

Philippine Labor: State of the Nation Address, ENDO, The Real State of Labor

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Statement for State of the Nation Address 2018

The reality of inequality and the precarity of employment that continues to affect the working people of the country demonstrate the failure of the Duterte government.



This year's State of the Nation Address (SONA) is the third under the Duterte administration. While the chief executive will no doubt use this opportunity to present the supposed achievements and the future promises of the national government before a national audience, We, the Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa assert, that behind the facade of progress, development, peace and stability that the incumbent administration attempts to portray, the reality of inequality and the precarity of employment that continues to affect the working people of the country demonstrate the failure of the Duterte government to adopt and articulate a national framework that is pro-people and supportive of the working class.

CEBU CITY

What we see is that despite the rhetoric of change and claims by the incumbent administration to be for the people, the policies and practices that are detrimental to the interests of working people throughout the country remain in place. Contractualization for instance remains rampant despite the promises of the Duterte administration to clamp down on its practice. Indeed, the much vaunted win-win solution by DOLE is full of legal loopholes that continues to leave workers vulnerable and their rights to dignified and secured employment frustrated.

DAVAO CITY

Another area of concern is the continuing rise of expenses for commodities and basic necessities, a product of the confluence of external factors and the impact of TRAIN. The disagreement between government technocrats and critics of TRAIN notwithstanding, the lack of meaningful action in response to the genuine concern of those affected by the price increase and eroding purchasing power betrays the lack of concern to the needs of the majority of the Philippine population.

GENERAL SANTOS CITY

Side by side with rising prices and precarious employment is the targeted assault on the poor and the vulnerable sectors in society. The continued war on drugs has resulted in thousands of extrajudicial killings, with victims predominantly poor. Oplan galugad on the other hand, results in the harassment of communities and the criminalization of the systemic issue of poverty by attacking the poor under the guise of ridding the streets of vagrants and unwanted elements in society. These heavy-handed and highly securitized operations obscures the fact that poverty is the primary condition for the rise in criminality and merely victimizes those who are already powerless and unable to assert their rights.



The failure of the incumbent administration to safeguard the concerns and interests of the broad majority are also evident in other areas. The utter disregard and lack of respect towards women as shown by the misogynist culture perpetuated by statements and actions of the President endangers the rights of women and undermines the important role they play in Philippine society. Duterte's remarks and words give state sanction to the practices and conditions of domination that women are constantly subjected to.

Second, the continued connivance with foreign powers detrimental to the national interest risks compromising national sovereignty and the authority of the Filipino people in our own territory. The acceptance of loans from China at high interest rates threatens to bring the Philippine State at the mercy of foreign creditors and take crucial decisions on the economy away from Philippine hands. The unabashed seizure of islands and territory claimed by the Philippines and the refusal of the Duterte administration to assert our 2016 hague ruling victory is also another betrayal of the public trust as the Philippine State itself appears to be unwilling to defend or even assert the rights of Filipinos against Chinese aggression.



Instead of working towards addressing the key concerns of the majority of the working population, or attempting to defend Philippine sovereignty against foreign incursions, what we see is the continuous attempt by Duterte and his allies in government to monopolize political and economic power. The attempt to force federalism upon the Filipino population despite widespread and

mounting opposition through the administration-dominated legislature, tactics involving the withholding of information on the proposed shift from the general public and the restricted scope of popular participation are examples of the flagrant abuse of power and the deliberate attempt to exclude the people from participating in this important discussion. The lack of transparent and inclusive participation on the question of federalism puts into question how the interests of the population, and more importantly, of entities such as the Bangsamoro and indigenous people's will be genuinely represented in the attempts at amending the charter.

Contrary to the government's assertion that it is the embodiment of change that the people aspire for, the actions and positions taken by the Duterte regime serve the interests of society's powerful and privileged at every corner, with popular demands constantly ignored and undermined. Thus, for SENTRO, the only appropriate response to the continuous assault on the rights of society's basic sectors and on the working class is the intensification of our mass struggle and campaigns against the Duterte regime. To this end, we stand together with our comrades in the other mass and social movements that likewise struggle against systemic injustice and oppression in opposition to Duterte's attacks on our fundamental rights.



