

Economic and Social Policy/International Affairs (ESPIA #5)

1 **Subject:** Support Workers Rights in the Philippines

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5 **WHEREAS** workers in the Philippines face an ever worsening economic situation
6 including low wages, high inflation lack of job security and attacks on their rights to
7 organize,

8 **WHEREAS** these economic conditions lead to the forced migration of Filipinos in
9 search of work abroad including as nurses, teachers, caregivers, domestic workers,
10 construction workers and seafarers where they often face discrimination, low wages and
11 hazardous working conditions,

12 **WHEREAS** labor activists in the Philippines are routinely “red-tagged,” a practice where
13 government entities label activists and critics as terrorists, which often leads to
14 harassment detention, imprisonment or extrajudicial killing,

15 **WHEREAS** red tagging and other forms of state repression has led to the murders of
16 Alex Dolorosa and Jude Fernandez, just 2 of over 72 labor related killings since 2016,

17 **WHEREAS** the International Labor Organization (ILO) has condemned the deadly
18 practice of red-tagging which continues under the government of Ferdinand Marcos Jr,

19 **WHEREAS** the Marcos JR regime continues to open up the country to plunder and
20 exploitation at the hands of foreign corporations including Oregon based NuScale Power
21 by promoting neoliberal reforms that deregulate and privatize the economy, including
22 changing the constitution to allow 100% foreign ownership of the energy, advertising,
23 and education sectors,

24 **WHEREAS** the US provides security assistance to the Philippines in the form of military
25 aid, intelligence, and training, including over \$1.14 billion in military aid since 2015 and
26 conducts regular joint military exercises with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)
27 which is responsible for war crimes including ongoing indiscriminate aerial bombings in
28 the countryside and the harassment, ref-tagging, forced disappearance, detention, torture
29 and extrajudicial killing of activists including labor organizers,

30 **WHEREAS** this US-backed state repression has a chilling effect on the ability of
31 workers to organize and fight for their basic rights,

32 **WHEREAS**, the Philippine Human Right Act (PHRA) would halt US military aid to the
33 Philippines until the human rights situation improves,

34 **WHEREAS**, the AFL-CIO awarded the Philippine labor movement with its 2023 George
35 Mean-Lane Kirkland Human Rights award for it’s “dedication and courage” in the face
36 of “aggressive surveillance, mistreatment, torture, imprisonment and even killings of
37 workers,”

38 **WHEREAS**, workers’ right at the international level are laid out in number of human
39 rights conventions and treaties including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
40 (1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966),

41 **WHEREAS** the SEIU 503 vision statement reads “we envision a just and vibrant society
42 where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, where all workers can provide for
43 themselves and their families,”

44 **WHEREAS** SEIU 503 members have thus far demonstrated their support for workers’
45 struggles in the Philippines through:

- 46 A. mobilizing to Seattle and San Francisco to protest the Asia Pacific Economic
47 Cooperation (APEC) and the negative effects of neoliberal reforms on workers
48 both in the US in countries like the Philippines,
- 49 B. attending the speaking tour of Kilusang Mayo Uno labor leader Elmer Labog,
- 50 C. hosting a film screening of “One Generation’s Time” to learn more about the
51 history of Filipino labor organizing in the Pacific Northwest,
- 52 D. signing a letter in support of Justice for Jude in the wake of the murder of
53 Kilusang Mato Uno labor organizer Jude Fernandez by the Philippine National
54 Police, and
- 55 E. rallying outside Senator Jeff Merkley’s office in support of the PHRA.

56
57 **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, SEIU 503** commits to building solidarity for the
58 fight for workers’ right in the Philippines through:

- 59 A. continuing to provide education about the conditions facing workers in the
60 Philippines and the role of the US in supporting the brutal anti-worker policies of
61 Ferdinand Marcos Jr
- 62 B. demanding an end to all US military aid to the Philippines and supporting the
63 passage of the PHRA
- 64 C. supporting the demands and campaigns of Filipino workers, including in Oregon,
65 many of who work dangerous, underpaid jobs as nurses, caregivers and seafarers
- 66 D. committing at least \$10,000 to send SEIU members on labor solidarity missions
67 to the Philippines and support in future US tours of labor leaders from the
68 Philippines
- 69 E. partner with International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP)
70 in continuing to build solidarity for the fight for workers rights in the Philippines
- 71 F. opposing all unequal military and economic agreements between the US and the
72 Philippines

IMPACT STATEMENTS

Financial: The cost of this would be \$10,000 as outlined in the resolution to send members on a solidarity mission.

Equity: This resolution could have a positive equity impact by strengthening our union's commitment to civil and human rights both locally and internationally through the promotion of international worker solidarity.

Legal: If the Union pays for or in any way sponsors travel by Union members to potentially dangerous areas where labor organizing activities are violently repressed, the Union should provide ample warning to any volunteers and require the signing of a liability waiver.

Political: The resolution directs the union to support the passage of the Philippine Human Rights Act (PHRA), which is a federal bill and to oppose military and economic agreements between the U.S. and the Philippines. SEIU Local 503, OPEU does not take positions on federal issues alone so this would require coordination with the International Union, which does the majority of our federal lobbying and advocacy work and does not currently have a known position on the conflict in the Philippines.