



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President
Canadian Labour Congress



Ken Lewenza,
National President
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