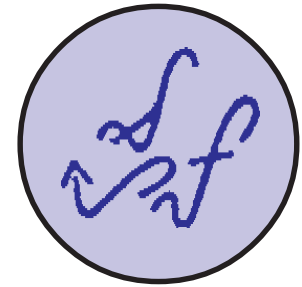


News Digest

April - May
2010



APMM

Monthly Newsletter of the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM)

Migrant workers organize and join Labor Day activities in HK, Macau and Australia



Thousands of Hong Kong migrants under the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (AMCB-IMA) marched in solidarity with HK workers to call for the promotion of worker's rights and the recognition of domestic work as work.

International Labor Day celebrations in Hong Kong, Macau and Australia were vibrant as migrant workers of different nationalities organized and joined local workers to project their issues. The event was also an opportunity to reach out to local workers who are likewise oppressed and exploited by advocates of neo-liberal globalization.

The workers recounted the early days of the labor movement where they struggled for an 8 hour working day until the current struggle against neo-liberal globalization which has trampled on the rights of the working people.

In Hong Kong, the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (AMCB) joined local workers to resist violations of their labor rights. They said that during the current financial crisis

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Legislator Ng Kuok Chong expressed solidarity to migrant workers especially on the recent anti-migrant policies in Macau

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the Hong Kong government, like other advanced countries, chose to bailout businesses instead of the working people who are left to fend for themselves.

Mainly domestic workers, the foreign workers called for their inclusion in the Statutory Minimum Wage (SMW). Excluding the domestic workers from the SMW only shows that the HK government is one of the authorities that do not recognize domestic work as work, even if the International Labor Organization (ILO) comes out with a Convention next year, according to them.

The HK government is notorious for violating other international standards, one of which is the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on the Two-Week Rule. It has even refused to review the findings of the committee that oversees the implementation of the said convention.

For the first time, migrant workers and their advocates organized a May Day celebration in Macau on May 2. With the theme "Promote the Dignity and Solidarity of all Workers in Macau", they called for solidarity with local workers in their struggle for an SMW and the right to unionize. They also called on the Macau government not to promote divisions of the working people by pitting local workers against non-resident workers.

This is best exemplified by the passage of a new law for non-resident workers

whose main provision is the prohibition for a worker to transfer to another employer who offers better pay and working conditions. If a non-resident worker terminates his/her contract for such reasons, he/she will be banned from working in the territory for a period of six months.

May Day was nevertheless an occasion for the workers and advocates to celebrate their victories as they gained some concessions on some provisions of the new law as a result of their collective struggles.

Meanwhile in Australia, Filipino immigrants, migrant workers and local advocates used the occasion to analyze the root causes why they are working down under because most Filipinos are denied the basic right to decent work.

Many Filipinos are now working in Australia on a temporary basis such as in construction and mining, health care, accommodation and food services and IT sectors through the so-called 457 visa. They rank third in number next to Indians and UK nationals with this kind of document.

Those who celebrated the May Day activity in Australia also condemned its new policy on refugee and asylum seekers. Many of these people are kept in legal limbo for months as they are locked up in detention centers in the middle of nowhere. ☹

FOR THE 4TH GLOBAL FORUM ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Third IAMR preps commence in Mexico City

Preparations for the 3rd International Assembly of Migrants and Refugees (IAMR3) began with the meeting of the initial members of the convenors and the local hosting committee last 19th March 2010 in Mexico City

The convenors' meeting was attended by local migrants and refugee organizations, church institutions, human rights groups and members of the academe led by MIREDES International, together with representatives of the International Migrants Alliance (IMA) from North America and Asia.

Organized as a counter event to the 4th Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), the IAMR3 will be held in Mexico on 7th to 8th November this year while the GFMD is scheduled on the 10th and 11th immediately after the Civil Society Days from 8th to 9th.

Other events related to the IAMR3 include a "Caravana del Pueblo Contra el GFMD" (Peoples Caravan Against GFMD) and the International Tribunal of Conscience. The first part of the International Tribunal will be held in Quito, Ecuador and will be concluded in Mexico City just before the start of the IAMR3.

The details of the IAMR3 program as well as the International Tribunal of conscience and the Peoples Caravan against GFMD will be posted at APMM and IMA website later.

The convenors also discussed and accepted in principle the concept paper and the meeting was concluded with affirmation of support to the IAMR3. Succeeding meetings of the convenors were scheduled in early May this year in time for the World Social Forum in Mexico. ☹

APWLD holds women's consultation on ASEAN

The Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants attended the Women's Consultation on Advancing Women's Rights Advocacy sponsored by the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development in Jakarta, Indonesia last April 24-26, 2010.

Attended by more than 50 participants from various members and friends organizations of APWLD, the consultation discussed about the structures, processes and tenets of the ASEAN (or Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and how they can maximize this in advancing women's rights advocacies.

Throughout the consultation, we have learned how civil society groups have maximized processes in the ASEAN to push the agenda for various sectors. In particular, through various efforts from those inside the governments and from people's organizations and NGOs, the ASEAN Charter on Human Rights was realized. Added to this is the creation of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and the ASEAN Committee on the Implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers.

Women's groups in succeeding portions of the program shared their experiences



APWLD members united in continuing the education and lobbying work in eth ASEAN including co-organizing the planned caravan with APMM and other groups.

in engaging with the ASEAN and their respective governments as well as providing recommendations in how they can better relate and work with the ASEAN both at the regional and national levels.