Our collective mobilization on the 23rd called the "United People's SONA" counters the President's address. It is essentially the people's response and challenge to the government that continuously fails to deliver on its promises. We will stand together in demanding that the popular demands and concerns of the people be at the center, both of national discussions and government action. The 23rd will be historic not because of the President's SONA, but rather because of the fact that the different progressive organizations stand united as one in the current struggle for our fundamental rights.

Mabuhay ang Uring Manggagawa!

Sentro

* Sentro, July 23, 2018:

<http://www.sentro.org/?p=1696>

ENDO to survive beyond Duterte's Administration sans Security of Tenure Law

Endo or labor only contracting will survive well beyond the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte unless the Security of Tenure (SOT) is certified as urgent, a labor group said on Tuesday, citing wrong data the president used during the State of the Nation Address (SONA).

During SONA, Mr. Duterte claimed that his campaign against endo resulted in the regularization of more than 300,000 workers as of early July.

According to the Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (Sentro) however, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has actually reported that they regularized only 182,915 as of June this year.

What Mr. Duterte might be saying perhaps is DOLE's target to regularize workers for this year is 300,000.

"So, either the pool of speechwriters committed error because they had to rush a new speech due to the tussle in Lower House leadership or the Mr. Duterte was too eager to claim something that's not yet accomplished," Josua Mata, Sentro's Secretary General said.

Mata said that he tend to believe it's the case of the latter rather than the former. After all, Mr. Dutette has yet to deliver a single accomplishment from his myriad of campaign promises.

But even DOLE's claim of some 182 thousand regularized is problematic, the labor leader said.

First, the labor department has yet to prove that the number they are claiming in their press releases are actually regularized workers or the number correspond only to the number they expect to be regularized based on the compliance orders they have issued. "We know for a fact that tens of thousands of workers ordered to be regularized are still waiting for its actual implantation," Mata said. "Some have already been sacked while their cases are appealed by their companies," Mata elaborated.

Secondly, Mata said the DOLE has yet to disaggregate those workers regularized with the principal company from those regularized under manning agencies. "We believe that most were regularized in manning agencies as that's the policy direction taken by DOLE under DO 174, as strengthened by EO 51," Mata said. "And that's a bogus regularization," he added.

"We are not against the DOLE's drive to regularized workers," Mata clarified. "But such efforts would only give false hopes to workers unless the Security of Tenure Bill is passed," he added.

Meanwhile, Mata asserted that the much hyped 300,000 target for regularization pale in comparison to the estimated 1.2 million contractual workers. By DOLE's own estimation, that would be only 15 percent of the total number of workers employed without any semblance of protection. Truth is, the 1.2 million used by DOLE was low estimate. If the high estimate of 5.1 million is used, then the target of 300,000 is only 3.5 percent.

Endo would indeed outlive the Duterte Regime if it ends by 2022.

The LEARN Research Institute showed in a press briefing that non-regular workers among the wage and salary earners would range from a low estimate of 1.19 million in 2016, plus 705,251 agency hired, based on the 2016 Philippine Statistics Authority Integrated Survey on Employment, to a high

estimate of 5.1 million if one uses the Labor Force Survey of 2016.

Finally, Mata said that while Mr. Duterte's declaration during his SONA that he is adding his voice in asking the Congress to "end the practice of endo once and for all" sounds cute in a speech, workers would still prefer a written certification of urgency for the passage of the SOT should some pro-employer Senators fail to read his statement as a marching order.

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* Sentro; July 24, 2018:

<http://www.sentro.org/?p=1708>

United Labor State of the Nation - The Real State of Labor under Duterte Exposed

A few days before President Rodrigo Duterte's third State of the Nation Address (SONA), the labor sector once again showcased working class unity. The country's major labor centers under the Nagkaisa! Labor Coalition and Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) presented the real state of Filipino workers to media under the two years of President Duterte.

"No end to ENDO. Run over by TRAIN. Waiting in vain for a significant wage increase. Labor rights violated." This in a nutshell is how Nagkaisa! and KMU described the sorry state of workers for the past two years.

