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PRESS RELEASE

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Strong advocacy for justice of the slain bishop and labor activists' causes deportation of US Labor Lawyer

Fr. Jose Dizon, executive director of the Cavite-based Workers Assistance Center (WAC), strongly believed that US labor lawyer Brian Campbell was denied entry in the country because the government wants to get even with him and with his Washington DC-based organization International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) for spearheading a strong justice campaigns in the USA for the slain Bishop Alberto Ramento of the Philippine Independent Church, Nestle union president Diosdado "Ka Fort" Fortuna, and other activists murdered in the Philippines.

"Supposedly that would be the second visit of Mr. Campbell in the Philippines. There's no other reason for his deportation except his strong advocacy for justice and human rights. The government wants to get even with him because they want the truth to be buried with the cadaver of Bishop Ramento forever" said Fr. Dizon.

It would be remembered that the cases of murder of Bishop Ramento, WAC's chair of the board at the time of his death, and that of former Yazaki-EMI union president Gerardo Cristobal who survived in police ambushed in April 2006, and the violent dispersals of the strikes at Chong Won Fashion Inc. and Phils Jeon Garments Inc. by the Cavite Economic Zone authorities were the strong concerns raised in an unprecedented joint- statement recently issued by seven US retail giants to President Arroyo for her government to address and resolve immediately. The government reacted negatively on that joint statement when it landed in the newspapers coincided with the statement of the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce in the Philippines.

ILRF is one of the several organizations in the USA, Canada, and Europe that was instrumental in convincing the seven US retail giants to issue the said joint statement.

According to Fr. Dizon, the sudden deportation of Atty. Campbell has further expose the increasing paranoia of Mrs. Arroyo's governance among her critics abroad.

To be with the protesters at the 12th ASEAN Summit was not part of Atty. Campbell's itinerary because he would leave the country early morning of December 11. He is invited to attend the WAC and Cavite workers's tribute for the slain Bishop Ramento on December 9, 2006 at St. Michael Institute in Bacoor, Cavite. His itinerary includes attending the International Conference on Jobs and Justice in Cebu City and several meetings with the workers of the struck Korean companies Chong Won Fashion Inc. and Phils Jeon Garments Inc. at the Cavite Export Processing Zone (CEPZ); meeting with other human rights and lawyer's groups; and the family of the slain bishop on the 10th of December, International Human Rights Day.

"Campbell is no terrorist nor a law fugitive in his country, but rather a respected labor lawyer in his own field of human rights advocacy. He should have been spared by our government from such kind of harsh treatment," Fr. Dizon lamented.

Campbell's first visit in the Philippines was in April 30 to May 7. 2006 when he was sent by ILRF, upon the invitation of Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR), to join the International Labor Solidarity Mission and Fact Finding Missions to investigate the truth behind the political killings of labor leaders and trade union repressions in the country.

He was barred from entering the country Wednesday evening at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). He was detained and immediately put by immigration officials on the next flight back to Hong Kong without being told "the exact nature of [his] transgression." He called up the WAC office at 10 p.m. upon his arrival at Hong Kong airport and narrated that he was not even allowed by immigration officials in the Philippines to make a phone call and was placed "under guard awaiting expulsion from the Philippines."

"We will be seeing more of Campbell's case in the future, because human rights advocates and political activists are not anymore free today to roam the streets of the so-called Philippine democracy," Fr. Dizon ended.

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