Resource people from Canada, Africa and the Pacific were also invited to share their experiences in engaging with their respective regional governmental platforms in terms of pushing for their respective agenda such as human rights and women's concerns.

Rey Asis represented the APMM in the consultation meeting and shared about the planned People's Caravan on the ASEAN slated next year. The idea of the People's Caravan is to bring the ASEAN closer to people's organizations and various sectors and how they can maximize it to push their respective agenda. ☺

KASAMMAKO launches petition vs renewed crackdown in Korea

The Unity of Filipino Migrant Workers in Korea or KASAMMAKO has launched a petition campaign against another crackdown on undocumented migrant workers in South Korea.

According to the group, there are renewed moves by Korean authorities to criminalize said workers caught in the crackdown as a pre-emptive response to the G-20 Summit which will be held in Korea this coming November.

The intensity of the present crackdown is worse, according to the KASAMMAKO, as 32 Filipino workers were nabbed in one week in May right after its announcement. The police have already identified areas for the ongoing crackdown and its duration, specifically where there are big concentrations of Chinese; Mongolian; Vietnamese; Russian and Uzbek nationals.

The police announced that their main targets are foreigners who are suspects in a crime; foreigners who are in possession of deadly weapons (e.g. knives, etc.); foreigners who have pending arrest warrants; sex workers and their costumers and the undocumented migrant workers. The raids would be done also at any time. The crackdown would last for five months.

KASAMMAKO and the Migrants Trade Union are demanding for the legalization of all undocumented migrant workers. They also criticized the Employment Permit System (EPS) which replaced the trainee system for the increase in number of undocumented migrant workers as it does not respect their rights and only limits the number of years migrant workers can legally work in Korea.

Both groups are calling upon all migrant and human rights advocates to sign the petition against the crackdown.

APMM conducted a petition signing in HK that gathered hundreds of signatures from migrant workers. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENT

Asia Pacific Conference of Migrants Service Providers on Undocumented Migrants and the Current Global Economic Crisis

Academy House 76, Suyu 6-dong, Gangbuk-gu, Seoul, South Korea
July 16-17, 2010

The conference is co-organized by the APMM, Migrants' Trade Union, Friends of Asia, Osan Migrants Center and the Migrants Human Rights Network. For details, please contact the APMM at apmm@hknet.com

Low turnout characterizes OAV of Filipino migrants



Progressive women's group GABRIELA got the nod of OFWs to represent them in the Philippine Congress. In HK, the group cornered about 30% of the total party-list votes.

Yet again, only a small fraction of overseas Filipino workers went out to participate in the overseas absentee voting for the Philippines' national elections. Only 153,300 OFWs cast their votes from about half a million registered absentee voters.

Highest turnout was recorded in HK with 39,383 out of 95,355 voters. Hong Kong was one of the two countries – Singapore being the other – where automated election was conducted.

Filipino migrant organizations blamed the Philippine government for the dismal turnout saying that efforts to educate and encourage OFWs to vote were minimal at best in some areas and were totally absent in others.

According to the United Filipinos in Hong Kong, the perennial problem of information dissemination and establishing support mechanisms for OFWs to vote prevented many Filipinos from participating in the elections. Dolores Balladares, chairperson of the

group, said that even the current list of registered OAV voters is suspect given the problems they encountered during the OAV wherein many people were not able to vote because they were delisted for no known reason.

Balladares added that information and education campaign should have started during the registration period. At

the onset of the registration campaign in Hong Kong, Balladares reported that it only averaged about 200 per week.

"It took the efforts of OFWs to increase the registration rate to about 2,000 per week," she relayed.

Aside from the said problems, there still was the wide sentiment of many OFWs that the elections would not bring the change they needed. Such sentiment, said Balladares, was due to their "traumatic" experiences of the past regimes especially the Arroyo government.

"Electoral fraud, broken promises and problematic policies characterized the nine years of the Arroyo

government. It is no wonder that many OFWs have already been disillusioned of the electoral system," she remarked.

Currently, OFW groups around the world led by Migrante International are preparing to draft the OFW agenda that will be forwarded to the government of President-elect Noynoy Aquino.

"It is incumbent for the incoming government to take heed of the demands of OFWs. We want and deserve meaningful changes in the Philippine system," Balladares concluded. ☺

GAMMI-HK gabung aksi kecam Israel

Pada hari senin, 6 Juni 2010 lebih dari seribu orang ikut dalam aksi mengecam kebrutalan Israel. Aksi yang diselenggarakan oleh Youth Muslim Association Hong Kong, diikuti oleh berbagai sector dan etnik di Hong Kong. Aksi ini mengecam Israel yang telah menyerang kapal kemanusiaan Mavi Marmara pada hari Senin, 31 Mei 2010.

Relawan yang rencananya akan mengunjungi Jalur Gaza, dalam rangka mengirimkan bantuan kemanusiaan ini diserang di perairan Internasional oleh tentara Israel. Kebrutalan ini telah mendapat kecaman dari seluruh penjuru dunia termasuk di Hong Kong.

Gabungan Migran Muslim Indonesia di Hong Kong (GAMMI-HK), sebagai organisasi muslim progressif juga ikut berpartisipasi dalam aksi ini. Menurut Romlah Rosidah, kali ini mereka hanya mengirimkan 40 orang perwakilan dari GAMMI, dikarenakan aksi ini diadakan sangat mendadak. Ini aksi solidaritas dari kami, kami mengecam tindakan Israel yang tidak lain dalang dibalik semua ini adalah Imperialism Amerika. ☺



APMM NEWS DIGEST

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