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2025 WORKERS' RIGHTS WATCH REPORT

Report on the State of Freedom of Association in the Philippines



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2025 Workers' Rights Watch Report: State of Freedom of Association in the Philippines

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We likewise extend our sincere gratitude to our development partners, the European Union (EU) and the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA), for their steadfast support in advancing workers' rights, strengthening monitoring mechanisms, and sustaining the WRW network's initiatives.

We also recognize the valuable insights and constructive feedback provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Office in the Philippines, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR), the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR), and the Department of Labor and Employment Bureau of Labor Relations (DOLE-BLR), and the National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council (NTIPC) Committee on Freedom of association and Case Monitoring.. Their guidance has been instrumental in refining the analysis and ensuring that this report remains aligned with international human rights and labour standards.

Finally, we extend our appreciation to members of the press and media practitioners who continue to amplify the voices of workers and bring critical labour issues to the forefront of public discourse. Their role in informing the public and holding institutions accountable remains vital in the ongoing struggle for justice, dignity, and respect for workers' rights.

This report stands as a testament to the strength of collective action and shared responsibility in advancing freedom of association and defending the rights of workers in the Philippines.

Message from the Danish Trade Union Development Agency



The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) reaffirms its strong solidarity with workers and trade unions in the Philippines in advancing the protection of workers' rights and fundamental human rights. The findings of the Workers' Rights Watch 2025 Report present a deeply concerning picture of the state of freedom of association in the country. Persistent cases of harassment, intimidation, red-tagging, and violence against trade unionists and human rights defenders point to a shrinking civic space where the exercise of fundamental rights remains fraught with risk. These patterns not only undermine internationally recognized labor standards but also erode the foundations of democratic participation and social justice.

In this context, the role of systematic and credible documentation becomes even more critical. DTDA commends the Workers' Rights Watch (WRW) network for its unwavering commitment to monitoring and documenting workers' rights violations across regions. Your efforts ensure that these realities are not rendered invisible and that workers' voices continue to be heard in national and international arenas. At a time when the right to organize is under pressure, your work stands as both a safeguard and a catalyst for accountability.

As we move forward, we call on all partners to intensify and continuously improve monitoring efforts. This includes strengthening coordination mechanisms, enhancing analytical and reporting capacities, and establishing sustainable regional hubs that can anchor long-term monitoring, rapid response, and support systems for workers and their organizations. Investing in these structures is essential to ensure that documentation efforts are not only sustained but also translated into meaningful action and protection on the ground.

DTDA recognizes that progress is neither linear nor guaranteed. In environments where workers and human rights defenders face ongoing threats, strong and principled partnerships are more important than ever. We remain committed to working closely with trade unions, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that violations are addressed through appropriate national and international mechanisms, and that workers are empowered to claim their rights without fear.

Finally, DTDA extends its sincere gratitude to the European Union for its continued partnership and support, which has been instrumental in advancing this work. This collaboration reflects a shared commitment to upholding human rights, democratic values, and inclusive development. Together, we reaffirm our collective responsibility to stand with workers, defend freedom of association, and work toward a more just and equitable society for all.

Ms. Lotte Ellegaard
Head, Asia Sub-regional Office (Manila)
Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA)



Foreword

We have often heard it said that unions are the voice of the voiceless. Some may dismiss this Report as mere noise from the margins. But history teaches us that when workers make “noise,” society should not cover its ears or close its eyes — it should check its conscience. What power calls noise is often truth speaking without a microphone.

Pope Francis said it best: “There is no trade union without workers, and there are no free workers without trade unions.” In other words, workers do not need charity as much as they need voice, protection, and power.

Freedom of association is not a legal decor or fiction created by law. It is not a nice phrase framed on office walls. It is the foundation of decent work, social dialogue, and dignity at work because it is inherent in every worker as a human person.

For more than two years, the Workers’ Rights Watch (WRW) has documented this reality across the country — from factories and farms to service centers and digital platforms, where technology may be modern, but some labor abuses remain painfully old-fashioned.

The findings are sobering: delayed union registrations, discrimination, harassment, dismissals tied to organizing, contractualization, red-tagging, threats, violence, abductions, and killings. These are not isolated sparks. They are warning lights on the dashboard of our democracy.

Yet this Report is not only a complaint sheet. It also recognizes efforts by DOLE, CHR, and social partners with the ILO, with support from DTDA, the EU, and others, to strengthen monitoring, clarify protections, and train state actors on ILO Convention No. 87.

That is good news. Progress is possible when people and institutions choose dialogue over denial, accountability over alibi, and protection over press release.

The challenge now is to follow-through. Cases of violence against workers and unionists must move from documentation to prosecution and reparation — from “under investigation” to actual accountability. Justice delayed should not become justice archived.

We offer this Report as both witness and roadmap. To the executive: stop the killing of workers and other forms of violence; prosecute those responsible. To lawmakers: close the loopholes. To the judiciary: speed up labor justice. To employers and investors: unions are not enemies of productivity; they are partners in sustainable enterprise. To workers: your courage keeps democracy breathing. Let us continue organizing unions — for unions are not only our voices, but also our schools for democracy, instruments for a just and humane society, and vehicles for the common good.

May this Report help ensure that freedom of association becomes not merely a promise in principle, nor a right only in contemplation of law, but a right enjoyed in practice — not only on paper, but at the table of decision-making, at the picket line, in the workplace, and in the daily lives of Filipino workers.

Atty. Jose Sonny G. Matula

National President, Federation of Free Workers
Co-convenor, Workers' Rights Watch



The right to peaceful concerted action is linked to and integral to trade union and human rights.

Executive Summary

This report examines the state of workers' rights and freedom of association (FOA) in the Philippines in 2025, situating current developments within the broader labour, political, and institutional context. It finds that while important gains for workers and labour organizations were achieved during the year, these advances remain overshadowed by persistent and worsening violations of labour and human rights. The overall picture is one of contradiction: workers continue to organize, win workplace and policy gains, and push labour issues into national and international platforms, yet they do so in an increasingly restrictive environment marked by impunity, precarity, anti-union practices, and shrinking civic space.

The report notes several positive developments in 2025. Workers' organizations were able to elevate labour concerns in both domestic and international arenas, including

through participation in the 113th Session of the International Labour Conference and advocacy on platform work, informal work, and international labour accountability. Nationally, labour issues gained visibility through developments such as the proposed Php 200 legislated wage increase, the issuance of wage orders, tripartite and policy engagements on workers' benefits and social protection, and new initiatives related to child labour and just transition. Workplace-level victories—including regularization of workers, reinstatement of illegally dismissed union members, and collective bargaining gains—further demonstrate the continued relevance and power of worker organizing and collective action.

However, the report finds that these gains have not altered the fundamental conditions under which many Filipino workers live and work. Violations of freedom of association and workers' rights

remain widespread and severe. Workers and trade union leaders continue to face killings, red-tagging, threats, harassment, surveillance, trumped up charges, arbitrary arrests, detention, and union busting. Cases documented under the ILO High-Level Tripartite Mission (HLTM), including killings and attacks against labour leaders, remain unresolved. Not one of the many reported extrajudicial killings of workers has meaningfully progressed through the justice system, underscoring a continuing and dangerous culture of impunity.

Workers' rights violations in 2025 show a clear pattern of geographic concentration and periodic surges, with the majority of cases clustered in key economic hubs in Luzon—particularly NCR and CALABARZON—where labor activity and organizing are most active. Incidents peaked in January and again between August and October, suggesting cyclical pressures linked to employment practices and labor actions across the year. In contrast, while the relatively low number of reported cases in many parts of the Visayas and Mindanao point not only to possible regional disparities in incidence and reporting gaps, persistent threats and harassment against workers undermine the exercise of their rights and freedoms. This uneven distribution highlights the dual need to address structural drivers of violations in

high-incidence urban centers while strengthening documentation and protection mechanisms in underreported regions to ensure a more accurate and inclusive picture of workers' rights nationwide.

Cases of workers' killings reveal a disturbing pattern of retaliation against those exposing corruption and wrongdoing. Instead of protection, whistleblowers and organizers face intimidation, harassment, and legal pressure designed to silence them and suppress the truth—reflecting a shrinking space for accountability. This pattern persists within a broader context of violence and impunity: 105 killings of workers and labour rights defenders from 2016 to 2023 were presented to the International Labour Organization High-Level Tripartite Mission (HLTM), yet case resolution remains slow. Even priority cases, including Manny Asuncion and Alex Dolorosa, show limited progress. Four additional killings and two abductions further underscore the urgent need to address impunity.

A central finding of the report is the widening gap between formal protections and actual accountability. Although new mechanisms and policy instruments—such as Executive Order No. 97, the FOA Training Module, and the FOA Roadmap—were introduced or maintained to strengthen safeguards, they have not translated into real protection for workers on the ground. Key

government bodies tasked with addressing FOA violations have remained inactive, underpowered, or structurally flawed, while labour rights violations continue to occur with little consequence for perpetrators. This disconnect reveals that policy issuance alone is insufficient when implementation is weak and state accountability remains absent.

The report also highlights the persistence of structural barriers to organizing and collective bargaining. Employers' resistance, union busting, contractualization, subcontracting, and anti-union stigma continue to undermine workers' ability to organize in both the private and public sectors - especially the increasing share of the service sector, as opposed to manufacturing, in employment. In the public sector, privatization, optimization, and restrictions on collective negotiations further threaten workers' rights and job security. These conditions contribute to persistently low trade union density and collective bargaining coverage, despite conflicting official and independent data. The report argues that these low rates are not merely statistical concerns, but indicators of deeper structural exclusion from labour representation and democratic participation in the workplace.

Special attention is also given to emerging and highly precarious sectors, particularly the BPO and

platform economy. In these sectors, weak and outdated regulations, misclassification of workers, and exemptions from existing labour protections have enabled the persistence of excessive work, income insecurity, lack of social protection, occupational safety from the impact of climate change, and barriers to unionization. The report underscores the urgency of legislative and policy reforms to ensure that workers in non-traditional and rapidly expanding sectors are not left outside the protection of labour law and freedom of association guarantees.

Another major concern raised in the report is the continued weaponization and institutionalization of state security frameworks against workers and labour rights defenders. Anti-insurgency policies and institutions—especially those linked to surveillance, red-tagging, intimidation, and forced disaffiliation—continue to constrain civic space and expose workers to heightened risks. The continued funding and operation of these structures, despite repeated calls from labour and civil society groups for reform or abolition, signal a serious contradiction between the government's formal commitments to labour rights and its broader security practices. In fact, there is an observable and increasing trend of trumped-up terrorism financing

charges against labour and civil society leaders during the period.

Women workers and labour organizers continue to face gendered forms of state intimidation, with 14 of the 46 or 30 % of documented victims of red-tagging, harassment, and threats being women. Cases such as the killing of Warlita Jimenez and the illegal arrest and detention of Perla Pavillar and Pauline Joy Banjawan highlight the persistent use of violence and trumped-up charges against women labour organizers. The lack of sex-disaggregated data further obscures the full gendered impact of state repression, particularly in the education sector where more than 10,000 teachers in regions such as Masbate and Cebu reportedly face red-tagging, forced disaffiliation, and intimidation from state forces.

Despite these challenges, the report affirms the significance and continuing urgency of worker-led monitoring, documentation, organizing, and advocacy efforts, particularly through the Workers' Rights Watch (WRW). WRW has continued to play an essential role in documenting violations, supporting worker awareness and paralegal capacity, and sustaining labour rights advocacy in contexts where official data and mechanisms remain incomplete, selective, or inaccessible. These efforts remain vital not only for exposing violations but also for strengthening labour solidarity and



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building the evidence base necessary for accountability and reform.

The report concludes that the state of freedom of association in the Philippines in 2025 remains deeply concerning. While workers continue to win important gains through collective action, the broader labour rights environment remains hostile, repressive, and structurally unequal. Genuine progress will require far more than symbolic policy developments or fragmented institutional responses. It will require decisive state action to end impunity, dismantle anti-worker structures, protect workers and labour rights defenders, address precarious employment, and ensure that all workers—without distinction—can freely organize, bargain collectively, and assert their rights in safety and dignity.

I. The Labour and Economic Context of the Philippines

In 2025, a number of important gains for workers and the labour movement were achieved which demonstrated that sustained organizing, advocacy, and social dialogue can still create meaningful openings for reform and protection. At the international level, the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), through its participation as official worker delegate to the 113th Session of the International Labour Conference, was able to advance key labour priorities on platform work, the formalization of informal work, and international accountability on forced labour and workers' rights. This reflects the continued presence and relevance of Philippine labour voices in shaping global labour standards and influencing discussions that have direct implications for workers on the ground.

At the national level, labour issues also gained greater visibility in governance and policymaking spaces. The passage of the proposed

Php 200 legislated national wage increase in the 19th Congress signaled renewed public and political recognition of workers' long-standing demands for living wages amid rising costs of living. Various tripartite and government mechanisms also opened opportunities for labour engagement. The National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council (NTIPC) reviewed the Workers' Rights Watch (WRW) Report, Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards issued wage orders, and institutions such as the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) and Employees' Compensation Commission (ECC) engaged workers on benefits and social protection concerns. Likewise, the National Council Against Child Labor approved a new Philippine Program Against Child Labor, marking another policy development with significance for vulnerable sectors of the workforce.

Several legal, institutional, and workplace-level victories also

underscored the value of worker organizing and collective action. Executive Order No. 97, which adopted the Omnibus Guidelines on Freedom of Association (FOA) and Civil Liberties, was issued as a formal state policy instrument intended to strengthen protections for trade union rights. The Supreme Court's ruling declaring the ₱89.9 billion PhilHealth fund transfer unconstitutional was likewise an important win for public accountability and the protection of social security resources that should directly benefit workers and the public. Some political detainees from the labour movement were released, following several courts' junking of trumped-up charges against workers. Some fabricated charges of terrorism financing against labour leaders were also junked by courts.

On the ground, workers won concrete gains through collective bargaining, legal action, and labour inspections. These include a new collective bargaining agreement for workers in Laguna Colleges of Arts and Sciences, the filing of an unfair labour practice case to defend union rights, and a favorable NLRC decision ordering the reinstatement of 131 illegally dismissed Ninjavan Riders Union members. Additional victories included the regularization of 74 electronics workers in Cirtek Corp. and 500 contractual workers in Palawan through labour inspection and enforcement processes. The

Nexperia Philippines Inc. Workers Union went on strike because of management's union busting and stalled collective bargaining negotiations - eventually winning the negotiations.

Beyond individual workplace wins, there were also notable advances in labour unity and agenda-setting. The forging of a collective call to urgently amend the Labor Code of the Philippines reflected growing convergence among workers' organizations around the need for deeper structural reforms. This was complemented by the adoption of a Resolution with Education Workers for Decent Work, the Bipartite Joint Action Plan on Freedom of Association, and a Memorandum of Undertaking with the DOLE National Conciliation and Mediation Board—developments that point to stronger channels for dialogue, dispute resolution, and labour-management engagement. The adoption of the All-Labor Agenda for Equitable and Just Transition by the NAPC Formal Labor and Migrant Sector Council also marks an important policy step in ensuring that workers' rights, welfare, and participation remain central in the country's transition pathways.

Taken together, these developments show that workers and labour organizations continue to secure important policy, legal, and institutional gains despite persistent

constraints. They demonstrate the enduring strength of worker organizing, solidarity, and advocacy in pushing labour issues into national and international platforms. Yet these positive developments exist alongside a much harsher and more troubling reality—one where workers' rights in the Philippines remain under severe pressure from structural precarity, anti-union practices, repression, and weak policy enforcement—conditions that continue to define the broader state of labour rights in the country.

The state of freedom of association in the Philippines report for 2025 is released a year after the much publicized arrest of former president Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity committed during his time as mayor of Davao City and the first half of his presidency of the Republic of the Philippines.

While his incarceration in The Hague stems from the “war on drugs”, which was essentially a “war on the poor”, media and observers were quick to link these crimes to the extrajudicial killing of workers. We cannot blame them. After all, the killing of poor, vulnerable citizens, in the name of the war on drugs, is guided by the same policy to “kill, kill, kill” unionists and labor activists and pretty much anyone who speaks against injustices without regard for due process and with impunity.

While the confirmation of charges against President Duterte has commenced at the ICC, nothing has happened at the home front to address other grave human rights violations. None of the 105 cases of extrajudicial killings of workers from 2016 to the present has made it to court. The Inter-Agency Committee (IAC) on Freedom of Association created under Executive Order 23 has failed to prosecute police officers involved in the killing of labor leader Manny Asuncion—an urgent action item that the IAC committed itself to do during its hurriedly called meeting in April 2025, following the release of the Workers' Rights Watch report.

The EO23 IAC, tasked to address the many blatant violations of freedom of association principles under ILO Convention 87 has nothing to show over the past year, but the elevation into an executive order of the Omnibus Guidelines on the Exercise of Freedom of Association and Civil Liberties, now known as EO 97, does not even cover all workers, nor does it penalize labor rights violations and human rights violations and abuses. The implementation of EO 97 was never planned and carried out since its release on September 22, 2025 as the EO 23 IAC never reconvened since April 2025. While several labour groups within the Workers' Rights Watch (WRW) network have expressed concern over the inclusion of the National Task Force

to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) in EO97, they caution that this provision risks legitimizing the involvement of an institution widely reported to target trade unionists and activists, thereby undermining workers' exercise of FOA. Red-tagging and other rights violations as reported by the WRW have persisted despite the issuance. In fact, the incumbent Executive Secretary, has never convened the IAC, which he heads as the President's alter ego, nor has he and the President met workers—a clear indication that workers' rights are a low priority of the administration, what with no trade union related proposed legislation making it to the list of bills certified as urgent. Further, the Philippines has been tagged as one of the 10 worst countries for workers according to the Global Rights Index of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

Meanwhile, instead of defunding and/or abolishing the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC)—for its role in red tagging, surveillance, and forced disaffiliation among others—as recommended by both workers and employers to the National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council (NTIPC) and the EO23 IAC, this state entity received a fresh infusion of Php. 1.95 billion funds from the national budget in 2025 and a proposed Php. 8.1 billion for 2026 - a 314% to 340% increase from its 2025

approved budget. This has certainly derailed, if not set back efforts to enforce freedom of association laws and policies. Further, the NTF-ELCAC has continued to release statements justifying red-tagging and other practices in the guise of establishing peace and development in the country.

With continued attacks on trade union rights, trade union density in the Philippines remains low at around 6.6% to 8.5%. As of the last quarter of 2025, there were 159,926 registered labor organizations with 18,691 enterprise-based unions in the private sector; 2,101 unions in the public sector: with 140 federations; and 14 trade union centers. Collective-bargaining coverage is however drastically low even with the slight increase of 7.54% in existing CBAs and CNAs that number 1,312 covering a measly 308,956 workers of the 54 million labor force.

The Workers' Rights Watch (WRW) over the past year was able to sustain efforts at monitoring and documenting cases of FOA violations with the view of exacting accountability from authorities, especially state forces that are bent on suppressing the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of speech, of expression, even of the press and the right of the people to peaceably assemble in focus over rights violations and social injustice, including the right to strike, which are all under attack. Through a

series of capacity building activities, including paralegal training, awareness raising and organizing, especially of workers facing a lot of vulnerabilities, the WRW's main task of vigilant monitoring and documentation of labor rights has been adequately complimented.

Much still needs to be done to make significant changes that will positively impact the state of freedom of association in the Philippines. Initiatives of the WRW need to be improved on, better systematized and duplicated across the country, with the participation of more trade unions, resulting from our organizing efforts, in order to relentlessly pursue labor and social justice.

Updates from the Government on the Protection of Freedom of Association in the Philippines

In its report to the National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council (NTIPC) on April 7, 2026, the DOLE through the Bureau of Labor Relations gave updates on the FOA roadmap. In terms of structure and monitoring mechanism, it issued Department Order 256-26 (Revised IRR of the Tripartism Law) on March 31, 2026 that institutionalized standing committees including the Committee on Freedom of Association and Case Monitoring. The same DO replicates EO 23 at the regional (RTMB) Level, thereby expanding its membership. Tripartite Councils are now linked

with Coordinating Councils, such as the EO 23 IAC, by virtue of the issuance.

The DOLE also reported that together with the CHR and with ILO support, they are enhancing the **Case Referral System** under existing MOAs and mechanisms towards establishing a **Labor-Focused National Monitoring Mechanism**. Meanwhile, **LIFE** assisted more than 300 beneficiaries with over Php 4M in livelihoods, scholarships, skills training and job placement support.

The Omnibus Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Civil Liberties has been elevated to an Executive Order, and is now EO 97, issued on September 24, 2025. Members of the TWG for the review of the same for the Public Sector have been identified.

In terms of capacity building, the DOLE reported that 117 worker-paralegals have been trained across the country on labor rights, documentation and legal remedies. It also reported 154 sectoral capacity building activities involving 5,600 participants. It pilot-tested the FOA Training Program launched in August 2025 that produced 32 FOA advocates who have been rolling out the training to PEZA and CHR.

Meanwhile, the DOLE Legal Service has reported that the **"Request for SEBA"** that was suspended by DOLE in July 2025 is now permanently removed as a means to certify a trade union



IMPUNITY. Despite its commitment to re-open the case of the brutal killing of trade union leader Manny Asuncion, the EO 23 IAC on Freedom of Association has nothing to show. Justice has not prevailed and impunity persists. (Photo: Bulatlat)

as a sole and exclusive bargaining agent (SEBA) in an unorganized establishment, due to the entry of judgement on the SMILSI case, where “**Request for SEBA**” was questioned by management and the concerned union withdrew its appeal.

Priority Cases of EJK of Workers

Killing of Alex Dolorosa: Due to the repeated failure of the accused, John Michael Mahilum, to appear at scheduled hearings, the court *motu proprio* cancelled his bail and issued a warrant of arrest on 23 April 2025. The court likewise directed the prosecution’s primary eyewitness, Rene John Nacis, to post a bond of P10,000 due to his repeated non-appearance despite due notice. On 25 and 27 June 2025, the Bacolod City Police Office coordinated with

barangay officials and residents to verify the whereabouts of John Michael Mahilum and Rene John Nacis. Both individuals were confirmed to have vacated their known addresses. The warrant of arrest against Mahilum was disseminated to all police units for appropriate action.

During the scheduled trial on 26 November 2025. Assistant City Prosecutor Romel S. Gabuya was replaced by Public Prosecutor Emmanuel Lope P. Lupisan. On 18 February 2026, PSSg Mark Anthony N. Pabuaya, the assigned investigator, appeared before the Court during the presentation of prosecution evidence and was directed to serve the Warrant of Arrest against prosecution witness Rene John Nacis. The next hearing

is scheduled on 8 May 2026. As of reporting, both John Michael Mahilum and prosecution witness Rene John Nacis, remain at large.

Killing of Manny Asuncion:

On 26 May 2025, the Office of the Prosecutor General forwarded a copy of the complete records of the case entitled Liezl Asuncion vs. PLT Elbert M. Santos, et al., docketed as NPS No. XVI-INV-22J-00386, for Murder. The Office likewise requested the NBI to conduct a case build-up to reassess existing evidence, pursue additional leads, and if warranted, file a new complaint before the DOJ. In a letter dated 07 October 2025, the NBI confirmed that it has initiated re-investigation through the B I Cavite North District Office (NBI-CAVINDO), which was later referred

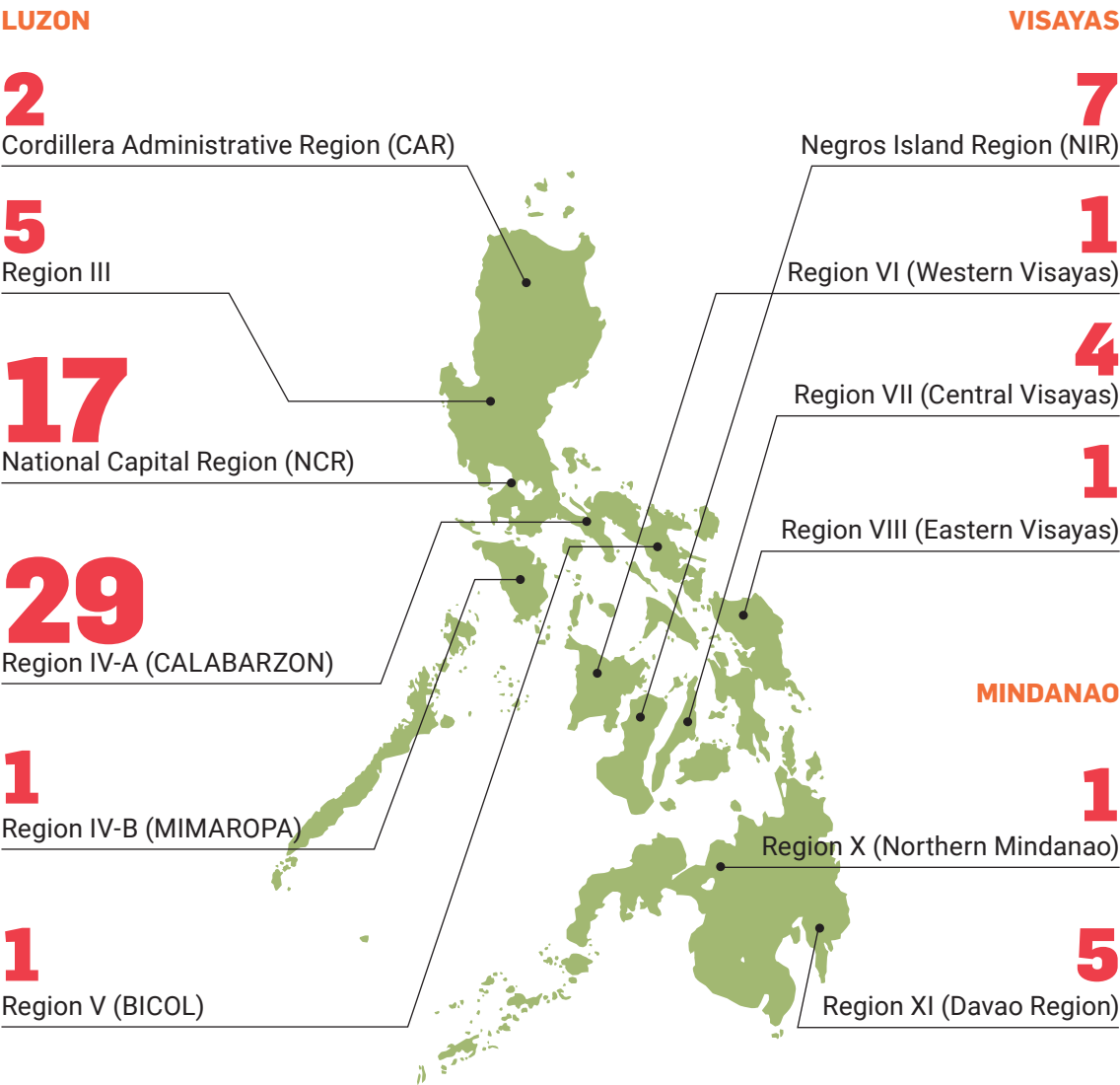
to the NBI Cavite/Imus District Office for continued investigation.

Initial findings indicate that the victim was killed inside the Workers' Assistance Center in Dasmariñas, Cavite, and was later dragged outside. Witnesses reported that no firearm was seen beside the victim. Verification with the PNP Firearms and Explosives Office is ongoing, while efforts to locate Liezel Asuncion y Vallite and secure relevant search warrant documents continue. The case remains under active re-investigation per DOLE-BLR report, with the NBI continuously pursuing all viable leads and undertaking necessary investigative activities to determine the truth and establish accountability.



WORKERS' GAIN. The successful strike by the Nexperia Philippines Inc. Workers Union-NAFLU-KMU that resolved the CBA deadlock and led to the reinstatement of union leaders, proves that exercising the right to strike as part of the right to freedom of association is a power tool that will always be available for workers. (Photo: All Nexperia Fight Facebook Page)

II. Cases and Violations Reported in 2025



NUMBER OF CASES PER MONTH

January	12	April	6	July	3	October	11
February	3	May	2	August	10	November	5
March	2	June	3	September	12	December	5

► Killings

Four (4) killings were documented in 2025, resulting in four (4) victims, reflecting the continued vulnerability of individuals linked to labor advocacy and public interest work. The victims, Atty. Joshua Lavega Abrina, Eric Saber, Niruh Kyle Antatico, and Warlita Jimenez, were all killed in separate incidents carried out by unidentified assailants across different regions in the Philippines. Notably, the killing of Eric Saber

has been linked to anti-corruption protests, while Warlita Jimenez on her involvement in labor organizing with the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), underscoring the persistent risks faced by grassroots labor advocates. Across all cases, a common pattern of impunity is evident, with investigations either ongoing, lacking transparency, or with no formal charges filed to date which raises serious concerns about accountability and the protection of human rights defenders.

Killings - 4 cases, 4 victims			
Name	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
Atty. Joshua Lavega Abrina	N/A	2025 Sep 17	Atty. Joshua Lavega Abrina was killed by an unidentified assailant. The incident occurred on September 17, 2025, in Barangay San Jose, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan. As of April 2026, the case remains under active investigation, with no formal murder charges yet filed against any suspects.
Eric Saber	N/A	2025 Sep 25	Eric Saber was killed by unidentified armed assailants, with suspicions pointing to possible involvement of the Philippine National Police (PNP). The incident occurred on September 25, 2025, in Recto, Manila in relation to anti-corruption protests. As of now, no case has been filed regarding the incident.

Name	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
Niruh Kyle Antatico	N/A	2025 Oct 10	Niruh Kyle Antatico, was killed by two unidentified motorcycle-riding gunmen. The incident occurred on October 10, 2025, in Cagayan de Oro City. As of now, there is no available information on the status of the case.
Warlita Jimenez	National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW)	2025 Dec 23	On 23 December 2025, Jimenez, a member of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), was reportedly killed by unidentified men wearing balaclavas in Kabankalan City. The incident is linked to her labor advocacy work. As of now, no formal case has been filed regarding the killing.

► Abduction

One (1) case of abduction involving one (1) victim was documented in 2025, reflecting the continued use of coercive and punitive measures against grassroots organizers. Pauline Joy Banjawan, affiliated with Bayan Muna and KADAMAY, was subjected to a range of violations including abduction, illegal arrest and detention, red-tagging, surveillance, and harassment. The incident,

reportedly involving elements of the Philippine Army and police forces, underscores the convergence of security operations and reprisals against individuals engaged in community and sectoral organizing. As the case remains ongoing and under trial, it highlights both the persistence of such violations and the critical need for accountability and protection of civil and political rights.

Abduction - 1 case, 1 victim			
Name	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
Pauline Joy Banjawan	KADAMAY and Bayan Muna	2025 Apr 26	Pauline Joy Banjawan, a coordinator and organizer affiliated with KADAMAY and Bayan Muna, was subjected to abduction, illegal arrest and detention, trumped-up charges, red-tagging, surveillance, and threats, harassment, and intimidation. The incident involved elements of the 59th Infantry Battalion under the 2nd Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, along with the Regional Mobile Force Battalion 4A, including identified personnel. It occurred on April 26, 2025, in Barangay San Jose, Sto. Tomas City, Batangas. The case is currently ongoing and under trial.

► **Illegal arrest and detention**

Seven (7) cases of illegal arrest and detention involving nine (9) victims were documented in 2025, indicating the continued use of harassment and deprivation of liberty against development workers, labour organizers, and human rights defenders and activists. Many of the cases involved the filing of trumped up charges and were carried out by state security forces, particularly elements of the Philippine National Police and other specialized task forces. While some cases, such as those involving members of Paghida-

et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc (PDG), have been resolved with dismissal and acquittal, others remain in preliminary stages or under trial, including those of Pauline Joy Banjawan, Felixberto Consad, and Michael “Mike” Cabangon. The recurrence of such violations often accompanied by red-tagging, surveillance, and intimidation, highlights a broader pattern of criminalizing legitimate organizing and advocacy work, raising concerns about due process, misuse of legal mechanisms, and the protection of civil liberties.

Abduction - 1 case, 1 victim				
Name	Number of victims	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
Federico Salvilla	1	Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG)	2025 Jan 02	One victim, Federico Salvilla of Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG), was subjected to illegal arrest and detention along with trumped-up charges. The incident involved officers of the Regional Philippine National Police (PNP) Office Region 6, who identified themselves as members of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force. It occurred on January 2, 2025, at his residence in Barangay Pagayon, Pulupandan, Negros Occidental. The case has since been resolved, with a decision resulting in his dismissal and acquittal.
Perla Pavillar	1	Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG)	2025 Jan 02	Perla Pavillar, a 58-year-old Community Development Officer of Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG), was subjected to illegal arrest and detention and faced trumped-up charges filed against her. The incident involved state forces, specifically officers from the Regional Philippine National Police (PNP) Office Region 6 under the Anti-Terrorism Task Force.

Name	Number of victims	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
				It occurred on January 2, 2025, in Barangay Pagayon, Pulupandan, Negros Occidental, in Region 6 (Western Visayas). The case has since been resolved, with a decision resulting in her dismissal and acquittal.
Federico Salvilla, Perla Pavillar, and Dharyl Albanez	3	Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG) and Kristyanong Mangunguma Lubos nga Itib-ong sang Grupo, Inc. (KMALIG)	2025 Jan 03	Three development workers, Federico Salvilla, Perla Pavillar, and Dharyl Albanez, from Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group Inc. and Kristyanong Mangunguma Lubos nga Itib-ong sang Grupo Inc. (KMALIG) were subjected to illegal arrest and detention and faced trumped-up charges. The incident involved state forces, specifically the Regional Intelligence Division of the Police Regional Office-6. It occurred on January 3, 2025, in Negros Occidental, Region 6 (Western Visayas). The victims filed the case, which has since been resolved with a decision resulting in dismissal and acquittal.
Pauline Joy Banjawan	1	Bayan Muna and KADAMAY	2025 Apr 26	Pauline Joy Banjawan, a coordinator and organizer affiliated with Bayan Muna and KADAMAY, was subjected to abduction, illegal arrest and detention, trumped-up charges, red-tagging, surveillance, and threats, harassment, and intimidation.

Name	Number of victims	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
				The incident involved elements of the 59th Infantry Battalion under the 2nd Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, along with the Regional Mobile Force Battalion 4A, including identified personnel. It occurred on April 26, 2025, in Barangay San Jose, Sto. Tomas City, Batangas. The case is currently ongoing and under trial.
Felixberto Consad	1	PISTON-Butuan	2025 Aug 14	On 14 August 2025, Consad of PISTON Butuan was reportedly subjected to illegal arrest and detention, along with alleged trumped-up charges, in Barangay Mabicay, Sogod, Southern Leyte. The operation was attributed to unnamed elements of the Southern Leyte Police Provincial Office (SLPPO) under the supervision of PCOL Raymundo P. Graveles, including personnel from the 1st Southern Leyte Provincial Mobile Force Company, Bontoc MPS, Sogod MPS, RIU-SLPIT, and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (SL-CIDG). The case is currently in the preliminary stage, with initial proceedings ongoing to assess the legality of the arrest and the charges filed.

Name	Number of victims	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
Ayrene Marasigan	1	Alyansa ng Magsasaka para sa Kompensasyon	2025 Aug 29	Ayrene Marasigan, leader and spokesperson of Alyansa ng Magsasaka para sa Kompensasyon (AMK) was subjected to illegal arrest and detention, as well as red-tagging, surveillance, threats, harassment, and intimidation. The incident involved individuals identified under the same group. It occurred on August 29, 2025, in Barangay Santol, Balayan, Batangas, in Region IV-A (CALABARZON). As of now, no case has been filed regarding the incident.
Michael "Mike" Cabangon	1	KMU-Cordillera and PISTON	2025 Dec 27	On 27 December 2025, Michael "Mike" Cabangon, a cultural worker and trade union leader affiliated with KMU-Cordillera/PISTON was reportedly subjected to illegal arrest and detention by the PNP's Crime Investigation and Detection Group - Regional Force Unit 14 (PNP-CIDG-RFU14) in Irisan, Baguio City. He was also previously subjected to trumped-up charges and red-tagging by the same perpetrators on 15 February 2025 in Baguio. The incident allegedly involved deprivation of liberty without lawful basis. The case is currently in the preliminary stage, with initial proceedings underway to determine the circumstances and legality of the arrest.

► **Trumped-up charges**

Seven (7) cases of trumped-up charges involving nine (9) individuals were documented in 2025, reflecting the continued use of the legal system to target development workers, labour leaders, and grassroots

organizers. Many of these cases were closely linked to illegal arrests and detention operations carried out by state forces and its specialized units, raising serious concerns on the judicial principles of rule of law and due process.

Trumped-up Charges - 7 cases, 9 victims				
Name	Number of victims	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
Federico Salvilla	1	Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG)	2025 Jan 02	One victim, Federico Salvilla of Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG), was subjected to illegal arrest and detention along with trumped-up charges. The incident involved officers of the Regional Philippine National Police (PNP) Office Region 6, who identified themselves as members of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force. It occurred on January 2, 2025, at his residence in Barangay Pagayon, Pulupandan, Negros Occidental. The case has since been resolved, with a decision resulting in his dismissal and acquittal.
Perla Pavillar	1	Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG)	2025 Jan 02	Perla Pavillar, a 58-year-old Community Development Officer of Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG), was subjected to illegal arrest and detention and faced trumped-up charges filed against her.

Name	Number of victims	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
				The incident involved state forces, specifically officers from the Regional Philippine National Police (PNP) Office Region 6 under the Anti-Terrorism Task Force. It occurred on January 2, 2025, in Barangay Pagayon, Pulupandan, Negros Occidental, in Region 6 (Western Visayas). The case has since been resolved, with a decision resulting in her dismissal and acquittal.
Dharyl Albanez	1	Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG)	2025 Jan 03	Dharyl Albanez of Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG), faced trumped-up charges filed against him. The incident involved personnel from the Isabela Municipal Police Station in Negros Occidental. It occurred on January 3, 2025, at the Isabela Municipal Police Station. The case has since been resolved, with a decision resulting in dismissal and acquittal.
Federico Salvilla, Perla Pavillar, and Dharyl Albanez	3	Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG) and Kristyanong Mangunguma Lubos nga Itib-ong sang Grupo, Inc. (KMALIG)	2025 Jan 03	Three development workers, Federico Salvilla, Perla Pavillar, and Dharyl Albanez, from Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group Inc. and Kristyanong Mangunguma Lubos nga Itib-ong sang Grupo Inc. (KMALIG) were subjected to illegal arrest and detention and faced trumped-up charges.

Name	Number of victims	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
				The incident involved state forces, specifically the Regional Intelligence Division of the Police Regional Office-6. It occurred on January 3, 2025, in Negros Occidental, Region 6 (Western Visayas). The victims filed the case, which has since been resolved with a decision resulting in dismissal and acquittal.
Michael “Mike” Cabangon	1	KMU-Cordillera and Ebkas Waya	2025 Feb 15	Michael “Mike” Cabangon, spokesperson of KMU-Cordillera and affiliated with Ebkas Waya, faced trumped-up charges and was subjected to red-tagging. The incident involved the Philippine National Police’s Crime Investigation and Detection Group-Regional Force Unit 14 (PNP-CIDG-RFU14). It occurred on February 15, 2025, in Baguio. The case is currently at the preliminary stage.
Pauline Joy Banjawan	1	KADAMAY and Bayan Muna	2025 Apr 26	Pauline Joy Banjawan, a coordinator and organizer affiliated with KADAMAY and Bayan Muna, was subjected to abduction, illegal arrest and detention, trumped-up charges, red-tagging, surveillance, and threats, harassment, and intimidation.

Name	Number of victims	Affiliation / Organization	Date of incident	Details of incident
				The incident involved elements of the 59th Infantry Battalion under the 2nd Infantry Division of the Philippine Army, along with the Regional Mobile Force Battalion 4A, including identified personnel. It occurred on April 26, 2025, in Barangay San Jose, Sto. Tomas City, Batangas. The case is currently ongoing and under trial.
Felixberto Consad	1	PISTON-Butuan	2025 Aug 14	On 14 August 2025, Consad of PISTON-Butuan was reportedly subjected to illegal arrest and detention, along with alleged trumped-up charges, in Barangay Mabicay, Sogod, Southern Leyte. The operation was attributed to unnamed elements of the Southern Leyte Police Provincial Office (SLPPO) under the supervision of PCOL Raymundo P. Graveles, including personnel from the 1st Southern Leyte Provincial Mobile Force Company, Bontoc MPS, Sogod MPS, RIU-SLPIT, and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (SL-CIDG). The case is currently in the preliminary stage, with initial proceedings ongoing to assess the legality of the arrest and the charges filed.

► **Red tagging, threats, harassment, intimidation, surveillance, and interrogation**

A total of sixty (69) cases of red-tagging, threats, harassment, intimidation, surveillance, and related violations were documented in 2025, affecting approximately 11,280 victims, making this the most widespread category of violations recorded. These incidents targeted a broad spectrum of actors, including public school teachers, labor leaders, union members, and community organizers, and were reported across multiple regions in Luzon and the Visayas. Notably, mass incidents involving nearly 900 teachers in Cebu and around 10,000 teachers in Masbate highlight the scale and institutional

nature of these practices, often carried out through coordinated seminars and activities allegedly involving state security forces.

Across the cases, a consistent pattern emerges of sustained surveillance, red-tagging, and intimidation directed at individuals and organizations engaged in labor organizing and social advocacy, with involvement attributed to a mix of state actors, private security forces, and unidentified individuals. While some incidents have been formally reported or are under investigation, many remain unfiled or unresolved, underscoring persistent concerns around impunity, shrinking civic space, and the systemic targeting of workers and human rights defenders.

Red-Tagging / Threats, Harassment, Intimidation / Surveillance / Interrogation - 69 cases, approx. 11,280 victims	
Reporting organization	Details
Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) -Philippines	In Bantayan, Cebu, nearly 900 public school teachers affiliated with ACT Region 7 Union were reportedly subjected to red-tagging, threats, harassment, and intimidation. These actions included the conduct of red-tagging seminars within school premises, allegedly carried out by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) alongside military forces. The incidents took place on August 27, 2025, across public schools in Bantayan. As of now, no formal case has been filed in relation to these events.
	Similarly, around 10,000 public school teachers in Masbate, affiliated with ACT Bicol Union, experienced comparable forms of red-tagging, threats, harassment, and intimidation. These included a series of red-tagging seminars conducted in schools, reportedly involving the Philippine Army 2nd Infantry Battalion. The incidents began on September 1, 2025, and occurred across multiple public schools in Masbate. As with the Bantayan case, no formal complaints have yet been filed.

Reporting organization	Details
Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR)	In early 2025, multiple labor and civil society actors reported harassment, intimidation, and related violations across several regions. Around 122 workers led by Rodel Andes of HANEP-SUPER (Handyman Empowered Workers Union) were allegedly targeted by private security forces linked to RRHI in Quezon City, resulting in union busting and illegal dismissal, with no updates on the case. At the same time, individuals affiliated with Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (EILER) experienced red-tagging and surveillance, prompting formal complaints. Other incidents involved online red-tagging of community workers, as well as surveillance of development groups such as Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group (PDG) and individuals like Vincent Pepito, with several cases elevated to the Commission on Human Rights. From February to April 2025, reports escalated to include legal harassment, intensified surveillance, and severe rights violations. Michael “Mike” Cabangon of KMU-Cordillera faced alleged fabricated charges and red-tagging by police units, while activists such as Renso Bajala, Joanne Cesario, and Shane Ganal linked to BIEN (BPO Industry Employees Network), KMU, and Gabriela Youth were reportedly subjected to threats and monitoring in Makati. A particularly serious case involved Pauline Joy Banjawan of Bayan Muna and KADAMAY, who allegedly experienced abduction, illegal detention, and multiple forms of harassment involving military and police units in Batangas; this case remains under trial. From mid to late 2025, patterns of surveillance, red-tagging, and intimidation persisted, affecting labor organizers, transport workers, and peasant leaders across Luzon and Mindanao. Members of PAMANTIK-KMU, OLALIA-KMU, KMU-SMR, AMBALA, and Sugarfolks’ Unity for Genuine Agricultural Reform-Batangas (SUGAR Batangas), along with Alyansa ng Magsasaka para sa Kompensasyon (AMK), reported repeated incidents of monitoring and harassment. These include the continued targeting of Maria Cristina T. Alomia and her family in Laguna, surveillance operations in Davao City against KMU-SMR staff, and intimidation of transport workers such as Jeffrey Uypala and Larry Argilles.

Reporting organization	Details
	Peasant leaders were also affected, including Sylva Attala “Ahla” Fortuno, who faced repeated red-tagging, surveillance, and harassment in multiple incidents in 2025, some of which led to complaints before the Commission on Human Rights, as well as Ayrene Marasigan, Louie Quiroz, and Hailey Pecayo, who experienced red-tagging, illegal arrest, and intimidation in Batangas. While some cases have been formally reported or are under investigation, many remain unresolved or without filed cases, underscoring persistent concerns over the safety and protection of labor and rural organizers.
Federation of Free Workers (FFW)	Across several labor-related incidents in 2025, union leaders and workers in the National Capital Region reported serious violations including unfair labor practices, union busting, threats, harassment, intimidation, and illegal dismissal. One case involved Carlo S. Yanson of the Petrofuel Logistics Inc. Employees Union (NCR)-FFW, who alleged multiple labor rights violations by the employer on January 25, 2025. Another major case involved 131 workers led by Dick Pacioles of the Ninja Van Riders Union (NCR), who similarly reported union busting and unlawful termination on August 8, 2025. Both cases remain ongoing and are currently awaiting decisions. In a separate incident, Aniceto Ituriaga Jr. of the FFW Staff Union experienced threats, harassment, and intimidation, along with complications related to a hold departure order tied to a decade-old criminal case. This incident allegedly involved state forces and occurred at NAIA Terminal 1 on September 8, 2025. Unlike the other cases, no formal complaint has been filed so far, leaving the matter without an active legal proceeding at present. Overall, these incidents reflect continuing labor tensions in the NCR, particularly involving union leaders and organized worker groups facing allegations of employer retaliation and state-related actions. While some cases are already under formal adjudication, others remain unfiled or unresolved, highlighting ongoing concerns around workers’ rights, union protection, and due process.

Reporting organization	Details
Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA)	Across several incidents in 2025, agricultural workers and rural organizers in Batangas and Tarlac reported experiences of red-tagging, surveillance, threats, harassment, intimidation, and interrogation. These cases involved members and affiliates of organizations such as Sugar Folks Unity for Genuine Agricultural Reforms (SUGAR-Batangas) and Alyansa ng Manggagawang Bukid sa Asyenda Luisita (AMBALA), as well as individuals linked to Gabriela Women's Party. The reported incidents took place in different parts of Batangas and Tarlac, often occurring in community or public spaces such as barangay halls and local villages. One case involved Desiree Bituin Dimailig, who allegedly experienced threats and intimidation in Tuy, Batangas on February 28, 2025, with involvement attributed to elements of the 59th Infantry Battalion. Another incident involved Eduardo Aninao Marasigan and Ayrene Comia Marasigan, who reported red-tagging, surveillance, and interrogation in Balayan, Batangas on August 29, 2025. These incidents also included alleged military presence and unidentified individuals, with documentation such as fact sheets being prepared to record the events. In a separate case, Analyn Baluyut of AMBALA reportedly faced surveillance and intimidation in Tarlac City on October 1, 2025, allegedly involving personnel from the 3rd Mechanized Infantry Battalion and intelligence operatives in civilian clothing. While some incidents have been formally documented or reported to the Commission on Human Rights, others remain unfiled, reflecting ongoing concerns about the safety and protection of rural and agricultural organizers in these areas.

► **Unfair Labour Practices**

A total of twenty-one (21) cases of unfair labor practices affecting 1,609 workers were documented in 2025, highlighting widespread violations of labor standards and workers' rights across multiple sectors and regions. These cases include collective bargaining agreement (CBA) violations, illegal dismissal, union busting, non-payment of wages and benefits, and labor-only contracting, often involving both large groups

of workers and individual union leaders. Incidents were reported in key industrial areas such as NCR, Laguna, Batangas, Pampanga, and Iloilo, with some cases escalating into strikes or formal complaints before labor authorities.

While a few cases have resulted in favorable outcomes for workers, such as reinstatement with back wages, many remain pending, under appeal, or unresolved, reflecting

persistent challenges in enforcing labor laws and ensuring employer accountability. The recurrence of these violations, particularly those linked to union activity and benefit

entitlements, underscores ongoing labor tensions, gaps in compliance, and the continued vulnerability of workers to exploitation and retaliation in the workplace.

Unfair Labour Practices (including CBA Violations, Non-payment of retirement pay, mandatory benefits) - 21 cases, 1,609 victims	
Reporting organization	Details
Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR)	On April 4, 2025, around fifty unidentified workers of the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) were reportedly affected by collective bargaining agreement (CBA) violations and illegal termination involving Manila Toll Expressway System Inc. (MATES) in Cabuyao, Laguna. The workers staged a strike in response to the alleged violations, which has since ended, although no further updates on the case are available.
	On April 15, 2025, a total of 96 workers led by union officers Marvin Yocte, Robert Vallespin, and members of KMM-Katipunan Fermina-Chapter-WFTU experienced alleged unfair labor practices and a CBA deadlock in bad faith involving Fermina Express Corp along Zabarte Road in Caloocan City. The case is currently ongoing and under appeal.
	On June 10, 2025, thirty-one workers of Sun Ace Polymer Manufacturing Corporation reported illegal dismissal, labor-only contracting, and other labor-related violations in Valenzuela. The identities of the affected workers remain incomplete, and as of now, there are no available updates on the status of the case.
	On June 19, 2025, fifteen workers, including Rogel Estonato of Big Twine Plastic Manufacturing, allegedly experienced forced work and other unfair labor practices involving Juanito Tiamson in Bagbaguin, Valenzuela City. Complaints have been filed with the Department of Labor and Employment – Caloocan Field Office and the Local Government of Valenzuela, and the matter remains pending.
	On September 13, 2025, Florence Dalapag of AMBALA experienced forced disaffiliation, red-tagging, surveillance, threats, harassment, and intimidation allegedly involving individuals identifying themselves as “NOLCOM,” referring to the Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM), in Barangay Parang, Concepcion, Tarlac. As of now, no formal case has been filed regarding the incident.

Reporting organization	Details
Federation of Free Workers (FFW)	Across multiple labor disputes in 2025, numerous groups of workers and union leaders reported widespread violations including unfair labor practices, illegal dismissal, union busting, CBA violations, and denial of benefits such as 13th month pay, service incentive leave, overtime pay, and separation pay. Large groups such as the 150 URFE-FFW members in Laguna, 131 Ninja Van Riders Union members in NCR, 255 CPURAFU-FFW workers in Iloilo, 500 CLEU-FFW members in Pampanga, and other unionized and non-unionized workers consistently raised concerns over regularization issues, diminution of benefits, and employer retaliation. Many of these cases remain at preliminary stages or are still awaiting decisions, while a few, such as the CPURAFU-FFW case, have already been resolved. Several individual and small-group cases highlight intensified labor tensions, particularly involving union officers and workplace organizers. Notable examples include Carlo S. Yanson of Petrofuel Logistics Inc. Employees Union, who alleged harassment, intimidation, union busting, and illegal dismissal, and Salvador Espinas III, involved in multiple disputes including unfair labor practice claims and a certification election conflict in Laguna. Other cases include Allan Galiza, Sofronio Blastique, and Robert Cartas of Interphil Laboratories Employees' Union, who alleged illegal dismissal and unfair labor practices, alongside Nilanda Almazan and other workers in Batangas facing illegal dismissal and regularization issues. These cases reflect recurring disputes involving union activity, job security, and employer compliance with labor standards. A number of cases also involve financial and contractual disputes tied to employment benefits and redundancy. Workers such as Arvin Garcia, Randy Diaz, and Bernie Cred raised claims involving constructive dismissal, unpaid wages, and statutory benefits, while others like Francesca Cassandra Samonte reported non-payment of 13th month pay and separation pay. One notable resolved case involved Interphil Laboratories Employees' Union members in Laguna, where workers were granted reinstatement with backwages and damages following findings of CBA violations and redundancy issues. Overall, the cases demonstrate a broad pattern of labor rights disputes across NCR, Laguna, Batangas, Quezon, Iloilo, and Pampanga, with outcomes ranging from ongoing litigation to favorable rulings for workers.
Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (KMK)	On February 10, 2025, Nermalyn Nerosa, a member of the Workers Association of Caloocan, filed a labor complaint against the Philmastic Corporation, represented by Leonardo Flores. She alleged unfair labor practices, illegal dismissal despite non-unionized status, illegal salary deductions, non-payment of social benefits, and underpayment of wages. The incident occurred in Valenzuela City, and the case remains ongoing, pending decision.

	In a separate incident on September 27, 2025, a group of workers from the Workers Association of Valenzuela, including Maryn Basea, Revelyn Bebania, Rossana Claus, Maribel dela Cruz, Margie Bacaycay, Rosabel Siazon, Mercedita Ibañez, and May Francisco filed similar complaints against Asian Stationery Corporation, represented by George Santos. Their allegations also included illegal dismissal, unfair labor practices, underpayment, and non-payment of social benefits. This case is currently under trial and remains unresolved.
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► Other Anti-Union Activities

Six (6) cases of union busting affecting approximately 867 workers were documented in 2025, reflecting continued employer resistance to unionization and collective worker action. These cases, reported across sectors and regions, often involved threats, harassment, intimidation, and illegal dismissal

of union leaders and members, with perpetrators ranging from company management to private security forces. While a few cases have seen partial resolutions, such as the reinstatement of dismissed union leaders, most remain ongoing or at preliminary stages, indicating persistent barriers to the exercise of freedom of association.

Union Busting - 6 cases, approx. 867 victims	
Reporting organization	Details
Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR)	CTUHR reported two (2) cases on union busting 1. A total of 122 victims, led by Rodel Andes and members of the Handyman Empowered Workers Union (HANEP-SUPER), experienced threats, harassment, and intimidation, as well as union busting and illegal dismissal. The incident involved private security forces employed by RRHI. It occurred on January 6, 2025, at E. Rodriguez Jr. Avenue, Bagumbayan, Libis, Quezon City. As of now, there is no available update on the status of the case. 2. Over 100 workers, led by Alan Esponga and members of the Organization of Metro Wear Employees for Empowerment and Genuine Advocacy – Pinag-isang Tinig at Lakas ng Anak Pawis (OMEGA-PIGLAS), experienced union busting. The incident involved company management, with Alan Esponga and others identified in relation to the case. It occurred on March 26, 2025, in Mactan Economic Zone 1, Barangay Ibo, Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu. The case has seen developments, with dismissed union leaders reinstated.

Reporting organization	Details
Federation of Free Workers (FFW)	FFW reported four (4) cases on union busting 1. Carlo S. Yanson, union president of Petrofuel Logistics Inc. Employees Union (NCR)-FFW, experienced unfair labor practices, threats, harassment and intimidation, union busting, and illegal dismissal. The incident involved the employer. It occurred on January 25, 2025, in the National Capital Region (NCR). The case is ongoing and currently awaiting a decision. 2. Thirteen victims, led by Edmar Lapena and other officers and members of the United Riders of J&T Express Laguna-FFW, experienced unfair labor practices and union busting. The incident involved their employer. It occurred on May 28, 2025, in Sta. Rosa, Laguna. The case is currently ongoing and awaiting a decision. 3. A total of 131 victims, led by union president Dick Pacioles and other members of the Ninja Van Riders Union (NCR), experienced unfair labor practices, threats, harassment and intimidation, union busting, and illegal dismissal. The incident involved their employer. It occurred on August 8, 2025, in the National Capital Region (NCR). The case is currently ongoing and awaiting a decision. 4. A total of 500 victims, led by union president Eric Nalam and members of CLEU-FFW, experienced unfair labor practices and union busting. The incident involved their employer. It occurred on December 22, 2025, in Clark, Pampanga. The case is currently at the preliminary stage.

In parallel, eleven (11) cases of constructive dismissal, illegal dismissal, and illegal termination involving 377 unionized workers were recorded, further underscoring the precarious conditions faced by organized labor. These violations frequently intersect with union busting and unfair labor practices, targeting union officers and active

members through termination, non-regularization, and denial of benefits. While some cases are progressing through legal channels, many remain unresolved, highlighting ongoing challenges in enforcing labor protections, safeguarding job security, and ensuring accountability for violations against unionized workers.

Constructive Dismissal / Illegal Dismissal/ Illegal Termination (unionized) - 11 cases, 377 victims	
Reporting organization	Details
Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR)	CTUHR reported two (2) cases of illegal dismissal and an illegal termination of unionized workers: Illegal Dismissal 1. A total of 122 victims, led by Rodel Andes and members of the Handyman Empowered Workers Union (HANEP-SUPER), experienced threats, harassment, and intimidation, as well as union busting and illegal dismissal. The incident involved private security forces employed by RRHI. It occurred on January 6, 2025, at E. Rodriguez Jr. Avenue, Bagumbayan, Libis, Quezon City. As of now, there is no available update on the status of the case. 2. On 28 August 2025, Marvin Yocte, Sonny Armas, Jeffry Jacob, Eulogio Manlaran, Alvin Serrano, Robert Vallespin, Jasrell Dy Casas, Rolando Lacaba of KMM-Katipunan Fermina Chapter (WFTU) filed complaints for illegal dismissal against Fermina Express Corp. management in Caloocan City. The case concerns alleged unjust termination of non-unionized employees. The matter is currently ongoing, with the parties pursuing an appeal in the relevant labor forum. Illegal Termination 3. Fifty workers of the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX), whose identities are unknown, experienced CBA violations and illegal termination. The incident involved Manila Toll Expressway System Inc. (MATES). It occurred on April 4, 2025, in Cabuyao, Laguna. The strike has since ended, with no further updates available on the case.
Federation of Free Workers (FFW)	FFW reported a total of eight (8) cases involving illegal dismissal (5), constructive dismissal (1), and illegal termination (2) of unionized workers: Illegal Dismissal 1. Carlo S. Yanson, union president of Petrofuel Logistics Inc. Employees Union (NCR)-FFW, experienced unfair labor practices, threats, harassment and intimidation, union busting, and illegal dismissal. The incident involved the employer. It occurred on January 25, 2025, in the National Capital Region (NCR). The case is ongoing and currently awaiting a decision. 2. A total of 131 victims, led by union president Dick Pacioles and other members of the Ninja Van Riders Union (NCR), experienced unfair labor practices, threats, harassment and intimidation, union busting, and illegal dismissal. The incident involved their employer. It occurred on August 8, 2025, in the National Capital Region (NCR). The case is currently ongoing and awaiting a decision.

Reporting organization	Details
	3. Three victims namely, Allan Galiza, Sofronio Blastique, and Robert Cartas, officers and representative members of the Interphil Laboratories Employees' Union-FFW experienced illegal dismissal and unfair labor practices. The incident involved their employer. It occurred on September 30, 2025, in Laguna. The case is currently ongoing, with submission of a reply to the position paper underway. 4. Edison Calasicas, a union member of Malayang Manggagawa sa HM Transport-UNILUP, experienced illegal dismissal. The incident involved the employer. It occurred on November 2, 2025, in Sta. Cruz, Laguna. The case is currently at the preliminary stage. 5. Eighteen workers, led by union president Sena Lenard Recodig of the J&T Alcabasa Workers Union-FFW, experienced illegal dismissal (non-unionized), non-payment of 13th month pay, lack of regularization, and non-payment of service incentive leave. The incident involved their employer. It occurred on December 24, 2025, in Cabuyao, Laguna. The case is currently at the preliminary stage. Constructive Dismissal 6. Arvin Garcia, Randy Diaz, and Bernie Cred experienced constructive dismissal and related labor issues, including money claims, non-payment of 13th month pay, service incentive leave (SIL), and overtime pay. The incident involved their employer. It occurred on October 6, 2025, in Quezon Province. The case is currently ongoing and awaiting a decision. Illegal Termination 7. Richard Nobles of the DLTB Labor Union-PTGWO, experienced illegal termination. The incident involved the employer. It occurred on January 22, 2025, in Turbina, Calamba. The case is currently ongoing and under trial. 8. Bryan Joseph Estenzo, a union member of Obrero Pilipino-Lucena Lines Inc. Chapter, experienced illegal termination. The incident involved the employer. It occurred on November 20, 2025, in the National Capital Region (NCR). The case is currently at the preliminary stage.



