



UNI Apro MEI Statement of ABS CBN Network closure

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The closure of a major radio and television network because of political vendetta in the midst of a national health crisis is doubly deplorable.

On May 5, 2020, just two days after World Press Freedom Day, the Philippine's National Telecommunications Commission issued a cease and desist order that shut down the operations of the Philippine's largest broadcast network, the ABS-CBN after its franchise ended on May 4, 2020. Through this punitive action, the regulatory body deprived 11,000 broadcast workers and artists their livelihood. It also deprived millions of Filipinos a major source of news and entertainment in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis and the lockdown the government ordered as a result of the pandemic.

Since the beginning of his term in 2016, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has repeatedly expressed his animosity towards ABS-CBN and have on several occasions, publicly threatened the network that its franchise will not be renewed. His allies in the Lower House of Congress, which has the Constitutional mandate to grant broadcast franchise, had inexcusably delayed legislative action on ABS-CBN's application for the renewal of its franchise which the network filed two years previously. Thus, the franchise lapsed, and this was used as an excuse to shut down the media network.

The closure of ABS-CBN follows a disturbing trend of the increasing erosion of trade union and human rights as well as the curtailment of press freedom and the right of free expression. Media outfits and media practitioners critical of the Duterte Administration have been harassed. Punitive actions taken against these media outfits which now culminates in the closure of the biggest broadcast network in the country.

UNI Apro MEI condemns the closure of ABS-CBN and the continuing erosion of press freedom in the Philippines. UNI Apro MEI stands in solidarity with its affiliate, the National Alliance of Broadcast Unions (NABU) and the UNI Global Union Philippine Liaison Council (UNI-PLC), in urging the Philippine government to rescind the closure order against the ABS-CBN. It calls upon the Philippine Congress to renew the broadcast franchise of ABS-CBN with safeguards that protect workers' rights particularly the right to security of tenure. UNI Apro MEI calls upon the Philippine government stem the erosion of press freedom and the continuing deterioration of trade union and human rights.