

# **Philippines: 7<sup>th</sup> labor killing this September, result of culture of violence**

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## **SENTRO condemns 7<sup>th</sup> labor killing this September, result of culture of violence**

It is another sad day for human rights.

Edilberto Miralles, former union president of R&E Taxi, was gunned down in front of the National Labor Relations Commission this morning. Initial information suggests it was another daytime riding-in-tandem killing.

Sentro is appalled by the continuing violence against members of the working class, and the men and women who seek justice for workers who have been wronged.

This is at the least the 7<sup>th</sup> killing from our ranks within September alone of this year.

At the start of the month, four farmers were shot dead by unidentified men in a farm located inside Fort Magsaysay in Laur, Nueva Ecija. The armed men involved in the brutal slay were reportedly dropped from a helicopter hovering the military reservation camp. Victims were Emerenciana Mercado-de la Cruz, Violeta Mercado-de Leon, Eligio Barbado and Gaudencio Bagalay.

They were all members of the Alyansa ng mga Mamamayang Nagkakaisa, tilling part of the disputed 3,100 hectares of land inside Fort Magsaysay. Several others were wounded.

On September 7, farmworker leader Ariel Diaz was shot to his death by three men in his Villa Pereda farm in Delfin Albano town, Isabela. Diaz is the chairperson of the Danggayang Dagiti Mannalon ti Isabela and was the head of the the provincial chapter of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas in Isabela.

In the early morning of September 17, a labor organizer in Cebu vocal of his dissent against the administration's execution of its war on illegal drugs was gunned down in the same violent manner murder was being executed in the drug war. The very object of his criticism was used in his slay. Orlando Abangan, 38 years old, has been rallying workers to collectively fight for their rights in the past 15 years. He is with Partido Manggagawa.

Today we forget differences and mourn for the deaths of each of our own.

We know the pain, courage, and patience it takes to organize working people at a time when organizing is met with doubt, evidenced by dwindling union density, union/workers' association membership, and number of collective bargaining agreements.

Yet, these are all necessary for the protection of decent work. Studies have shown that unions are strongly linked to fairer wages and better working conditions.

While the motives behind the killings are undetermined at this point, we condemn the culture of violence spread by the current spate of summary executions in the name of the so-called war on

drugs.

The ease by which men with evil intent can now execute unimaginable plans is gut-wrenching.

The fatalities in this war provide those with ill motives against others with an easy way out — add another number to the growing statistics of men and women killed execution-style.

We weep for those numbers, each with a face and a family left behind.

We condole with the kin of the slain, who have chosen legitimate avenues to demand base level of respect for working people's rights, no matter how long and arduous processes have been for us.

Contrary to the claim that the bloody manner by which the war on drugs is perpetuated has made our communities free of crimes, it has instead normalized violence in our streets.

We, from the working class, no longer feel safe.

### **Sentro**

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