ILO to Send High Level Mission to Philippines to Investigate Extrajudicial Killings of Labor Advocates

After two years of requests, the government of the Philippines has finally agreed to allow a high-level mission of the International Labor Organization (ILO) into the country to investigate extrajudicial killings of labor rights advocates and anti-union campaigns by the military. At the ILO’s annual conference in Geneva this week, the Committee of Experts stated that the investigation would focus on “serious allegations of the murder of trade unionists, death threats, arrests of trade union leaders in connection with their trade union activities, widespread impunity related to violence against trade unionists and the militarization of workplaces in export processing zones and special economic zones.”

The decision was announced as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) released its 2009 Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights that indicated once again that the Philippines is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for union organizing.

For years, the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) has been calling attention to the range of intimidation and harassment workers confront when attempting to exercise their right to organize unions. A high-level ILO investigation into violations of the freedom of association in the Philippines has been a key demand in ILRF’s campaign work. ILRF also has a pending petition under the Generalized System of Preferences in the US regarding worker rights violations in the Philippines.

“We welcome the announcement of the ILO’s investigation into extrajudicial killings in the Philippines. This is an important step forward in ensuring that workers’ freedom of association is protected in the Philippines,” said Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum.

“We look forward to the ILO investigation and expect that the ILO mission will ensure that all trade unions in the Philippines are consulted and included in the investigation. Workers have faced violence and intimidation for too long and it is time for their rights to be respected,” said Brian Campbell, Staff Attorney for the International Labor Rights Forum.

The International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) is an advocacy organization dedicated to achieving just and human treatment for workers worldwide. More information is available online at www.LaborRights.org.