

# Philippines - Ka Dennis Sequeña shot dead by gunmen: Workers assert rights as labor leader laid to rest

Monday 17 June 2019, by [GUEVARRA Stanley Triston](#), [PEREZ Alessandro Alfred](#) (Date first published: 13 June 2019).

**On a day commemorating the country's freedom from colonizers, workers gather to honor slain labor leader, Dennis Sequeña, and to fight for workers' rights.**

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*FIGHT FOR RIGHTS. Representatives of Samahang Mangagawang Nagkakaisa sa Jisoo raise their arms with clenched fists as they pledge to continue fighting for their rights after the funeral march held for Ka Dennis Sequeña on June 12, 2019. Photo by Stanley Triston Guevarra/Rappler*

As events commemorating the 121<sup>st</sup> Philippine Independence Day took place in other parts of the country, workers gathered as early as 8 am to honor Sequeña, who was gunned down by unidentified riding-in-tandem gunmen on Sunday, June 2.

At the funeral march, Rappler asked workers about their plight. They expressed strong, heartfelt sentiments that reflected how they viewed and valued freedom.

## Awareness is liberating

Noting how industries spread falsehoods about workers' rights, Jopay Odchimar said that there is really a need to make Filipinos aware of their basic privileges.

"Hindi lahat ng manggagawa dito sa Pilipinas ay nalalaman ang karapatan nila at 'yong dapat nilang panindigan, sapagkat ang pinapaintindi sa marami sa amin na ang pag-uunyon ay isang ilegal na gawain na kung saan ay hindi naman talaga totoo," he said.

*(Not all workers here in the Philippines know their rights and what they need to stand up for, since many of us are led to think that forming unions is an illegal activity, when it's not.)*

Partido Manggagawa urges authorities to 'act with dispatch and catch the perpetrators' behind the

killing of Dennis Sequeña, who was slain less than a week before his birthday

The Department of Labor and Employment mandates that under the right to self organization, workers and employees have the right to “form, join, or assist unions, organizations, or associations for purposes of collective bargaining and negotiation, and for mutual aid and protection.”

### **Rights equals freedom**

According to Ariel Garcia, representative of Samahan ng mga Manggagawang Nagkakaisa sa Jisoo, their rights are a form of freedom they now need more than ever.

“Siyempre, para sa aming manggagawa, ang kalayaan ay ang pagkukuha ng benepisyo, respeto, katarungan, at hustisya (*Certainly, for us workers, freedom means securing benefits, respect, equity, and justice*),” he said.

Also present at the funeral march was 59-year-old Partido Manggagawa chairperson Rene Magtubo who said workers’ rights continue to be disregarded by employers.

“The fact na kahit meron tayong labor standards, marami pa ring hindi sumusunod, halimbawa sa minimum wage, overtime.... Marami ang naharass dahil sa pag-oorganisa,” he said.

*(Despite the existing labor standards, a lot of employers still do not comply with things like minimum wage and overtime pay.... The workers are harassed for their attempts to organize.)*

Magtubo called on the government to improve its mechanisms so that workers’ rights would be upheld.

### **The fight does not stop here**

Nickay (not her real name), an active member of a labor group in Cavite, expressed her grief as well, but at the same time guaranteed that she and her association will continue to fight not only for workers’ rights, but for justice.

“Hindi naman ibi -sabihin na nawala si Ka Dennis ay mababalewala na ang kanyang pinaglalaman. Mayroon pa rin kaming nandito – may mga kasama siya na ipagpapatuloy ang mga ito. Hangad namin ang katarungan at ang paglutas ng hustisya para kay Ka Dennis,” she said.

*(Just because we lost Sequeña doesn’t mean that his advocacies will go to waste. We are still here – we who journeyed with him will continue what he started. We want justice for him.)*

### **Stanley Triston Guevarra and Alessandro Alfred Perez**

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[https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-uds-cse&cx=018227238170732268891:mec4hsltics&q=https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/232915-workers-assert-rights-dennis-sequena-laid-rest&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwjM9ez0je\\_iAhWKWbwKHXXHDe0QFjADegQIDxAC&usg=AOvVaw29yLixCdXBspYzALc8buo8](https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-uds-cse&cx=018227238170732268891:mec4hsltics&q=https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/232915-workers-assert-rights-dennis-sequena-laid-rest&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwjM9ez0je_iAhWKWbwKHXXHDe0QFjADegQIDxAC&usg=AOvVaw29yLixCdXBspYzALc8buo8)

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## Hundreds seek justice at funeral for slain labor leader Dennis Sequeña

**Dennis Sequeña's colleagues vow never to stop demanding action on his case until his killers are caught**



*CALL FOR JUSTICE. Hundreds of people call for justice during the funeral march for slain labor leader Dennis Sequeña to Sta Cruz Memorial Park in Cavite on June 12, 2019. All photos by Samantha Bagayas/Rappler*

MANILA, Philippines – Hundreds of people joined the funeral march that brought the remains of slain labor leader Leonides “Dennis” Sequeña to Sta Cruz Memorial Park in Cavite on Wednesday, June 12.