Contractualization

"Government put one over workers," KMU and Nagkaisa! said. "Failing to address the issue of contractualization, government tries to cover up the failure to deliver the promise of ending contractualization by citing empty statistics," KMU and Nagkaisa! said.

DOLE Secretary Silvestre Bello claims that the government has helped regularize 180,000+ workers, and that DOLE will regularize 300,000 more within the year. "This is false if not empty. The truth, is that the number of contractual workers is rising, even based on the government's own data," labor groups Nagkaisa! and KMU said.

"This has led to the massive termination of contractual workers as seen in the cases of PAL and PLDT where 'endolords' refused to implement the DOLE regularization order and instead laid-off over 12,000 of its workers.

This is also the case in Jollibee Foods Corporation, NutriAsia, and other companies that have been found practicing Labor Only Contracting," KMU and Nagkaisa said. "Without the President's decisive action, contractualization will persist," the groups added.

Despite DOLE's DO 174 — and Duterte's EO 51, which bars companies from firing contractual employees covered by DOLE regularization orders — PLDT and other violators have faced no penalty for their non-compliance.

“Almost three months after Labor Day, when he said a law is needed to end contractualization, the President has not certified as urgent the Security of Tenure Bill. The Expanded Maternity Leave Bill is also in limbo,” Nagkaisa! and KMU said.

Wages

“The wage system remains the same with no concrete plans to institute reforms,” Nagkaisa! and KMU said.

“The President himself promised to remove provincial wage rates in favor of calls of workers for a national minimum wage (NMW), yet the government has openly opposed the passage of National Minimum Wage (NMW) bills such as House Bill 7787 and other proposed legislation increasing wages,” Nagkaisa! and KMU said.

The record high inflation rate of over 5% over the past five months resulting from “the rampaging TRAIN law has run over the poor.” Additional excise taxes and coverage of VAT have further devaluated the meager wage rates across the country,” KMU and Nagkaisa! said.

Instead of wage hike, Duterte gave us unabated price hikes. Thanks to the anti-people TRAIN law, Filipino workers are feeling the brunt of rising costs of basic goods and services, including food, transport, electricity, and water. To distract from the reality of how the TRAIN law further pressed down the value of wages in the country, the government implemented meager wage hikes through nine regional wage boards.

These increases would not even bring our wages any closer to the P40,000 monthly cost of living begrudgingly proposed by NEDA as the budget for the average Filipino family. Even by the government’s own calculations, wages are insufficient for decent living.

Rights

“Basic labor rights violations are rampant. At EPZA, workers have been treated as wanted criminals for union organizing activities, while investors enjoy all the privileges and protection,” Nagkaisa ang KMU said.

The same continues to happen in Mindanao.

“Workers from companies such as Sumifru, Shin Sun, and Freshmax have been harassed through union-busting, terrorist tagging and even paraded as fake rebel surenderrees,” KMU and Nagkaisa said.

“In many similar cases, such as that of Coke, NutriAsia, Core Asia, and Middleby, it’s the workers themselves who end up being harassed, treated as criminals, and violently dispersed by state security forces,” KMU and Nagkaisa! said.

“The Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR) has reported the death of 30 labor leaders in the past two years, with a number getting illegally arrested, filed with trumped-up charges and are branded as common criminals,” KMU and Nagkaisa said.

Urban poor communities, where many workers live, continue to be anxious about the threat to their rights and liberty.

“In the near future, things might get worse should the proposed charter change that missed out on workers’ rights in the original draft and shift to federalism as it is proposed, come into fruition,” the labor groups said, whose combined membership make up the bulk of organized labor in the Philippines.

The cycle of unfulfilled promises—old and new—continue to hound workers.

It is in the hands of workers, as to where to take the continuing struggle for workers’ rights. Trade unions, organizations and institutions have banded together in a scale not seen since the 80’s. The unity we have forged highlighted by the joint actions since before Labor Day and continue to nurture, will all the more inspire us to work towards a common agenda.

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* Sentreo, July 21, 2018:

http://www.sentro.org/?p=1682&utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter
