



VANCOUVER and DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL



March 21, 2020

President of the Philippines
Rodrigo Duterte

VIA Email: pcc@malacanang.gov.ph

Mr. President,

I write on behalf of the Vancouver and District Labour Council, with its approximately 100 affiliate unions and over 60,000 members, regarding the plight of political prisoners during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our labour council has previously written regarding the concerning state of human and workers' rights in the Philippines. We join with Canada-Philippines Solidarity for Human Rights (CPSHR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human rights, and others throughout the international community in calling for the release of all political prisoners, including those in detention centres, jails, the national penitentiary and military camps.

The human rights organization Karapatan has documented that out of 610 political prisoners currently held in the Philippines, 102 are already sick. Many of these are life-threatening or debilitating illnesses and 48 are elderly. All these prisoners should be released immediately on humanitarian grounds.

Instead of punitive measures, a comprehensive, people-centered and rights-based public health response is needed to save lives. Countries across the globe have released prisoners. In some cases, these releases have been in the hundreds or thousands. History will judge the government of the Philippines poorly if it does not follow suit and do all that is within its power to limit the death and human suffering brought about by the pandemic. Please act now.

Sincerely,

Stephen von Sychowski
President, Vancouver and District Labour Council

Cc: VDLC Executive Board
Canada-Philippines Solidarity for Human Rights – cps.humanrights@gmail.com

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