DOUBLE VICTORS WAITING FOR THE PRIZE. Ninja Van Riders Union Bulacan-FFW and Ninja Van Riders Union NCR-FFW successfully fought for the reinstatement of employees, and won union recognition. The Unions are sustaining the pressure as management has yet to settle their payments while still refusing to negotiate for the CBA with both unions. (Ninja Van Riders Union - NCR Facebook Page)

► Violations Against Non-unionized Workers

Nine (9) cases of constructive dismissal, illegal dismissal, and illegal termination involving fifty-eight (58) non-unionized workers were documented in 2025, highlighting the heightened vulnerability of workers without union protection. These cases, reported across industrial areas such as Metro Manila, Laguna, Batangas, Bulacan, and Quezon, involved a range of violations including labor-only contracting, non-regularization, illegal salary deductions, and non-payment of statutory benefits. Many incidents were directly attributed

to employer actions, with affected workers often lacking the collective mechanisms to defend their rights or negotiate redress.

Most cases remain ongoing, under appeal, or pending resolution, with only limited progress in securing accountability or remedies for the affected workers. The pattern of violations underscores systemic gaps in labor protection for non-unionized workers, particularly in enforcing job security and fair labor standards, and points to the urgent need for stronger safeguards and accessible legal remedies for vulnerable segments of the workforce.

Constructive Dismissal / Illegal Dismissal / Illegal Termination (non-unionized) - 9 cases, 58 victims	
Reporting organization	Reporting organization
Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR)	Illegal Dismissal 1. Julio D. Estonato, Jun Tubos, and Jose Emil Canaway experienced illegal dismissal (non-unionized) and constructive dismissal at SAKOMOTO. The incident involved Production Supervisor Alma R. Ariate. It occurred on May 8, 2025, at Gen. Luis Street, Barrio Kaybiga, Caloocan City, Metro Manila. The case status is currently uncertain, with updates still pending. 2. A total of 31 workers of Sun Ace Polymer Manufacturing Corporation, whose specific identities are still to be updated, experienced illegal dismissal (non-unionized), labor-only contracting, and other related labor violations. The incident involved Sun Ace Polymer Manufacturing Corporation itself. It occurred on June 10, 2025, in Valenzuela. As of now, there is no available update on the status of the case. Constructive Dismissal 1. Six victims, including Japhet Lungcayana, experienced constructive dismissal. The incident involved Karen Syjueco and Haidee Enriquez. It occurred on October 12, 2025, on the 18th floor of Global One Eastwood, Barangay Bagumbayan, Quezon City. The case did not reach settlement at the NLRC and is currently proceeding with the submission of position papers.
Federation of Free Workers (FFW)	Illegal Dismissal 1. Rochelle Mae Dayo, experienced illegal dismissal (non-unionized). The incident involved the employer. It occurred on June 14, 2025, in Cabuyao, Laguna. The case is currently ongoing and awaiting a decision. 2. Two workers, led by Albert Aldave, experienced illegal dismissal (non-unionized). The incident involved their employer at Lazada. It occurred on July 9, 2025, in Bulacan. The case is currently ongoing and awaiting a decision. 3. Two victims, led by Nilanda Almazan, experienced illegal dismissal (non-unionized) and issues related to regularization. The incident involved the employer. It occurred on October 22, 2025, in Lipa, Batangas. The case is currently at the preliminary stage. 4. Randy Diaz, Bernie Credo, Normin Bernabe, and Arvin Garcia experienced illegal dismissal (non-unionized). The incident involved their employer. It occurred on November 3, 2025, in Tiaong, Quezon. The case is currently ongoing and under appeal.

Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (KMK)	Illegal Dismissal 1. Nermalyn Nerosa, a member of the Workers Association of Caloocan, experienced unfair labor practices, illegal dismissal (non-unionized), illegal salary deductions, non-payment of social benefits, and underpayment. The incident involved Leonardo Flores of Philmastic Corporation. It occurred on February 10, 2025, at Philmastic in Valenzuela City. The case is currently ongoing and awaiting a decision. 2. Maryn Basea, Revelyn Bebania, Rossana Claus, Maribel dela Cruz, Margie Bacaycay, Rosabel Siazon, Mercedita Ibañez, and May Francisco, members of the Workers Association of Valenzuela, experienced unfair labor practices, illegal dismissal (non-unionized), non-payment of social benefits, and underpayment. The incident involved George Santos of Asian Stationery Corporation. It occurred on September 27, 2025, in Valenzuela City. The case is currently ongoing and under trial.
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SAHOD ITAAS. The unified trade union campaign for a living wage is closely linked to the campaign for freedom of association.

III. Status of Workers' Rights and Freedom of Association in 2025

The state of workers' rights in the Philippines remains deeply alarming, as reflected in the persistent pattern of violence against trade unionists and labour rights defenders. A total of 105 victims of killings recorded from 2016 to 2023 were formally presented to the International Labour Organization High-Level Tripartite Mission (HLTM) in 2023, yet progress in delivering justice has been markedly slow. Even in emblematic cases identified for prioritization—such as those of Manny Asuncion and Alex Dolorosa—accountability remains elusive, underscoring systemic gaps in investigation and prosecution. This stagnation is further compounded by recent developments: four additional workers have been killed and two abductions recorded, reinforcing the urgent need for decisive action to end impunity and ensure the protection of fundamental labour rights, particularly freedom of association.

Invisible Regions, Visible Hotspots: Uneven Reporting of Workers' Rights Violations

The dataset reveals a highly uneven geographic and temporal distribution of cases, characterized by strong urban concentration and periodic spikes throughout the year. A total of cases is heavily clustered in Luzon—particularly in NCR (17 cases) and Region IV-A (24 cases)—which together account for a significant majority of reported incidents. This suggests that violations are most prevalent in economically dense and industrialized areas where labor activity, union presence, and employer-employee tensions are more pronounced. In contrast, large parts of the Visayas and Mindanao reported a relatively low number of cases, which may reflect either lower incidence or, more critically, underreporting and weaker monitoring mechanisms in these regions.

Temporally, the data shows fluctuating but notable surges in specific months. January (12 cases) and September (11 cases) recorded the highest number of incidents, followed by elevated levels in August and October (7 cases each). These spikes may be linked to cyclical labor dynamics—such as the start-of-year employment adjustments, budget cycles, or intensified labor actions in the latter part of the year. Meanwhile, consistently low reporting in months like March, May, and July indicates periods of relative decline or possible gaps in documentation.

Overall, the pattern points to a dual challenge: first, the persistence of violations in key economic hubs where labor organizing is active; and second, the likelihood of invisible or undocumented violations in regions with limited reporting. Strengthening regional monitoring systems while addressing structural labor issues in high-incidence areas will be critical to ensuring a more accurate and equitable protection of workers' rights nationwide.

Silencing Truth: Retaliation Against Whistleblowers Exposing Corruption

The cases of Kyle Antatico, Joshua Abrina, and Eric Saber collectively reveal a disturbing pattern of retaliation aimed at silencing individuals who expose corruption and wrongdoing. Across these cases, whistleblowers and advocates faced intimidation,

harassment, legal persecution, and other forms of pressure designed to halt the disclosure of sensitive information and deter further investigation. Rather than being protected for their role in promoting transparency and accountability, they were subjected to reprisals that undermine both their safety and the broader public interest.

This pattern reflects a systemic failure to safeguard whistleblowers and uphold mechanisms for accountability, particularly in contexts where corruption intersects with labor rights and governance. The targeting of these individuals not only suppresses critical evidence and testimonies but also creates a chilling effect on others who may seek to come forward. Ultimately, these cases underscore how efforts to expose corruption are met with coercive responses, weakening democratic institutions and eroding trust in systems meant to protect truth and justice.

Protections without Accountability: Rising Violations Despite FOA Safeguards

Despite the establishment of national and local mechanisms intended to safeguard freedom of association (FOA)—including Executive Order 97, the FOA Training Module, and the FOA Roadmap—violations of workers' rights continue to rise, reflecting a shrinking civic space for workers and

rights defenders. High-profile cases reported under the ILO High-Level Tripartite Mission (HLTM), such as those of Manny Asuncion, and the 2023 killing of Jude Fernandez, remain unresolved, underscoring persistent gaps in accountability. The Inter-Agency Committee on Freedom of Association under Executive Order 23, has not been convened since a new Executive Secretary took over its helm, nor has its mandated dialogue with social partners been conducted.

Data from 2025 indicate an average of six (6) labour rights violations per month—equivalent to at least one incident per week—contradicting official indicators such as the Department of Labor and Employment's (DOLE) 86.4% regional compliance rate on occupational safety and health (OSH) standards and the reported 6.8% incidence of unpaid work. These figures suggest a disconnect between reported compliance and the lived realities of workers.

Moreover, Workers' Rights Watch (WRW) data remain limited to documented cases and do not yet fully capture underreported regions. Several incidents are also excluded from official labour statistics due to their perceived political nature, further obscuring the true scale of violations and reinforcing systemic barriers to recognition, protection, and justice.

Systemic Barriers to Organizing: Impunity, Union Busting, and Declining Coverage

The unchecked violations to Freedom of Association principles in the Philippines contributes greatly to the persistent failure to acknowledge and address a culture of impunity in the country. It continues to stigmatize trade unions and undermine the protection of workers' rights. Workers who assert their rights—particularly in organizing and negotiating and implementing collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)—often face resistance and retaliatory actions from management. Trade union and human rights defenders enjoy no protection from the State. Employer-driven union busting tactics were reported in 7.9% of documented cases, including illegal dismissal of trade union leaders; contractualization, sub-contracting and agency hiring; and CBA deadlocks. These have increasingly constrained spaces for social dialogue.

In the public sector, violations are equally alarming: union-busting, interference in collective negotiations, and the harassment and intimidation of union leaders continue unabated, further eroding workers' ability to organize and defend their rights. Privatization has likewise been aggressively pursued as a strategy to weaken union presence and influence within government institutions. Compounding these threats, the

rushed passage of the Government Optimization Act has heightened fears of mass layoffs across the public sector, while paving the way for deeper restructuring measures that risk further undermining job security, weakening unions, and intensifying violations of workers' rights.

These conditions contribute to persistently low levels of unionization and collective bargaining coverage. Despite a relatively high labour force participation rate of 60%, union density remains at approximately 4%, with only 1% of workers covered by CBAs, according to the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA). These figures contrast sharply with official data from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), which report higher rates of 6.6% union density and 6.3% CBA coverage in 2024—highlighting discrepancies that point to deeper structural and reporting gaps in assessing the true state of workers' rights in the country.

Weaponized Security Policies: Escalating Threats to Labour and Human Rights

The Philippine government's counter-insurgency framework, particularly the National Action Plan for Unity, Peace, and Development (NAP-UPD), risks further intensifying patterns of intimidation against workers and human rights defenders. Reports indicate that state actors—most notably the National Task Force to End Local Communist

Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC)—have leveraged this framework to carry out threats, harassment, surveillance, and red-tagging, often aimed at pressuring individuals to disaffiliate from unions and civil society organizations while advancing black propaganda efforts. This even resulted to the killing of Warlita Jimenez, a sugar-farm worker from Negros.

Documented cases from key regions—including Negros, Bicol, Samar, and CALABARZON—highlight incidents of trumped-up charges, illegal arrest and detention, and persistent red-tagging by state forces, contributing to a cumulative total of at least 187 violations since 2016. Beyond state-led actions, private sector actors have also become increasingly emboldened in responding to worker and community resistance. In particular, mining operations have been linked to violent displacement, forced evictions, and the suppression of protests, with resistance often met by confrontations and the violent dispersal of affected communities.

