

News Digest

June - July
2006



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

Filipino migrant workers in Lebanon: Victims of war, casualties of government neglect

ON JULY 12, WAR erupted between Israel and Lebanon. Within weeks, hundreds died, thousands were rendered homeless, lives and livelihood were destroyed. Majority of the victims were civilians - most of which were Lebanese.

However, it was not only the local civilian population that was gravely affected by the devastation in Lebanon. Also affected were the thousands of migrant workers whose lives were put in danger by the wanton bombings.

What was even more tragic, the ones who they expected to act swiftly to their situation were no where to be seen.

Such was the case of the 30,000 Filipino migrant workers.

Days after the first bombs were dropped, the Philippine government had nothing to offer to their nationals but promises of protection.

The government, as expected, again made the excuse of lack of funds. Without even first instituting its own assistance mechanisms, it immediately resorted to outside support, such as that of the Vatican to assist OFWs in Lebanon. The government's so-called "innovative" ways to secure the lives of its citizens in Lebanon included seeking refuge in Catholic churches, as if those infrastructures were immune from bombings.



APMM joined protest to protect of migrant workers in Lebanon

Even more 'innovative' was Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's initial call for the warring sides to spare Filipino migrants. As if the Israeli bombs were capable of choosing their casualties.

Other governments, even before the war broke, have

had clear evacuation plans for their citizens. The Philippines, which has the second-highest population of citizens in Lebanon (Canada has the highest at 40,000 citizens), did not even have foresight for possible evacuation as the war was looming.

Estrelita Hizon, who is president of a recruiters' group and who sits comfortably on the board of trustees of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), even declared, irresponsibly, that what was happening in Lebanon was not that bad and scary, even if the emergency alert level was already at No. 3.

The escalation of the war and the sustained pressure of Filipinos around



OFWs lamented the fact that there's money for war but not for services and protection

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the world for the government to act finally forced the Gloria administration to get off its slumber.

Still, the government's response is not only too late but also too little.

Up to date, the funds that should be allotted for the repatriation of migrant workers as well as protection and services for those who were in refugee centers and those that were still left stranded in Lebanon remained only in government press releases. The money in the Overseas Workers Welfare administration (OWWA), taken entirely from Filipinos working abroad, was nowhere to be seen.

What the Philippine government is busy doing right now is covering up the anomalies that have infested the OWWA Fund for years and that have intensified during the period of the current government.

The pathetic response of the Philippine government was proven by the fact that of the a little more than 4,000 Filipinos repatriated back to the Philippines, the government shouldered the cost of only a quarter of them.

OFWs provide billions of dollars in remittances to the Philippines (\$11.5 billion last year, according to an Inquirer report on July 17, 2006) — and there is not a single cent allocated for overseas Filipinos in a crisis? Where is the emergency repatriation fund of P100 million that should have been allotted for such cases as directed by the Magna Carta for OFWs?

Remittances from OFWs keep the Philippine economy afloat and the least that this inutile government can do is to ensure that its "milking cows" are out of danger so the inflows of remittances won't be disrupted. According to Presidential Spokesman Mike Defensor and Justice Secretary

Raul Gonzalez, it would cost \$300-\$400 to ferry each person out by ship, or \$12 million for all the 30,000 Filipinos in Lebanon. What is \$12 million compared with the billions of dollars that we OFWs bring into the country? What is \$12 million if that is the cost of our lives?

With the help of their responsible governments, most foreign nationals have fled Lebanon already, in one of the biggest mass evacuations since World War II.

The war in Lebanon has shown to the Filipino people and to the migrant workers what the Philippine government is willing to protect - remittances of OFWs and the money that it can perennially collect from migrant workers. Services and protection are words absent in its vocabulary.

This the migrant workers should never - will never - accept.#

Filipinos in Asia Pacific countries bare 'state of the nation'

ALL AROUND THE region, Filipino migrant workers presented the true state of the people during the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Armed with the Migrant's Agenda that were drawn up during the First Women Migrant Workers Summit 2006, Filipinos in Hong Kong staged a program on July 23 at the Chater Garden attended by around 1,000 Filipino migrants.

Speakers concentrated on major issues affecting migrants as a result of policies from both the HK and Philippines governments. The cultural presentations also centered on the relevant topics such as government services and protection, recruitment agencies, human rights violations, OWWA corruption and plunder.

