

## 10-06-2009 Cebu export zone workers picket DOLE, assail collusion with employers

Press Release

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“Hardly one week has passed since the investigation by the International Labor Organization (ILO) into government’s enforcement of Convention 87 on the freedom of association but the DOLE is back to business as usual in conspiring with employers in hindering unionization. The med-arbiters’ summary decision without benefit of a hearing to canvass 27 disputed votes in the certification election completes management’s scheme to deny our labor rights,” stated Renante Pelino, president of the Alta Mode Workers Union (AMWU).

The protesting workers brought placards assailing “DOLE-capitalist conspiracy vs. workers rights.” Some placards also appealed to the multinational garments firm A&F which owns the brands Abercrombie and Fitch, and Hollister to respect labor rights in its supplier companies, among them Alta Mode Inc. Since the start of the year up to the Alta Mode shutdown last September 11, the workers were producing orders for A&F products.

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AMWU representatives and its lawyer walked out of the canvassing yesterday after the med-arbiters Atty. Theresa Casino and the DOLE election officer Eliza Mojana dismissed the workers’ motion for reconsideration and pushed through with the counting of the 27 segregated ballots. AMWU criticized the decision to count the 27 segregated votes without hearing the side of the workers on why the disputed ballots should not be counted. “These 27 ballots were cast by supervisors and others that should be excluded since we filed a petition for elections with only regular rank-and-file workers as the bargaining unit. We do not oppose unionization, and in fact we will support it, by supervisors but by law they should organize unions separate from the rank-and-file,” Pelino explained.

In the hearing conducted by ILO more than a week ago, Renato Magtubo, chairperson of the Partido ng Manggagawa (PM), presented Alta Mode as “a graphic case of the violation of Convention 87” and proof of the “no union policy” in the export zones. According to Magtubo, AMWU’s experience reflects why not a single union has survived and gained status as a bargaining agent in the 30 years of the MEZ.

AMWU and PM, which is supporting the workers, vowed that the picket today is just the start of a series of protests against employer interference and DOLE’s collusion in workers freedom to organize. The workers chanted “Babalik kami, mas marami” as the picketed ended. ###

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