Together, these developments point to a convergence of state and corporate practices that constrain civic space, weaken collective action, and heighten risks for workers and communities asserting their rights, while exposing trade union and human rights defenders to countless vulnerabilities.

Legal Gaps and Loopholes: Deepening Precarity in BPO and Platform Sectors

Weak and outdated labor regulations in the Philippines have enabled the persistence of labor rights violations in emerging sectors like BPOs and platform-based work. In the BPO industry, gaps in enforcement—particularly on overtime, night work, and contractual arrangements—have resulted in chronic overwork, health risks, and barriers to unionization. Policy exemptions under existing DOLE issuances further undermine workers' ability to organize and assert rights, while the long-pending Magna Carta for BPO Workers reflects the lack of legislative urgency despite documented violations.

Similarly, platform workers such as delivery riders and TNVS drivers are often misclassified as independent contractors, excluding them from basic protections like minimum wage, social security, and collective bargaining. Although Supreme Court rulings have recognized riders as regular employees due to the level of control exercised by companies like Lazada, enforcement remains weak and companies continue to evade full accountability. The absence of clear legal frameworks and the delay in passing protective legislation leave platform workers vulnerable to income instability, unsafe working conditions, and unresolved labor disputes.

Silencing Women Organizers: Gendered Attacks on Freedom of Association across Labour and Education Sectors

Women workers and labour organizers continue to face gendered forms of state intimidation and violence in the exercise of their right to freedom of association. Of the 46 individuals documented to have experienced red-tagging, threats, harassment, and other forms of state intimidation, 14 were women—highlighting the disproportionate risks faced by women who engage in labour organizing and community advocacy. These attacks reflect not only attempts to suppress workers' collective action, but also the broader vulnerability of women human rights defenders operating in highly militarized and hostile environments.

The severity of these violations is illustrated in the cases documented during the reporting period. Warlita Jimenez, a sugar farmer-organizer, was killed amid continuing violence against rural workers and labour advocates. Meanwhile, women organizers Perla Pavillar and Pauline Joy Banjawan were subjected to illegal arrest and detention through trumped-up charges, demonstrating the persistent weaponization of the justice system against labour activists. These cases represent only a fraction of the violence and intimidation experienced by women workers and organizers, underscoring the

urgent need for stronger protections, accountability mechanisms, and gender-responsive measures to safeguard women's rights and participation in labour movements.

At the same time, the absence of comprehensive sex-disaggregated data on red-tagging and state intimidation limits a deeper gender analysis of these violations, particularly in sectors with significant women representation such as education. Reports indicate that more than 10,000 teachers have experienced red-tagging, forced disaffiliation from unions and

organizations, and threats from state forces. These incidents are reportedly concentrated in the Bicol and Central Visayas regions, particularly in Masbate and Cebu, where teachers and education workers continue to face sustained intimidation linked to their organizing and advocacy activities. The scale of these reported violations demonstrates the urgent need for systematic documentation and gender-sensitive monitoring mechanisms to better understand how state repression uniquely affects women workers, educators, and union leaders across sectors.

IV. Conclusion

The state of workers' rights and freedom of association in the Philippines in 2025 reflects a deeply contradictory landscape. On one hand, workers and labour organizations continued to secure important gains through sustained organizing, advocacy, collective bargaining, legal action, and tripartite engagement. ***Labour issues gained visibility in local, national, and international policy spaces, including through the participation of workers' representatives in the International Labour Conference, the advancement of a legislated wage increase, the issuance of wage orders, and policy developments on child labour, social protection, and just transition.*** Concrete workplace victories—such as worker regularization, reinstatement of illegally dismissed union members, and the conclusion of collective bargaining agreements—demonstrate that collective action remains an effective and necessary force for defending labour rights.

On the other hand, these gains remain fragile and profoundly undermined by the broader political and institutional environment in which workers attempt to exercise their rights. The persistence of killings, red-tagging, surveillance, arbitrary arrests, union busting, precarious employment, and legal loopholes continues to expose workers and trade union leaders to grave risks. ***The gap between formal protections and actual accountability remains one of the most alarming findings of this report.*** While mechanisms such as Executive Order No. 97, the FOA Roadmap, and various tripartite structures have been established, they have not translated into meaningful protection, deterrence, or justice for workers facing violations. The continued non-resolution of emblematic cases, the non-convening of key state mechanisms, and the persistence of anti-insurgency frameworks that

directly threaten civic space all reinforce a climate of impunity.

The report further highlights that structural barriers to organizing remain firmly entrenched. **Low union density and minimal collective bargaining coverage are not merely technical labour market outcomes; they are symptoms of a labour regime that continues to tolerate anti-union practices, precarious work arrangements, and the marginalization of workers in both formal and emerging sectors.** These challenges are particularly visible in the BPO, platform, and public sectors, where outdated regulations, contractualization, privatization, and restrictions on union recognition continue to weaken workers' capacity to organize and bargain collectively.

Workers' rights violations remain concentrated in key economic hubs, particularly in NCR and CALABARZON, with notable surges during specific periods of the year. At the same time, low reporting in the Visayas and Mindanao points to persistent gaps in monitoring and documentation rather than an absence of violations. Addressing both the structural drivers in high-incidence areas and the underreporting in other regions is critical to ensuring comprehensive protection of workers' rights nationwide.

The targeting of whistleblowers reveals a dangerous inversion of justice—where those who expose corruption are punished, while

wrongdoing remains shielded. When truth-telling is met with retaliation, accountability mechanisms are not only weakened but actively undermined. Without robust protection for whistleblowers, corruption thrives in silence and impunity becomes the norm.

The findings also make clear that freedom of association cannot be treated as an isolated labour concern. It is inseparable from broader questions of democracy, civil liberties, social justice, and state accountability. **When workers are harassed, criminalized, silenced, or killed for organizing, the issue extends far beyond industrial relations—it becomes a human rights crisis.** The continued presence and funding of institutions and policies associated with red-tagging and intimidation, despite repeated calls for reform, demonstrate that the repression of labour rights remains embedded in state practice.

The continuing pattern of red-tagging, harassment, illegal arrests, and killings against women workers and labour organizers highlights the gendered nature of attacks on freedom of association in the Philippines. Cases such as the killing of Warlita Jimenez and the criminalization of Perla Pavillar and Pauline Joy Banjawan demonstrate how violence and trumped-up charges are used to silence women labour leaders and community organizers. The absence of comprehensive sex-disaggregated



REPORT LAUNCH. At the launching of the 2025 WRW Report in Iloilo and NCR, the gripping testimonies of victims of FOA and human rights violations put flesh, blood and tears to the documented cases.

data further obscures the full impact of state intimidation, particularly in the education sector where more than 10,000 teachers in Masbate and Cebu reportedly face red-tagging, forced disaffiliation, and threats from state forces. These trends underscore the urgent need for stronger accountability mechanisms and gender-responsive protections to safeguard women's rights and participation in labour organizing.

At the same time, this report also affirms the critical importance of trade union-led monitoring, documentation, and solidarity-building efforts such as the Workers' Rights Watch (WRW). In a context where official mechanisms remain weak, selective, or inaccessible, the role of independent labour rights documentation has become even more vital. WRW has not only sustained visibility on violations but has also strengthened worker awareness, paralegal capacity, organizing, and

advocacy. These efforts provide an important foundation for pursuing accountability, amplifying workers' voices, and challenging the normalization of labour rights abuses.

Ultimately, the 2025 situation shows that while workers continue to win important battles, the larger struggle for freedom of association and decent work in the Philippines remains far from over. The task ahead is not only to defend the gains already achieved, but to confront the systemic and political conditions that continue to produce repression, precarity, and exclusion. Genuine progress will require more than policy pronouncements or symbolic reforms; it demands decisive action to end impunity, dismantle anti-worker structures, expand legal protections, and ensure that all workers—without distinction—can organize, bargain, and assert their rights in safety and dignity.



FREE OUR UNIONISTS. Trumped up charges against trade union leaders and organizers are schemes used by unscrupulous employers and state security forces to silence trade unionists and bust unions.

V. Recommendations

Recommendations	Updates
1. Take immediate and effective measures, in line with previous recommendations of the Conference Committee and the ILO-HLTM to put an immediate end to any violation of freedom of association, including threats and harassment, surveillance, arbitrary arrest and detention, and extrajudicial killings, against union members for the legitimate exercise of their rights under the Convention.	There is further regression of FOA with reported cases of killings, illegal arrests and detention, surveillance, red-tagging, and threats to workers in 2025.
2. Undertake, without delay, effective and independent investigations into the new allegations of violence against members of workers' organizations and expedite those that are pending with regard to all allegations reported since 2015.	Not one case of the reported extrajudicial killing of workers has progressed into a case filed in court, nor has any gone beyond the level of the prosecutor. This, despite the promise of the EO 23 IAC to at least look into reopening the case of the killing of Manny Asuncion, whose wife even appeared and testified before the ILOHLTM.
3. Take measures to ensure the effective prevention of any violence perpetuated in connection with the exercise of workers' and employers' organizations' legitimate activities and ensure that such organizations can exercise their activities within the framework of a system which guarantees the effective respect of civil liberties and freedom of association rights.	The chief executive released Executive Order 97 on September 22, 2025, elevating the Omnibus Guidelines on the exercise of freedom of association and civil liberties. While promising at first, it was unable to deter violations to FOA. In fact, the EO 23 IAC has yet to meet ever since the release of the issuance, nor has it had a dialogue with employers and workers, as the new executive secretary, who heads this presidential body, has not convened it or called for a meeting.

4. Address as a matter of urgency all concerns relating to the status and content of the roadmap with the social partners and ensure their full participation in its monitoring and implementation.	There is slow progress in the rollout of the Tripartite FOA Roadmap.
5. Ensure the effective functioning of the monitoring bodies and provide regular information to the ILC-CAS in this regard.	Mandate confusion of the monitoring bodies leads to irregular information/updates on the status and reports on workers' rights violations. Meetings with monitoring bodies demonstrate this situation with RTMBs asking for information from labour groups and CSOs on workers' rights violations.
6. Continue to promote comprehensive training activities, with a solid focus on freedom of association and collective bargaining, among government agencies with the help of ILO technical assistance.	While the DOLE, with support from ILO, has begun rolling out training programs, these initiatives have yet to translate into concrete improvements on the ground. Meaningful changes in the actual exercise and protection of the right to freedom of association remain largely unrealized, as workers continue to face persistent barriers, reprisals, and weak enforcement of labor rights.
7. Ensure that the Anti-Terrorism Act is not implemented so as to restrict legitimate union activities and related civil liberties contrary to the Convention.	There is the continued presence and funding of NTF-ELCAC, a body borne out of the EO70, and the enforcement of the Anti-Terror Law perpetuating surveillance, threats, and intimidation of workers, their activities, and the exercise of FOA in general.
8. Ensure that the following legislative matters are promptly addressed with a view to bringing national legislation into conformity with the Convention as soon as possible: House Bills Nos 1152 and 4941.	Proposed bills still pending and yet to progress; continued red-tagging of labour groups and workers' organizations by the NTF-ELCAC which comprised 17.1% of reported cases in 2025.

9. Ensure that all workers without distinction are able to form and join organizations of their choosing in accordance with Article 2 of the Convention.	DOLE has removed implementation of the mechanism to request for sole and exclusive bargaining agent (SEBA) certification, which allowed for union recognition, and the right to bargain collectively when a newly organized and registered trade union has secured the signatures of majority of the bargaining unit in an unorganized establishment following a written request or ratified resolution for SEBA certification submitted to the DOLE regional director after final judgment in the SMILSI case. This has stifled organizing efforts. Meanwhile, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), while continuing to force trade unions into disaffiliating from their federations has upped the ante and has organized its own labor federation under its control to take trade unions into its own fold built on an anti-union agenda. It has been reported that NTF-ELCAC has established similar organizations in the community. Low union density (4%) and continued social stigma on unions demonstrating sustained alienation of workers and individuals from trade unionism.
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ILO HLTM Recommendations

Recommendations	Updates
1. Stop the killings and investigate FoA violations, particularly killings, harassment, red-tagging and enforced disappearances, and speedily resolve the various cases of FOA violations, particularly abductions, release the detained trade unionists and dismiss all trumped-up charges, and take effective measures to prevent further FOA violations.	There is further regression of FOA with reported cases of killings, illegal arrests and detention, surveillance, red-tagging, and threats to workers in 2025. This, despite the promise of the EO 23 IAC to at least look into reopening the case of the killing of Manny Asuncion.
2. Review the anti-insurgency campaign of the government to ensure that such a campaign does not undermine FoA.	The anti-insurgency campaign of the government in the face of the NTF-ELCAC and NAP-UPD perpetuates surveillance, threats, and state intimidation of workers at the national and community levels, respectively, undermining FOA. The continued inclusion of NTF-ELCAC in the EO 23 IAC structure as well as in EO 97 reflects how government has sustained its view of anchoring an anti-insurgency campaign on abridging freedoms of the speech, of expression, of the press and of association, and the right to peaceably assemble.
3. Address precariousness of work to strengthen FoA in both the private and public sectors.	Rampant labour contractualization and outsourcing reinforce precariousness of work at all levels and in the private and public sectors. Further, lack of safety nets for overseas workers contribute to this precarity of work.