They also called for the ouster of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo who they deemed is primarily responsible for the neglect of OFWs

and in the worsening political, economic and social conditions in the Philippines.

A similar protest action was conducted by the Migrante Sectoral Party in Taiwan on July 23. Protesters bared the deterioration of government services and exploitation of caretakers and domestic workers in households and even in nursing homes and hospitals. Another major concern involves employment contracts of all job categories that are rendered useless when the OFW's are made to sign side agreements.

Denouncing the unabated political killings in the Philippines, they affirmed that the struggle of the migrant workers in Taiwan should be linked to the overall struggle of the Filipino people for a better homeland.

In Dubai, 45 members of Migrante-UAE and supporters called for Philippine President Gloria Arroyo to release



Filipinos in HK call for services, protection and ouster of GMA

political detainees and conduct an investigation into the abduction and disappearance of activists. Cyrine Pinpin, chairperson of the group and sister of one of those abducted, described the torture that the victims suffered from the Philippine military personnel.

Meanwhile, Filipinos in Korea conducted various forms of protests on different issues such as the Arroyo government's corruption and plunder of OFWs' funds, crackdown of undocumented workers, political killings, free trade agreements, and the ongoing war of Israel against Lebanon.#

Filipino Women Migrant Workers Summit 2006 marks a broader and stronger migrants' movement in HK



The Filipino Women Migrant Worker's Summit was the most representative gathering of Filipino migrants in HK

NINETY-NINE ORGANIZATIONS RANGING from ethno-linguistic, provincial, interest groups in line with skills and previous professions (nurses, midwives, teachers) and unions, participated in the first ever migrants' summit that was held at the University of Hong Kong on July 2 this year.

Jointly organized by the biggest alliances and union, namely, Abra Tinguian Ilocano Society (ATIS), Cordillera Alliance (CORALL-HK), Filipino Migrant Workers Union (FMWU), United Pangasinan Hong Kong (UPHK), and the United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-HK), the event gathered more than 400 delegates who assessed the impacts of the policies of the Hong Kong and Philippine government to migrants and their families and more importantly came up with plans of action on policy advocacy, campaign and education to address these concerns.

Specifically, five workshop groups tackled urgent issues on: 1) National Issues and Their Impacts to Migrants and our Families; 2) Recruitment Agencies and State Exaction; 3) Government Services and Protection; 4) Labour and Immigration Policies, and Services to Migrant Workers of the HK Government, and; 5) Money

economy and how such result to increased migration of Filipinos. She also tackled the relationship between the unconditional support of the Philippine government to the US-led "war on terror" and Filipino migration that include labor-conscription and the export of Filipino workers to war zones that make them vulnerable to life-threatening situations.

Ng Koon Kwan of the HK Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) gave a testimony on his experiences as a participant of the International Labor Solidarity Mission which investigated the Philippines human rights situation in May this year.

Elizabeth Tang, chairperson of the HK People's Alliance on Globalization and Chief Executive Officer of the HKCTU, spoke on Hong Kong policies and challenged the migrants to carry on their strength, courage, creativity and militancy to advance their rights and welfare.

The demands and plans of action drafted

Lending, Police Matters and Police Procedures. Three guest speakers provided input to the migrants to deepen their understanding on these issues.

Connie Bragas-Regalado, chairperson of MIGRANTE International, focused on the impacts of globalization policies in the Philippine

by each workshop group were unanimously and overwhelmingly approved by all the delegates in the plenary. Two other resolutions -to take part on the protest action on the occasion of the State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Arroyo as well as to support the Free Ka Bel Movement and conduct actions, including a letter-writing campaign to lobby for his release, were also carried.

On July 23rd, the summit participants submitted their petitions to the Central Government Offices and the Philippine Consulate General. Among their demands for the Hong Kong government were: the abolition of the levy, two-week rule and live-in arrangement as well as migrant workers' wage increase and provide social services to distressed and dismissed FDWs, i.e. to provide temporary shelters (by setting up government shelter or by providing government subsidy to existing shelters operated by non-governmental organizations) and free health care while in Hong Kong.

