

Press Statement

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Progressive, Independent Trade Unionism is not the Enemy of Peace: SENTRO Statement on Recent Harassment of Trade Union Offices

Trade Unions play an important part in protecting working people, especially during this present Covid-19 pandemic. Unions are always the first to stand up for workers when they are denied decent wages, safe working conditions, adequate rest, and dignified lives. Beyond our workplace, the trade union movement has been a steadfast ally of progress, democracy, and social justice. It is therefore alarming when trade unions come under attack, as it is a clear sign of political repression.

The Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO) condemns the recent round of police surveillance and harassment of workers organizations in Metro Manila.

On November 2, 2021, members of the Quezon City Police Department approached SENTRO's premises in NCR inquiring about a labor dispute involving our affiliate, the Federation and Cooperation of Cola, Beverage, and Allied Industry Unions (FCCU). The FCCU is currently in the middle of a labor dispute against Coke Philippines for its unfair treatment of its workforce (see #SaveCokeWorkers for more details). Without officially stating the purpose of their visit or providing relevant legal documents, the police repeatedly asked for information regarding SENTRO's office, the unions present there, and their activities.

Further adding to the suspicious behavior, police personnel also approached the premises of the Trade Union Confederation of the Philippines (TUCP) compound in Quezon City. They inquired about the NAGKAISA labor coalition, which SENTRO is a part of.

These have no other effect but harass trade unionists. Why should our police force waste valuable time and resources to snoop around union offices? Given important matter under police charge, surveillance of legitimate trade union work should not be in the list of their activities.

We call on the PNP chief Guillermo Eleazar to explicitly order the end to any attempts at intimidating or harassing trade unionists. We urge him to meet with union leaders and engage in a meaningful dialogue on how the PNP can truly help uphold the constitutional right to freedom of association.

Progressive, independent trade unionism is not the enemy of peace. A unionized and empowered working class is the bedrock of a free and prosperous society.###