



MIGRANTE MIDDLE EAST

Press Statement
17 December 2008

As the world celebrates International Migrants Day, the Arroyo regime's continued neglect to OFWs and their families reach new height

On December 18, the world will celebrate the International Migrants Day.

It was on December 18, 1990 when the United Nations General Assembly represented by participating governments signed and adopted the **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**.

The signing of this international instrument providing protection to the rights of migrant workers and member of their families by the United Nations General Assembly paved the way to the adoption and ratification of some UN-member states including the Philippines.

The Philippine government is one of the signatories to this international instrument. Its adoption and ratification to this international instrument manifests its readiness to commit its very institutions to provide protection to the rights of migrant workers as well as members of their families.

The Philippines is one of the countries sending huge numbers of migrant workers next to Mexico and India. At present there are an estimated 10-M overseas Filipinos abroad. It is made possible to the credit of the Arroyo regime who promised to send more than 1 million overseas Filipino workers abroad yearly, wherever and whenever there are job opportunities offered by first world countries.

It was on the early 70's when the Philippine government through the Marcos administration started to sending Filipino workers abroad. **Since then, the number of OFWs has increased and that thousands daily are forced to work overseas, it's clear there are more factors at play – apart from poverty or the lure of higher wages that push our people to work abroad.**

The **Labor Export Policy** began in 1974 with the revision of the Labor Code, under then Labor Sec. Blas Ople. **The LEP is a component of the structural adjustment program then imposed on the Philippines by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (IMF-WB).**

Its aim is to offset the rising social unrest of the period, due to rising unemployment rates and an economic and political crisis and at the same time, its purpose is to earn dollar remittances badly needed by the Marcos administration to pay off its increasing foreign debts.

Initially, Marcos administration said it was a temporary stop-gap measure; but in reality, it was far from temporary and over the decades, the creation of institutions geared towards the export of labor entrenched the policy further – so that it frames many aspects of our economic, political and social systems – including the public psyche.

When Mrs. Arroyo announces its target of one million overseas workers deployment per year, many could not even blink an eye! Because, it is contrary to her policy statements wherever she spoke during her State of the Nation's Address (SONA) that she is committed to create jobs locally so that no one will be forced to work abroad. But the fact tells us that the Arroyo regime is in massive OFWs marketing; to take note that almost every Filipino family has a member or relatives now working in abroad.

massive deployment of Filipino workers have been observed under the Arroyo regime following Marcosian policy of labor export to earn billions of dollars remittances at the expense of OFWs rights, welfare, and even at the cost of their lives who are mostly maltreated, abused, harassed and victims of labor malpractice.

Not content with the huge remittances sent by OFWs abroad, **the Arroyo regime never stopped to milking OFWs by imposing new and additional fees and charges.** The double taxation scheme of documentary stamp tax imposed on every OFW remittance, the Balik Mangagawa program which is nothing but only to ensure OFWs re-payment of OWWA and Philhealth membership, are only the few among the many exorbitant fees and charges imposed by the Arroyo regime to struggling OFWs and their families.

And yet, **government concerned agencies under the Arroyo administration have practically stop all benefits – social services and welfare programs for OFWs and their families** when then Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Thomas illegally implemented, devoid of consultations among OFWs, the codified policies of OWWA called OWWA Omnibus policies. Even the most basic state responsibility of repatriation has been delegated to recruitment agencies which the recruiters passed on at the mercy of foreign employers.

Yearly, **we have recorded an ever increasing numbers of OFW victims of their employers' cruelty.** Migrante chapters in the Middle East are now receiving right and welfare cases to an average of 5 cases daily. Thousands still remain in the jails who suffer from cases which many of them did not actually committed. The numbers of distress and stranded OFWs in deportation centers and Filipino Resources Centers are growing.

The Arroyo administration failed to develop the local economy that could generate millions of jobs. These jobs are needed to absorb the new batches of graduate which adds up to the growing population of workers. But many of them ended desperately looking for available jobs with decent wages and benefits just enough to survive their families daily subsistence. The unemployment rate rises to 6.8% in October 2008 due to the weakening of Philippine economy according to the National Statistics Office.

The Arroyo regime being a puppet-government is only too good to obey the wishes of its imperialist master's imposition – economic and indirect political and military intervention.

In line with its imperialist master's neo-globalization policies, **the Arroyo regime is press hard to amend the 1987 Philippine Constitution to remove all its protectionist provisions allowing foreign capitalists to own more than the allowed ownership of land and business in the Philippines even if its means wanton disregard and disrespect to our national patrimony and sovereignty.** And at the same time, Mrs. Arroyo and political cohorts sees an open opportunity in amending the Constitution to remain in power beyond its term limits.

The Filipino people and their mass organizations including the millions of OFWs and their families could not be mislead by the Arroyo regimes political spin-doctors by employing squid tactics and other forms of machinations to divert the real issue of amending the Constitution that will only serve the interest of the present occupant in Malacanang and its cohorts.

The Arroyo regime is the embodiment of lies, deceit, and machinations that is ready to use the oppressive state apparatus like the military and police ever ready to crash all oppositions even at the expense of our people's lives.

The Arroyo regime with the support of its allies in Congress disrespected the real sentiments of the people. It only showed that Arroyo allies in Congress who are supposed to represent the people that elected them in office are now acting without any accountability at all and just simply advancing their own selfish motives and interests along with Mrs. Arroyo.

...and, the only through the concerted efforts of the people by launching massive protest actions in the streets that could put a halt to the vicious grand design of amending the Constitution by the Arroyo regime.

December 18 is a new day for the progressive organizations of Filipino migrant workers and their families to leading big waves of protest actions in various forms in different part of the world to put more pressure to the now more isolated Arroyo regime in the international community.

The progressive organizations of OFWs must unite all patriotic overseas Filipinos, reach their organizations, and form broad alliances opposing the Arroyo-engineered Cha-cha, and denounce its continued persecution in filling trump up charges against political activists, political killings, and disappearances.

Through massive people's resistance, Mrs. Arroyo will be forced to resign. Only then, she and her political cohorts will be made accountable to their crimes against the Filipino people. History has proven the people united will never be defeated!

Signed:

Migrante-Middle East:

Migrante-Saudi Arabia
Migrante-Jeddah chapter
Kapatiran sa Gitnang Silangan (KGS-Migrante) Riyadh chapter
KGS-Migrante Al Jouf Chapter
Migrante-UAE
Migrante-Kuwait
Migrante-Qatar

For reference:

John Leonard Monterona
Migrante Middle East regional coordinator,
Migrante Sectoral Party Vice-Chairperson
Mobile No.: 00966 564 97 8012