Topping the demands for the Philippine government were: the scrapping of the OWWA Omnibus Policy and the creation of a pro-migrant charter; the prosecution of government officials involved in the OWWA fund corruption and anomalies; a call to stop excessive state exactions from overseas workers; and address the national issues that impact on the migrants' families.#



Local union urged summit participants to continue to resist anti-worker policies and forge solidarity

Proposed SSS compulsory coverage shows an intensification of state exaction

THE LATEST PROPOSAL that Social Security System (SSS) registration and contribution payment shall be part of the requirements for OFW documentation and deployment is another manifestation of the Arroyo government's commodification and exploitation of migrant workers.

The new income-generating scheme was revealed by SSS Executive Vice President Horacio T. Templo during the Leaders Forum organized by the Philippine Consulate General - HK at the Bayanihan Centre in Kennedy Town on July 23.

Clearly, officials of the SSS want to join the bandwagon of the POEA and the OWWA whose main objective is to exploit the Labor Export Industry to milk the OFWs dry. Last year alone, the government raked in US\$12 billion from OFWs' remittances, not to mention the P7.6 billion OWWA trust fund, and the government fees charged before leaving the country at an estimated P17,925 per applicant (considering that around 3,000 Filipinos leave the country everyday, government fees bring in billions more).

It is quite appalling that despite all these mandatory contributions from the Filipino migrants, the Arroyo government apparently neglects them. The recent fiasco involving OFWs abandoned by their employers during

the unjust war of Israel against Lebanon depicted government neglect when no fund was sent from OWWA until the Philippine Ambassador cried for assistance.

The controversy brought to light anew the Arroyo administration's corruption and plunder of the OFWs OWWA funds. Obviously, OWWA officials had something to hide when they did not show up for the Senate inquiry into this matter. To make matters worse, Malacanang employed dirty tricks to prevent concerned officials from testifying.

Migrante International has denounced the Arroyo administration for its gross misuse and plunder of the P8 billion OFW trust fund at the OWWA for her candidacy in the 2004 elections. These include anomalous transfers of funds such as the P530 million Medicare Fund for OFWs transferred to PhilHealth and the P23.587 million (then \$87,757) in OWWA funds diverted to the International Labor Affairs Service of the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE-ILAS).



On the first day of the campaign, more than 7,000 signed the petition



UNIFIL called for all OFWs to resist SSS mandatory collection

In addition Migrante also called for investigations of other anomalous transactions such as the alleged P30 million transfer by the Manila Economic Cultural Office (MECO) to the Office of the President in

August 2003 and the US\$293,500 released to Ambassador Roy Cimatu supposedly for massive evacuation operations in the Middle East during the U.S.-Iraq war in April 2003 that did not happen.

On top of this, the Omnibus Policies implemented by virtue of the OWWA Board Resolution 038 on September 19, 2003 opened the floodgates for mismanagement, misallocation and corruption of OWWA funds by government officials who are appointees of President Arroyo. The Omnibus Policies also deprived OFWs of necessary benefits services.

Filipino migrants in Hong Kong have launched a massive signature campaign to oppose and expose the continued government extortion from OFWs through the proposed SSS mandatory coverage. They want that the Arroyo government be held accountable for the slow services to OFWs and that the corrupt OWWA officials be prosecuted and punished.

They also urged legislators in Congress to stand firm in their investigation of the OWWA fund mess and legislate for the protection and services of Filipinos world wide. Finally, they also called for other OFWs in other countries to resist the new drive to collect more money from OFWs as well as to make the government responsible and accountable for the missing funds for OFW welfare.#

State exaction hounds Indonesian migrant workers

THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT, through the Director General of Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers Overseas issued its Issuing Letter No 625/2006, effective March 27, 2006, that ordered Indonesian migrant workers who are on home leave to get a Letter of Recommendation from the Service Office of Placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers before migrating through sea, air embarkation or border doors and to be entitled to free overseas fiscal tax.

The policy, which was not publicly announced, caught many Indonesian migrants by surprise.

They only learned of this policy when they were already at Jakarta Airport. At the airport, the airport staff asked them whether they have applied for the Letter of Recommendation from Service Office. If not, they were forced to pay HK\$400 for "Insurance Policy" for migrant worker and an additional US\$15 (HK\$150) for "Protection Fund".

Worse, there were even cases wherein the migrant workers were charged with different amount ranging from HK\$50 to HK\$1,000. There were few cases where the worker was allowed to leave even if they refused to pay. In other cases, migrant workers were not allowed to leave because they could not

produce the Letter of Recommendation that they only heard that time.

