

Appeal for Solidarity for Filipino Workers (PLDT)

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On September 15 this year the Philippines' biggest and oldest telephone company, the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) terminated the job contracts of 575 regular workers, 450 of which are women. This is the second time PLDT laid off a big number of workers. The first was in 2002 with 484 workers rendered jobless.

Hardest hit is the rank and file union of Communication Workers of the Philippines who is one of the last remaining national unions in the country. The latest wave of mass dismissals included 25 union representatives and a significant number of active union members.

Talk is rife from management level that PLDT regular workers will experience waves of retrenchment until the company shall have reduced the number to 1,700. Clearly, this is a scheme along contractualization: kicking out regular workers and hiring contractual ones giving way for the company to deny new contractual workers the right to a living wage, to job security, to unionize and bargain collectively. Thus, the company saves on wages, medical, insurance and other benefits, and earns super profits.

Earning profits and appetite for more super profits are the real reasons. PLDT has been having an all-time high in its net income in recent years. Just for the first half of 2007, it earned a net of PhP17 Billion. But it wants more.

Redundancy is but an alibi. New technology in this case did not necessitate reduction in workforce. After it dismissed a big batch of workers in 2002, PLDT's workforce of 15,000 increased to 24,750 of which 87.5 % are contractual workers.

Capital continues to attack workers through schemes like contractualization not only in the Philippines but also around the world. In Australia, workers are being pushed to individually bargain for their wages and other benefits.

Now more than ever, capitalists are pushing labor towards 'flexibilization' - unfettered by unions, a voice-less mass of casuals who are 'free' to be doubly exploited by capital to the hilt.

The struggle of the workers in PLDT is the struggle of the working people and in essence, is a fight for job security. It mirrors the challenge posed to labor around the world in defending hard-won

victories bought with blood, sweat and tears. This is a struggle to secure THE FUTURE.

You can help in many ways;

1. Please channel all information about the labor issue in PLDT and the workers' struggle to all possible media especially abroad to offset the seeming media blackout in the Philippines (PLDT is one of the biggest advertisers in both print and broadcast).
2. Express your own protest, mount your own protest actions against contractualization/informalization of labor, and let the whole world know about it.
3. Solicit or give material support to sustain the struggle and to help put up income generating projects for the dismissed workers.
4. Please write letters of concern to the following:

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

President

Republic of the Philippines

Malacañang Palace

San Miguel, Manila

www.op.gov.ph

Arturo D. Brion

Department Secretary

Department of Labor and Employment

Intramuros, Manila

www.dole.gov.ph

Manuel Pangilinan

President, PLDT

Ramon Cojuangco Bldg.

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mvpangilinan pldt.com

www.pldt.com.ph