

NEWS RELEASE

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KMU slams Labor Day mass arrests, calls it 'Duterte pandemic'
Reference: Ed Cubelo, Kilusang Mayo Uno-Metro Manila Spokesperson

Militant labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno-Metro Manila slammed the spate of mass arrests instigated by the Duterte administration on Labor Day.

"We condemn the series of arrests conducted by the Duterte administration on Labor Day. Almost 80 activists, volunteers and citizens were arrested on May 1 by elements of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines across the country who have been conducting relief operations to hunger-stricken communities and protests bearing legitimate calls even inside their homes," said KMU-Metro Manila Spokesperson Ed Cubelo.

Among those who were arrested on Labor Day were 42 activists and citizens in Iloilo City who staged a protest condemning the murder of Bayan Muna-Panay Island Coordinator Jory Porquia by state forces. Porquia led the series relief operations in Iloilo City to aid impoverished communities who are affected by the lockdown. Among those 42 arrested was Porquia's daughter.

10 volunteers in Marikina were also arrested while conducting a soup kitchen despite Marikina City Mayor Marcy Teodoro ordering the police to release the volunteers.

18 were arrested in Brgy. Central, Quezon City, 15 of which were residents and jeepney drivers who were seeking assistance because they were being called by the barangay, accusing them of participating in Mayo Uno activities, the three others were university students who went to help the residents. The students were volunteers of Tulong Kabataan, a youth-led nationwide relief operation. They were immediately brought to Camp Karingal by four policemen in plain clothing.

Two labor leaders under Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino were also arrested in Rodriguez, Rizal.

Four leaders under Kilos Na Homeless and Liga ng Manggagawa sa Valenzuela City were also arrested after staging a noise barrage inside their home. Policemen said that they were arrested due to their activities posted in social media.

Apart from this, 16 workers of Coca-Cola Beverages Philippines in Sta. Rosa, Laguna were taken by the police and army to a camp on April 30. Prior to this, the workers underwent series of anti-union seminars organized by the PNP in Fort Sto. Domingo, Camp Vicente Lim and Camp Macario Sakay in the province of Laguna. They were also interrogated, surveilled and threatened even in their homes by the AFP and PNP for their union activities. Earlier today, the workers were presented as “rebel returnees” by the AFP and PNP in a press conference.

“These mass arrests, murders, state-concocted fake news, heightened attacks on the people and blatant disregard for human rights cowardly cloaked in the name of fighting a virus is the ‘Duterte pandemic’. Constitutional rights are not suspended under the ECQ and even the GCQ yet dissent and volunteerism are being attacked relentlessly. Martial Law has gone airborne,” said Cubelo.

He added, “This year’s Labor Day was a crackdown on the people demanding for just calls. The Duterte pandemic doesn’t genuinely want and end to COVID-19. In fact, he has utilized the virus to his own interests by concentrating the power of the purse and state power to himself, with a cabinet full of mercenaries and corrupt.”

KMU-Metro Manila said that they are receiving more reports of harassments and human rights violations across the region and are expecting a new wave of possible mass arrests.

“Human rights violations is another curve that we must flatten. The only way to flatten it, like the virus, is to fight it,” Cubelo ended. ###