Due to wave of complaints from migrant workers, the Labour Department was forced to revoke the policy on August 1. However there were still many migrants who complained that the policy was still being implemented in Jakarta and also in some airports in Indonesia.

The Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in HK (ATKI-HK) said that they will continue to campaign against the policy especially now that it has been revoked but is still being implemented. They also said that they shall be watchful of any move by the government to again spring up unjust policies that will exploit the Indonesian migrant workers.

Migrant workers and advocates protest vs Economic Conference

A NUMBER OF migrant workers and almost all the major migrant NGO's in Taiwan joined local workers in a protest action against the National Conference on Sustainable Economic Development on July 27, 2006. They branded the conference as anti-worker and anti-migrant as most of the proposals discussed in the said activity were pro-capitalists and pro-employers.

These include:

1. Legalizing outsourcing or subcontracting
2. Abolishing the minimum monthly wage of migrant workers
3. Importing migrant workers in the manufacturing sector to do night shift

The July 27 activity was like the Economic Development Advisory Conference (EDAC) held in August 2001. During that time the government introduced flexible working hours on all manufacturing workers that reduced the laborers take home pay and benefits. In addition to this, migrant workers in manufacturing and construction jobs had wage cuts from NT\$2,500 to NT\$4,000 a month

in the guise of payment for their own board and lodging. And the Council of Labor Affairs (CLA) legalized the collection of brokers' fees in the guise of monthly service fees on migrant workers of all job categories.

So it is not surprising what the attitude of the local and migrant workers and their advocates is during this year's conference. However, it seems that the Taiwan government has decided to relegate the three proposals above for the cabinet to decide. This only means that the CLA will be the one to decide on this matter.

At the same time, Premier Su Tseng-chang only stated that the conference had offered a direction for industrial upgrading, improving the environment for industrial development, strengthening of financial systems, resolving labor shortages and helping small businesses. He never said anything about improving the life of the working people in Taiwan including that of the migrant workers.

And it seems that the CLA has acceded to some of the local workers demands that participated in the conference not to increase the quota for foreign

workers. At the end of June of this year there are already 336,900 migrant workers in Taiwan or 36,000 more than the number last year.

Instead what the CLA would want is to reduce the number of foreign caregivers that has increased to 23,400 since a new system to make it easier for families to employ them was implemented this January. If this becomes successful the CLA would want to use the surplus quota to import foreign workers in the manufacturing sector, especially those deemed as dirty, dangerous and difficult.

The CLA wants to import more foreign workers for such kind of jobs that are shunned by local workers. At the same time, it would be easy to make the migrant workers toil in the night shift as many of them are already doing this anyway. Under the Labor Standards Law, what is required of employers is to pay only for the additional food or its equivalent as night differential.

It is thus important to continue organize the workers especially in the manufacturing sector so that their jobs, rights and wages will be protected.

HK FDWs renew call to abolish NCS, submit report to CEDAW with grassroots women

A delegation of women's organizations in Hong Kong attended the meeting of the UN CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women) Committee in New York last August 7. The delegation included representatives of migrant workers.

According to Cynthia Tellez, director of the Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW) and one of the delegates, they aimed to present to the CEDAW Committee the real situation of migrant workers in Hong Kong.

She said that many of the policies instituted by the Hong Kong government are discriminatory to migrant domestic workers (MDWs) and since 90% of the MDWs in Hong Kong are women, whatever are the concerns of MDWs are also the concerns of women.

Among the calls, included in the shadow report prepared by migrant advocates and migrant workers under the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (AMCB), were:

1. Abolish the Discriminatory Immigration "Two Week Rule"

The HKSAR government should abolish the discriminatory Immigration "two week rule" that stipulates all MDWs must depart Hong Kong two weeks

after termination or completion of contract whichever is earlier. The Immigration's "two week rule" penalizes MDWs for premature termination of contract, regardless of which party initiates the termination. For MDWs who encounter abuse or exploitation, the "two week rule" becomes a further punitive measure that discourages seeking assistance due to fear of termination and loss of the right to work (eg. cessation of their work visa). The HKSAR should abolish the two-week rule and abide by international human rights norms. In particular, the ILO recommends that "the loss ...[of] employment should not in itself imply the withdrawal of [a migrant worker's] authorization of residence" and that migrant workers should be "allowed sufficient time to find alternative employment ... [and] the authorization of residence should be extended accordingly."

