



ITUC International Trade Union Confederation
CSI Confédération syndicale internationale
CSI Confederación Sindical Internacional
IGB Internationaler Gewerkschaftsbund

Ayuba Wabba

President
Président
Präsident
Presidente

His Excellency Rodrigo Roa Duterte
President
Republic of the Philippines

Email: op@president.gov.ph

Sharan Burrow

General Secretary
Secrétaire générale
Generalsekretärin
Secretaria General

HTUR/MW

7 May 2020

Request to revoke order to close ABS-CBN

Dear Mr President,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), representing 200 million workers globally, is shocked to learn about the order issued by the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC) to shut down ABS-CBN, the largest television network in your country, with the devastating impact of immediate job loss for its 11,000 employees.

We understand that the broadcasting network's legislative franchise expired on 4 May and is currently under deliberation at the Congress and take note of the opinion of the Department of Justice (DOJ) that ABS-CBN should be allowed to proceed with its operations based on the principle of equity. Under Article XII, Section 11 of the Constitution of the Philippines, it is within the statutory mandate of the Congress to grant, amend or repeal the franchise of a public utility. We therefore in particular note that the Senate passed a resolution on 4 March in favour of the continuous operation of the broadcasting network.

The ITUC and its affiliates in the Philippines strongly oppose the NTC's decision. The closure of major communications media is considered by the Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labour Organization an impediment to the rights of workers' and employers' organisations to express their views as well as an impediment to the principle of freedom of association. Moreover, the closure order of the NTC amounts to an attack on fundamental freedoms and democracy, as the state of public health emergency in response to the Covid-19 pandemic prevents the organisation of public protest against the commission's decision and industrial action to save jobs.

As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the government of the Philippines should strictly abide by its international obligations to ensure an environment favourable to the exercise of freedom of the press, expression and information and the promotion of pluralism. Any restriction of these freedoms, including the extreme measure of revoking a broadcasting license, can only be justified on the exclusive grounds outlined in Article 19 of the covenant. The NTC's order is purely based on the expiration of the legislative franchise of ABS-CBN. This reason does not meet the conditions under Article 19 and is certainly disproportionate, considering the mass job loss and the damage to the general public's rights stipulated under the covenant.

We urge your government, as a matter of urgency, to revoke the order to shut down ABS-CBN and to

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allow the process at the Congress to complete and support the call of our affiliates in the Philippines for the Congress to expedite and extend a pro-worker franchise to ABS-CBN.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Bello', written in a cursive style.

General Secretary

cc:
Gamaliel A. Cordoba
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National Telecommunication Commission
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Silvestre H. Bello III
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