

November 7, 2006

HE Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President Republic of the Philippines
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Dear Honorable President Macapagal-Arroyo:

As companies buying apparel products from the Philippines, we write to bring your attention to a matter of urgent concern. As you know, there have been recent reports of alleged violent attacks on striking workers and the assaults and killings of labor rights promoters. Our industry is alarmed by such reports and urges your immediate attention to the situation. We are particularly disturbed about allegations that Municipal and Export Processing Zone police may have been involved in some of these alleged attacks and assaults. In addition, we are concerned about the reports that Export Processing Zone authorities have banned some striking workers from entering the Cavite Export Processing Zone. The workers involved strongly believe that the recent actions taken by the Zone Authorities could result in blacklisting in which employers might discriminate against them in the future solely because they exercised their right to freedom of association, which is in accordance with the Philippines laws and internationally recognized human rights standards.

We urge your government to take proactive measures for ensuring the physical safety and for protecting the rights of workers and labor rights promoters. Additionally, we urge you to support, and fully cooperate with, independent and impartial investigations into the killing of Bishop Alberto Ramento, chair of the Board of Directors of the Workers Assistance Center, and the shooting of Gerardo Cristobal, former union president and a member of the Solidarity of Cavite Workers (SCW).

As companies that seek to source in countries and from suppliers that share our commitment to ensuring respect for workers' rights, we believe that local human and labor rights Non-Governmental Organizations ("NGOs") can play an important role by partnering with manufacturers and governmental entities as well as suppliers and companies to help improve labor practices and working conditions in the apparel industry. These NGOs should be able to express their views and carry out their legitimate role freely and without fear of violence.

Additionally, we strongly believe that individuals working in factories that produce our goods must have the right to associate freely, join organizations of their choice and bargain collectively without unlawful interference. Workers should have the opportunity to work and live in an environment free from the threat of physical violence or harm.

It is important that we and other companies doing business in the Philippines remain confident in the government's commitment to freedom of expression, freedom of association and the rule of law.

We appreciate your attention to these concerns and look forward to receiving a response on the actions taken by your government to address these alleged violations, and to ensure the safety and rights of worker and labor rights promoters.

Sincerely,



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