2. Revoke the Discriminatory Levy and MDW Wage Cut

Although the employer officially pays the levy, it is widely viewed as an indirect tax on the workers because the government simultaneously lowered the minimum wage of MDWs by \$400 per month (the exact amount of the levy pro-rata over a two-year contract) and many employers subsequently reduced the salary. The discriminatory levy is an illegal form of indirect taxation. We call for an immediate increase in the government stipulated Minimum Allowable Wage for MDWs considering the HKSARG's international obligations regarding equal pay for work of equal value.



FDWs continue fight against levy, branded as discriminatory

3. Abolish the Live-In Requirement and Enact Maximum Hours Legislation

The Immigration Department's live-in requirement for MDWs and the lack of legislation setting maximum work hours directly contribute to situations of MDW forced labour or 'modern day slavery' in Hong Kong. Often MDWs work on-call 24 hours a day and some work regularly upwards from 18 to 24 hours a day with no break or weekly rest day.

4. Enact Effective Legislation Against Racial Discrimination

Since 1969 the Hong Kong administration has fallen afoul of its international obligations to legislate against racial discrimination. In the 2004 consultation paper, there are numerous proposed exclusions and exemptions that render it ineffective to protect MDWs who comprise the largest community of ethnic minority women in Hong Kong.

5. Extend Equal Access to Right of Abode for MDWs

At present the exclusion of MDWs from equal access to right of abode in the Basic Law is discriminatory. The HKSARG should extend equal access to the right of abode for MDWs, who are comprised of mainly women from South East Asia. Like other residents in Hong Kong, MDWs should be able to confirm their right of abode upon completion of a stay of seven years and evidence of adopting Hong Kong as their home.#



AMCB and advocates highlighted the situation of Indonesian helpers as showcase of discrimination

Multisectoral groups in HK launch fact finding mission on human rights violations in the Philippines



Members of the HK Mission report on their findings

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION in the Philippines is fast becoming an international concern.

Wave upon wave of groups around the world have flocked to the Philippines to investigate the mounting human rights abuses in the country. To date, KARAPATAN (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights) has recorded more than 700 cases of extrajudicial killings and almost 200 cases of forced disappearance that have victimized farmers, workers, students, lawyers, health workers and churchpeople.

The most recent expression of international solidarity for the Filipino people was the Hong Kong Mission for Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines, or HK Mission, that was held last July 23 - 28.

The activity was initiated by the HK Campaign for the Advancement of Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines (HKCARHPP), a network of human rights advocates and grassroots organizations in HK, in order to contribute to international efforts to advocate against extrajudicial killings in the Philippines, raise the awareness of the people of HK on the situation of the Filipino people, and strengthen the solidarity between HK and Philippine groups.

Members of the HK Mission included the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), Justice and Peace Commission of the HK Catholic Diocese, HK Christian Institute (HKCI), HK Journalists Association (HKJA), HK Bar Association, St. John's Cathedral,

Asian Students Association (ASA), United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-HK), and the Chinese Asiaweek.

For six days, the HK Mission collected facts and information on human rights abuses and on particular cases of human rights violations. They focused their attention to the Central Luzon region

where many cases of human rights violations have been recorded especially since Gen. Jovito Palparan, known "butcher" of activists in the island of Mindoro, took over the regional command.

The participants interviewed victims and their relatives at Domus Dei - a refugee camp in the province of Bulacan. Many were moved by stories of the victim's families.

They also went to the province of Pampanga and went to the wake of another murdered peasant activist before they proceeded to Hacienda Luisita in the province of Tarlac. The Hacienda Luisita Massacre, where seven striking farm workers were shot dead and scores more were injured, in 2004 was pivotal in highlighting the human rights abuses in the Philippines. However, the HK Mission found out that even local officials denied the existence of human rights abuses in the province.

The participants of the Mission also met with grassroots organizations in the Philippine whose members and leaders have fallen victims to human rights violations which include BAYAN (New Patriotic Alliance), the Philippine Independent Church, National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Counsels for the Defense of Liberties (CODAL), National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), and the Batasan 6 (six lawmakers from progressive party list groups Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela Women's Party).

As well, the participants went to meet with the Task Force Usig of the Philippine National Police, tasked to investigate the killings, and the Commission on Human Rights. According to the group, both offices failed to give them satisfactory answers on the situation of human rights in the country.

