

MEDIA RELEASE

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Labor Group Appeals for Global Union Action on ABS-CBN Closure

The labor center, UNI-PLC, called on the international trade union movement to launch solidarity actions to condemn the government's closure of, and denial of franchise to, ABS-CBN. The appeal was addressed to the UNI Global Union which represents more than 20 million skills and services workers in more than 500 labor organizations in over 150 different countries. The UNI Global Union-Philippine Liaison Council (UNI-PLC) unites most of the Philippine affiliates of UNI Global Union. The National Alliance of Broadcast Union (NABU) of which the ABS-CBN union is affiliated, is a member of UNI Global Union and the UNI-PLC.

NABU president and ABS-CBN union president, Jon Villanueva, said that the denial of the ABS-CBN franchise was grossly unjust. "What is particularly galling about the franchise denial is that the Committee on Legislative Franchise completely ignored the testimonies of the relevant government agencies that ABS-CBN did not violate the laws and regulations that the Committee claims ABS-CBN violated", Villanueva said.

In the appeal, UNI-PLC President Exie Nidea called on the global trade union movement to condemn the continuous assault on press freedom, the right to free expression and trade union and human rights. He said that the closure of ABS-CBN should be seen both as an act of political vengeance and as a deliberate act of the Duterte Regime to restrict press freedom and the right to free expression as well as to stifle lawful dissent.

"Within three short weeks, and in the middle of a raging pandemic, the Duterte Regime delivered crippling blows to the Filipino people's right to freedom of expression. On June 15 Rappler CEO Maria Ressa and former Rappler researcher-writer Reynaldo Santos Jr. was convicted of the crime of cyberlibel. Two weeks later, on July 3, Duterte signs the Anti- Terrorism Act into law. A week later, on July 10, the House of Representative voted to deny the application of ABS-CBN for the renewal of its broadcast franchise.", Nidea added.

The appeal for global solidarity action was addressed to Christy Hoffman, UNI Global Union General Secretary and other officials. The appeal called for a sustained global campaign to demand that ABS-CBN be allowed to resume broadcasting. It requested assistance in utilizing the European Union GSP+ compliance mechanism to improve trade union and human rights in the Philippines. Under the EU's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), certain Philippine exports enjoy zero tariffs in the EU. But the Philippine's availment of GSP+ privileges carries with it the obligation to comply with trade union and human rights standards. ###

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