

AFL-CIO Executive Council Statement
Washington, D.C.
June 19, 2020

CONGRESS SHOULD INTRODUCE AND PASS THE PHILIPPINES HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

In the four years since the election of Rodrigo Duterte as president of the Philippines, we have been increasingly troubled by the increased repression of labor, human rights, environmental and political activists in the Philippines. This repression has taken place under the pretext of President Duterte's "war on drugs" and unfairly "red tagging" workers fighting for their legal rights as members of or sympathizers of the New People's Army. In this time, at least 48 labor leaders and activists have been murdered, along with as many as 30,000 extrajudicial killings throughout the country. In addition, thousands have been arrested on false charges in an attempt to silence their voices, including Anne Krueger, who was working to organize call center workers and hosted two delegations of visiting Communications Workers of America (CWA) members while in the Philippines.

Unfortunately, the Duterte administration now has used the COVID-19 pandemic as a further tool for the repression, issuing a "shoot to kill" order for anyone suspected of violating the lockdown. The forced lockdown in the country to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus has been used as an excuse for the government to target, repress and arrest not only those fighting for workers' rights, but also environmental, human rights and LGBTQ activists. Thousands more have been arrested for supposedly violating terms of the lockdown. It is outrageous that the Duterte administration would use a global health pandemic as cover to silence workers' voices.

Meanwhile, the United States continues to provide taxpayer dollars to the Philippines military and police forces that are actively engaged in these egregious human rights violations. In fact, the Duterte government is the largest recipient of U.S. military aid in East and Southeast Asia. More than \$33 million of U.S. taxpayer money has been given to the police forces in the Philippines for their "war on drugs," while the military conducts massive aerial bombardments of regions of the Philippines where workers are fighting for basic worker dignity. These aerial assaults on whole villages have displaced upward of 450,000 civilians. These weapons provided by U.S. taxpayers are turned on our brothers and sisters struggling for worker justice.

The International Committee of the AFL-CIO strongly urges introduction in the U.S. House and Senate of the Philippines Human Rights Act, which would suspend U.S. taxpayer-funded military aid to the Philippines until security officials stop the routine violations of human rights and those responsible for abuses are held accountable.