A full report of the HK Mission will be sent out soon. HKCAHRPP hoped that with the report, more people will become involved in solidarity with the Filipino people against human rights violations.#



OFWs in HK offered prayers and candles for peace in the Philippines and justice to victims of rights violations

MIGRANTE-Switzerland holds Stop the Killings forum

MIGRANTE INTERNATIONAL - SWITZERLAND Chapter, together with APMM and Ibon Philippines, organized a public forum on the current human rights situation and the heightening political killings in the Philippines. The forum was attended by around 30 migrant workers and Geneva-based international and local NGO's, human rights advocates and individuals.

Mr. Donnie Mapanao, chairperson of MIGRANTE-Switzerland formally opened the forum while APMM and

Ibon helped in the presentation and facilitation of the forum respectively.

The forum was held last 30 July at Maison de Assosiasion.#



Filipinos and advocates call for a stop to human rights violations

WTO Talks Collapse, APMM Joins OWINFS Strategy Meeting

In July 24, 2006, the World Trade Organization Doha negotiation was indefinitely suspended. The suspension came up after the G6 (United States, European Union, Brazil, India, Japan, Australia) meeting collapsed.

The temporary suspension came after the United States refused to lower its farm subsidies, which the EU is demanding, until countries like India and Brazil agree to open their markets to more U.S. farm goods. In response, the EU accused the U.S. government of creating barriers to agricultural goods trade. The negotiations thus came into a deadlock.

Meanwhile, APMM participated in a strategy meeting organized by the Our World is Not for Sale (OWINFS) from 28 to 29 July in Geneva to develop strategies based on the current indefinite suspension of the Doha negotiations in the WTO. Major strategy identified was the continued strengthening of the national level campaigns against neoliberalism and to continuously monitor developments on bilateral and regional free trade talks.

APMM joins confab in Canada; lobbies parliament for rights of migrant workers

APMM participated in the National Migrant Justice Gathering: Building Solidarity, Taking Action conference organized by Kairos Canada, held in June 10 and 11 at York University in Toronto, Canada. It was attended by around 100 participants from all around Canada representing various organizations including churches, trade unions, migrant organizations, migrant-serving institutions, NGO's and other advocates for the rights of migrants.

The conference highlighted the issues, concerns and struggle of migrant workers and refugees. Ramon Bultron, APMM managing director, was part of the panel on Globalization and Migration as well as on Building Alliances and Solidarity. (*papers presented can be downloaded at www.apmigrants.org*)

The conference ended with a unity statement and a video showing of "Borderless" - a film about the life of undocumented migrants in Canada and produced by KAIROS Canada.

Lobbying among parliamentarians at the Parliament building at Ottawa followed the conference. Issues concerning the labor importation program of Canada such as the Live-in Caregiver Program and Farm Workers Program are among the issues raised

HK foreign domestic workers vow to pursue appeal for levy judicial review in the highest court

Foreign domestic helpers expressed disappointment over the dismissal of their appeal for a judicial review of the levy charged from their employers but which they consider as an indirect taxation imposed on them.

Speaking for the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (AMCB), Eni Lestari said that the group will continue to challenge the court's decision. "Indonesians, Thais, Nepalese, Sri Lankans, Filipinos and other foreign workers will strengthen and broaden their ranks to expose that the levy is but a mere money making taxation scheme of the Hong Kong government at the expense of the lowest paid workers. This must be abolished," she asserted.

APMM speaks at Conference on Refugees

APMM PRESENTED THE issues, concerns and struggle of undocumented migrants in a workshop during the International Refugee Rights Conference last June 17-19 at York University, Toronto, Canada. Co-presenting for the workshop was Ms. Avvy Go, a legal practitioner from the Status Campaign.

The workshop discussed the needs for organizing undocumented migrants as well as the legal basis for recognizing their rights. Ramon Bultron of the APMM also shared the living and working conditions of undocumented migrants in some countries in Asia as well as the advocacy campaigns for the protection and recognition of their rights and wellbeing.

Experiences and lessons on conducting coordinated advocacy campaigns in several countries in Asia against the series of crackdown policies implemented by governments of Malaysia, Korea, Israel and Japan were discussed and shared.

Bultron ended the presentation by sharing the need and plans to organize an international migrants alliance (IMA) and encouraged the participants to assist and take part on this global formation.

Ms. Tanya Chute of KAIROS Canada facilitated the discussions.#

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