4. Take positive action on the recurring observations and recommendations from ILO supervisory bodies such as from CAS, CEACR, CFA, (HLM 2009, DCM 2017, 2021 virtual exchange, 2023 HLTM)	The current administration has failed to meaningfully address long-standing observations and recommendations regarding Executive Order No. 180, which governs the right to self-organization of public sector workers. It remains non-compliant with ILO Convention No. 151, particularly in ensuring full respect for workers' rights to organize and engage in collective negotiations. Worse, the Public Sector Labor Management Council (PSLMC) has issued revised implementing rules and regulations that further restrict the exercise of freedom of association among government employees. At the same time, public sector unions continue to be excluded from the PSLMC and are not meaningfully consulted in policymaking processes concerning public sector unionism, further undermining democratic participation and the representation of workers' interests.
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Executive branch

WRW Recommendations	Updates
Abolish the NTF-ELCAC for its atrocities and for duplicating functions of government agencies. Government claims that it is changing its mandate; but no issuance has been released to this effect	Continued presence and funding of NTF-ELCAC, a body borne out of the Anti-Terror Law, perpetuating surveillance, threats, and intimidation of workers, their activities, and the exercise of FOA in general. This, despite the absence of any law mandating its existence and purpose.
Pursue full inclusion of workers' representatives to the EO 23 IAC; enable tripartism to flourish in this presidentially mandated body.	Maintained intergovernmental arrangement of the EO23 IAC and status of workers and employers as mere dialogue partners.

Amend the Omnibus Guidelines on the Exercise of Freedom of Association and Civil Liberties to include penalties and other mechanisms to hold erring state security forces and other government officials accountable; public sector worker and workers in the informal sector in its coverage; among others and elevate the same into an Executive Order.	Elevation of the Omnibus Guidelines on the Exercise of FOA and Civil Liberties to EO97 maintaining status quo in structures and procedures, while not outlining any penalties for erring state security forces as they only refer to existing administrative procedures and their respective organizations. Since the culture of impunity continues to exist, none of these perpetrators would be made to a account.
Appoint genuine representatives of workers' organizations in tripartite and decision-making bodies, including in the PEZA Board and Ecozone Tripartite Bodies. Appoint Public Sector Unions in Tripartite Bodies and ensure gender-balanced representation.	No news on the appointment of a worker representative to the PEZA Board. Many public-run ecozones have appointed worker representatives to tripartite ecozone bodies, who are not endorsed by trade unions. Private-run ecozones are not compelled to establish a tripartite body.
Review capacity building programs for Regional Tripartite Monitoring Bodies (RTMBs) and social partners to enable them to do onsite investigations and deploy quick reaction teams (QRTs) to areas with brewing labour disputes and reported ongoing FOA violations; while revisiting the workers' proposal to establish tripartite validation teams (TVTs) to develop expertise in investigating FOA violations, in lieu of the RTMB, which is just one of the many functions of the Regional Tripartite Industrial Peace Council (RTIPC).	RTIPC has been restructured such that not all of its members sit at the RTMB. While capacity building through DOLE and technical assistance from ILO have been conducted, the RTMB has conducted its business as usual, reviewing filed police reports or the reports of other entities on the scene, without doing their own investigation or deploying QRTs to the scene. This brings to light anew the need for tripartite validation teams (TVT) who will quickly investigate on the ground, as originally proposed by workers. While a number of RTMBs convene meetings to review reported cases of FOA violations, such meetings occur in the presence of representatives of state security forces, the purported perpetrators of such, as they are members of the RTMB. This discourages victims, witnesses and whistleblowers from appearing.

Conduct multi-stakeholders' dialogues with due consideration to the safety and security of worker- victims of FOA violations who are exposed to the perpetrators of said violations.	While a number of RTMBs convene meetings to review reported cases of FOA violations, such meetings occur in the presence of representatives of state security forces, the purported perpetrators of such, as they are members of the RTMB. This discourages victims, witnesses and whistleblowers from appearing.
Proactively work against linking trade unions to terrorist financing.	In 2025, there was one recent case of a development worker being convicted for terrorist financing (i.e., Frenchie Cupio) with on-going appeal. This, while the more serious cases of corruption and money laundering over the flood control projects have not sent corrupt officials to jail.
Study establishing tripartite mechanisms abroad on site where migrant workers are to ensure FOA.	
Prioritize filling up of vacant plantilla positions and adopt Executive Order on institutionalizing current positions held by non-regular government workers.	Instead of regularizing workers and ensuring security of tenure, the current administration has merely imposed a cap on the number of Job Order (JO) and individual Contract of Service (COS) workers, while simultaneously entrenching precarious employment by institutionalizing the use of Institutional Contract of Service arrangements—effectively outsourcing labor through third-party contractors and service providers. This policy not only fails to address contractualization in the public sector; it reconfigures and legitimizes it, allowing agencies to bypass direct employment while continuing to deny workers full rights, benefits, and long-term security.
Adopt Executive Order on Institutionalizing Social Dialogue in the Public Sector.	There is no progress in implementing this recommendation.
Revoke Joint Circulars of DBM-COA on Job Orders and Contract of Service	Persistence of job orders and contracts of service in the public sector reinforces precariousness of civil service.

Legislative branch

WRW Recommendations	Updates
Repeal Anti-Terrorism Law, the law has been abused to target unionists, labour rights defenders, labour organizations	The ATL should be up for review in 2026 given its fifth year of implementation. Trade unions with other CSOs are conducting a review.
Enact a Human Rights Defenders Law	Not included in any list of bills certified as urgent. The Human Rights Defenders Bill has yet to be passed and tabled in both Houses. This demonstrates the low priority on protecting and promoting HRDs.
Enact a Security of Tenure Law that prohibits contractualization in both the public and private sectors, ensuring job security and stability for all workers	This is also low in the priority list of bills in both Houses.
Enact an Anti-Union Interference Law that criminalizes any actions intended to influence or disrupt union affairs	The bill has yet to be refiled in Congress but reached the Committee level. No progress has been made in terms of passing this legislation.
Enact legislation to simplify the trade union registration process and recognition as the sole collective bargaining agent	Request for SEBA certification should be integrated in the proposed legislation, following the court decision disallowing it.
Enact the Whistleblower Protection Act	There is no progress in implementing this recommendation.
Enact the Freedom of Information Bill.	President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has certified the proposed Right to Information (RTI) Act as a priority measure. However, labor and civil society groups remain vigilant, emphasizing that the version ultimately passed must be robust, enforceable, and truly uphold the public's right to access information—rather than dilute it through broad exemptions or weak accountability mechanisms.

Enact the proposed Public Service Labor Relations Act, which is the enabling law for ILO Convention 151.	The proposed measure has inched forward at a sluggish pace in the House of Representatives, while remaining effectively stalled in the Senate of the Philippines, with no significant progress to date.
Enact a Fair Salary Standardization Law to guarantee a living minimum wage for government workers, equalize pay between national and local government employees, and implement a gender- responsive job valuation and salary scheme	The Marcos administration has failed to meaningfully respond to government workers' demands for just and adequate salary increases, while continuing to neglect the longstanding wage disparities between national government employees and their counterparts in local government units.

Judicial recommendations

WRW Recommendations	Updates
Invite the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to a high-level dialogue with workers to discuss releasing a circular for the protection of Workers or of a declaratory relief.	The ATL should be up for review in 2026 given its fifth year of implementation. Trade unions with other CSOs are conducting a review.
Develop a "Writ of Manggagawa", while making effective use of Writ of Habeas Corpus, Writ of Amparo, and Writ of Habeas Data.	<i>Writ of Manggagawa</i> for discussion with DOLE. It was developed and consulted with labour groups and would be ready for lobbying with the Supreme Court, especially with DOLE's support.
Raise procedural problems with the SC that might help in prosecuting those responsible for killing and abducting workers.	

The WRW reiterates the above recommendations from 2024 and the ILO HLTM given the government's slow response on these recommendations. The WRW network demands urgent attention and response to these recommendations to provide safeguards and an enabling environment for workers and HRDs to promote and protect labour and human rights in the Philippines. Further, the following recommendations are forwarded as additional to the above recommendations from the ILO HLTM and 2024 report.

Executive branch

1. Ease registration and certification as SEBA of trade unions
2. Revoke and/or adopt relevant circulars and orders (e.g., DOLE Department Circulars No. 1, s.2017 in relation to Department Order No. 174, s.2017 among others) to recognize the rights of BPO and online platform workers to organize and be regularized.

Legislative branch

1. Enact House Bill 5166 or the Magna Carta for BPO Workers filed on October

2025 and House Bill 6572 or the Protektadong Online Workers, Employees, Riders, at Raktera (POWER) Bill filed on December 2025 to protect BPO and platform workers from further rights violations.

2. Enact easier registration process integrating, among others, the "Request for SEBA Recognition" of newly organized unions in unorganized establishments;
3. Enact House Bill 8608 or the An Act Prohibiting Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, Providing Remedies and Protections for Workers, and Appropriating Funds Thereof, which included violations to the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining and violence and harassment committed by state actors or agents of state against workers, trade unions, workers' organizations or any person in the world of work, including acts such as red-tagging.

Judiciary branch

1. Adoption of Writ of Manggagawa

Reactions and Inputs from Social Partners

“We welcome the report as it is a timely and important contribution to discussions on freedom of association and workers’ rights. We also took note that civil society documentation is vital in surfacing patterns of violations, especially in contexts where incidents are underreported or contested... The issue is not the absence of mechanisms. The structures exist. The issue is their functionality, consistency of action, and accessibility to workers. Reform efforts should focus on strengthening implementation and coordination. Security policies must remain within human rights and rule of law limits; they must not restrict lawful organizing and advocacy.”

Atty. Jasmin Navarro-Regino,
*Director IV, Human Rights Protection Office,
Commission on Human Rights*



“We acknowledge the report, bearing in mind the progress alongside persistent challenges. Important gains have been achieved through a strong labor movement. We see that reflected in workers’ representation in international platforms like the International Labour Conference. We see solidarity calling for accountability, resulting in influences on wage policy and workplace gains... We are worried by the reality that persistent deficits in fundamental rights exist. Labor rights are not just an economic problem. When there is unpaid wage, unfair labor practice, or an unsafe working environment, the fundamental rights of workers are being neglected. These gains are overshadowed by persistent violations and suppression of civil rights.”

Ms. Marie Allyssa Dacasin,
*National Project Coordinator,
Strengthening Freedom of Association and Action Against Child
Labour in the Philippines, International Labour Organization (ILO)
Country Office for the Philippines*



“The right to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association are the cornerstones of any functioning democracy. For workers, these are not just abstract concepts; they are the tools they use to ensure dignity, safety, and fairness in the workplace. When these rights are under threat, the entire human rights framework in a country is weakened... We encourage the government to take the recommendations of this report seriously and to engage in genuine, inclusive dialogue with labor unions and civil society. The international community is watching, and we remain committed to supporting all stakeholders in ensuring that workers in the Philippines can exercise their rights without fear.”

Ms. Signe Poulsen,
Senior Human Rights Advisor,
United Nations Office of the High Commissioner
for Human Rights (UN OHCHR)



**Documented and written by the workers,
for the workers**



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