

August 3, 2007

HE Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
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Dear Honourable President Macapagal-Arroyo:

As companies that source apparel products from the Philippines, we are writing to follow up on a letter of November 7, 2006, wherein the signatory companies, including many of the signatories to this letter, expressed their concerns about disturbing reports of violence and threats of violence against human and labour rights promoters, labour leaders and workers and the alleged negative role of the Municipal and Export Processing Zone police in such attacks and assaults. (Copy of the November 7, 2006 letter attached as Annexure 2.)

The November 2006 letter had called upon your government to look into the matter and take proactive measures for ensuring the physical safety and for protecting the rights of the workers and labor rights promoters.

Unfortunately, we feel compelled to reach out to you again regarding concerns about alleged attacks and death threats against striking workers at the Chong Won factory, now known as C. Woo Trading, in the Cavite Export Processing Zone. (Details of the allegations are noted on the attached Annexure 1.)

Based on the attached report, we are extremely concerned about the safety of the workers, as well as the safety of labour rights advocates who have been providing them support and advice.

Please note that many of the companies that have added their names to this letter have never sourced products from this particular factory, however, we are all concerned that these alleged incidents appear to be part of a larger pattern of harassment and violence against workers, labour leaders and human rights promoters that could discourage companies from doing business with your country.

We would therefore strongly urge your government to immediately launch an independent investigation into these incidents and ensure immediate steps to ensure safety of the striking workers and labour rights promoters who are providing support to those workers.

As was noted in the earlier letter as well, it is imperative that companies doing business in the Philippines remain confident in the government's commitment to freedom of expression, freedom of association and the rule of law.

Sincerely,



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ANNEXURE 1

Allegations regarding concerns at the Chong Won Fashion factory, now known as C. Woo Trading, in the Cavite Export Processing Zone.

- (1) Reports received allege that at 8:30 p.m. on June 10 nine men armed with crowbars and knives arrived at the Chong Won picket line in a white closed van with license plate number UBD-390 and with "Rapid Air Freight" written on the side of the vehicle. The picketers were reportedly held at knifepoint while the men dismantled their makeshift tent shelters. The attackers reportedly threatened the picketers that if they didn't abandon their strike and the company, they would be killed.
- (2) It is alleged that when asked by the picketers what jurisdiction the attackers had to dismantle their picket line, one of the attackers reportedly stated, "We are paid two million pesos to demolish your strike." The attackers reportedly challenged the strikers to call the police.
- (3) The second attack reportedly took place at 3:30 a.m. on June 11. Around 20 men wearing ski masks and armed with M-16 rifles reportedly arrived at the picket line in three vehicles. One of the vehicles, a black pick-up, reportedly had the license plate number WTH-196. According to reports from the picketers, the armed men rounded up the strikers in one corner of their vehicle and ordered them to lie face down while they pointed the barrel end of their rifles at the strikers' heads. They then reportedly threatened to kill the strikers one by one if they were still on strike later that morning. Some of the armed men were reportedly wearing military fatigue pants.
- (4) After the armed men left, the strikers reportedly went to the PEZA police station to report the attacks, but were reportedly told that the police could not assist them and would not conduct an investigation because tomorrow (Monday) was a public holiday. They then attempted to report the attacks to the National Police Municipal Station of Rosario, but were reportedly denied assistance, allegedly because the EPZ was out of their jurisdiction.
- (5) According to the strikers, shortly after the second group of armed men left the picket line, the PEZA police set up two checkpoints to prevent the re-entry of strikers to the area in front of the factory.

As you can see from the above, these are allegations of a very serious nature which cannot be ignored by responsible governments or corporations that operate within the framework of International Human Rights Conventions.