Various labor groups including Partido Manggagawa (PM) led the funeral march wearing matching shirts, carrying banners, and sporting red ribbons around their arms, calling for justice for Sequeña.





Sequeña was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Barangay Bunga in Tanza, Cavite, while he was giving a lecture on trade unionism. The 48-year-old, known fondly by colleagues as Ka Dennis, was the vice chairperson of PM Cavite and the group's 4<sup>th</sup> nominee for the party-list race during the 2019 midterm elections.

People who joined the procession raised their fists to honor Sequeña, calling him "bayani ng manggagawa sa EPZA (hero of workers in the Export Processing Zone Authority)."

Sequeña is best remembered for his work organizing laborers in the Cavite EPZA. He asserted their rights and spoke out against contractualization.

Partido Manggagawa urges authorities to 'act with dispatch and catch the perpetrators' behind the killing of Dennis Sequeña, who was slain less than a week before his birthday

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Cristeta Sequeña, wife of Dennis, promised to honor her husband's memory by continuing his legacy of fighting for workers' rights.

"Ipagpapatuloy namin ang iyong nasimulan. Masakit man, pero tatanggapin namin at hindi titigilan hangga't mabigyan ng hustisya. Sana mapabilis," she said.

(We will continue what you've started. It hurts, but we will accept it and we won't stop until we get justice. Hopefully, things will speed up.)

Rene Magtubo, PM's national chairman, said he and his colleagues would not stop demanding action on Sequeña's case until his killers are caught.

"Ito'y huling paghahatid, pero alam natin hindi ito ang huli, sapagkat ang sigaw natin simula [nang siya ay] napaslang ay hustisya. Tayo po ay hindi titigil sa paghahanap ng hustisya, sa pagkatok sa lokal na gobyerno ng Cavite para tugisin ang pumaslang sa kanya," Magtubo said.

(We may be laying him to rest, but we know this is not the end because we've been crying for justice since he was killed. We will never stop seeking justice, never stop knocking on the local government of Cavite's doors to capture the people who killed him.)

Although Cavite has lost an influential labor leader, PM Cavite chairperson Ramil Cangayao said the funeral march proved that workers in the province are still as united as ever.

"Hindi ito ang huli nating laban.... Irerehistro natin sa buong Cavite na ang mga manggagawa ay patuloy na lalaban hanggang makamit natin ang katarungan bilang manggagawa," Cangayao said.

(This is not our last fight.... Let's make it known to all of Cavite that workers will continue to fight until we attain our rights.)

During the funeral, people sang left-wing anthem "The Internationale" in Filipino to celebrate Sequeña's work as an activist.

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They later placed their banners and red ribbons on Sequeña's coffin right before his burial.

*[Video]*

Finally, lit candles and signs calling for justice were placed on his grave.

### **Samantha Bagayas**

• Rappler.com. Published 7:41 PM, June 12, 2019. Updated 8:19 PM, June 12, 2019:  
<https://www.rappler.com/nation/232885-hundreds-seek-justice-funeral-slain-labor-leader-dennis-sequeña>

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## **Labor leader shot dead in Cavite**

**Partido Manggagawa urges authorities to 'act with dispatch and catch the perpetrators' behind the killing of Dennis Sequeña, who was slain less than a week before his birthday.**



MANILA, Philippines – A labor union organizer was killed by unidentified gunmen while in a meeting with a group of workers in Cavite on Sunday, June 2.

Leonides “Dennis” Sequeña was gunned down in Barangay Bunga in Tanza, Cavite, by men riding a motorcycle who immediately fled the scene, according to labor group Partido Manggagawa (PM).

The 48-year-old labor leader was brought to the General Trias Maternity and Pediatric Hospital, but was declared dead.

Sequeña, the vice chairperson of PM Cavite, was also the group’s 4<sup>th</sup> nominee for the party-list race during the 2019 midterm elections.

Sequeña’s killing came less than a week before his birthday. He was set to turn 49 on Saturday, June 8, based on his certificate of acceptance of nomination for the polls.

In a statement, PM urged authorities to “act with dispatch and catch the perpetrators of the crime.”

“Dennis is a community leader and has no personal enemies,” PM national chairperson Rene Magtubo said. “We believe this is an extrajudicial killing for Dennis’ work as a labor organizer.”

The group also urged Congress to probe the alleged extrajudicial killings of labor leaders and activists, including human rights workers.

Sentro, another labor organization, called for justice for Sequeña.

“We call on the government to immediately and thoroughly investigate this dastardly act and ensure that the mastermind be brought to justice immediately,” said Sentro secretary general Josua Mata.

“This, once again, proves that the country continues to be dangerous for trade unionists, whose only crime is to assert their workers’ and trade union rights guaranteed by the Constitution.” –

**Rappler.com**

• Rappler.com. Published 10:05 PM, June 02, 2019 Updated 10:15 PM, June 02, 2019:  
[https://www.rappler.com/nation/232094-partido-manggagawa-dennis-sequena-killed-cavite-june-2-2019#cxrecs\\_s](https://www.rappler.com/nation/232094-partido-manggagawa-dennis-sequena-killed-cavite-june-2-2019#cxrecs_s)

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**P.S.**

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