

News Release
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Migrante Saudi Arabia

"We dream of a society that will never be torn apart just for the need to survive."

As Stranded Filipinos in Jeddah display 'mock coffin';
'Legal deportation process' a sham,
Migrante Saudi Arabia press for diplomatic solution



A mock coffin greeted visitors inside the Philippine Consulate in Jeddah today as Migrante Saudi Arabia pressed for a diplomatic solution after the 'legal deportation process' of Consul General Ezzedin Tago was proven futile to repatriate at least 198 'stranded' Filipino workers.

"The 'legal deportation process' is a sham, because it endangers our compatriots who left their employers due to various cases of abuse, maltreatment and contract violations," laments Migrante KSA Chairperson AM Ociones.

"We call on the government therefore, to opt for the more arduous diplomatic or

government-to-government solution," Ociones asserts. **"It is the solution that the government has been avoiding all this time for whatever reason and the only solution that can send the 'stranded' home... now."**

Death

The mock coffin, painted black with the words "The future of our families lies on this coffin. Send us Home, Not in Jail!" was made by the 'stranded' Filipinos camped inside the Consular premises in protest of the continuing neglect of their plight.

"The coffin symbolizes the dangers we are facing now," Carlos Rebutar, Spokesperson for the stranded Filipinos said today. "It also symbolizes the death of our family and loved ones as we languish here losing our remaining hope of being repatriated."



The symbolic action was prompted by recent developments proving Tago's 'legal deportation process' as futile to repatriate Filipinos in distress. Data gathered by Migrante Saudi Arabia confirms that of the 54 women and 24 men who were picked up by the Immigration Police through the so-called 'due process' in February 10:

- One man was confirmed 'returned' to his employer while about 20 or so women are facing the danger of being 'returned' to their employer whom they ran away from.
- 13 men on the other hand were transferred to the Deportation Facility in Riyadh in handcuffs and were dumped inside a cell measuring approximately 8m x 15m with at least 100 other men of different nationalities.

Deplorable situation

"The present situation of the 13 confirms what the 'stranded' has been refusing all along about this 'legal deportation process,'" Ociones explained.

In a telephone conversation with Ociones yesterday, one of the 13 transferred to Riyadh identified only as Jim reportedly said "*Kasuklam-suklam ang kalagayan namin dito, sir, kaya please tulungan nyo kami* (Our situation here is totally deplorable, sir, please help us)."



"*Hindi kami makaupo man lang, sir, tayuan kami dito. 'Di pa rin kami kumakain* (We cannot even sit, sir, we are all standing up here. We also haven't eaten yet)," Jim reportedly lamented further. "***Hindi ito ang pinangako sa amin ng Consulate noong pinapipirma kami sa 'due process'***. (This is not what has been promised us when they were convincing us to sign up for due process)."

Deteriorating health

Migrante KSA also expressed concern over the deteriorating health of the 'stranded' OFWs.

In the same telephone conversation with Ociones, Jim reported that one of their companions, identified as Noel Farrales, is already very weak and might collapse anytime due to the heat inside the deportation cell.

Previously on February 16, the men inside the Deportation Facility in Jeddah complained of cough and other symptoms through a text message sent to Ociones by one identified only as A.E.:

"Nandito po ako s deportation. Ako c a.e. S gusali n # 1 ay 66 kming pinoy. Mirmi s amin my ubo, s gabi, 2 o tatlo my fever. Vgay help consulate.. Qlang."

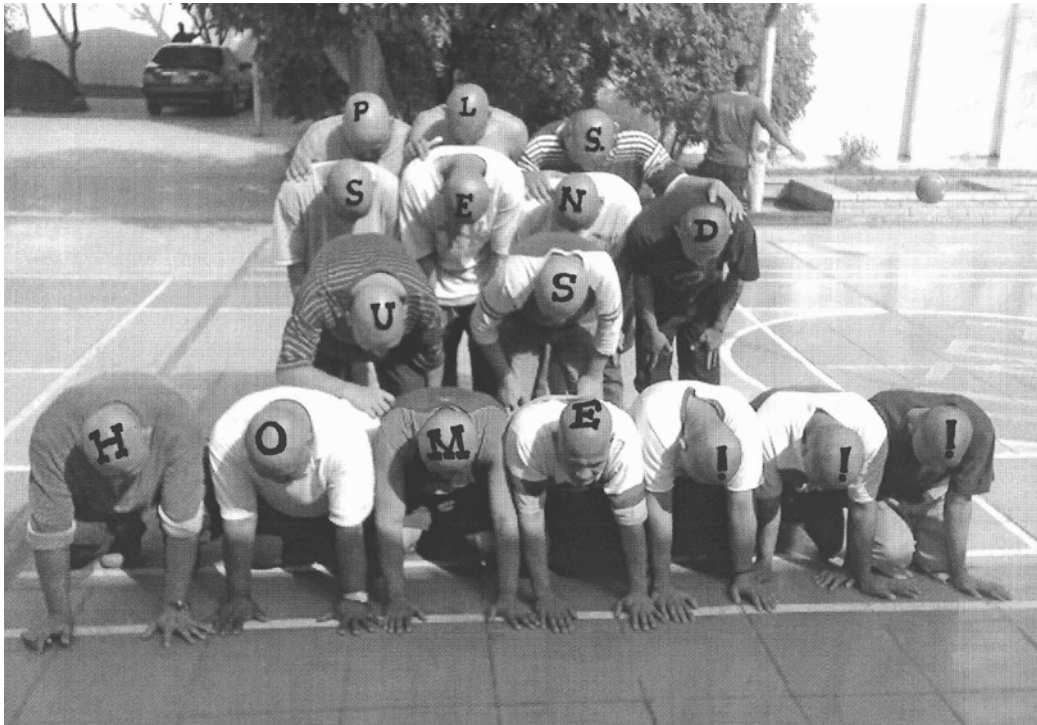
"Meron, vgay cla gamot pero qlang. 2box n expectont capsule. N involve n kmi sa away, laban ibang lahi. Cge bye bye n me pulis."

The stranded men camped out in the Jeddah Consulate were also suffering the same problems of cough and fever and complains of shortage of medical assistance.

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Some Photos of the Stranded Filipinos in Jeddah:

Taken in February 10, some of the 'stranded' Filipinos shaved their heads to appeal for government action to their plight.



Exposed to the elements:
From under Al Khandara Bridge



To the premises of the Philippine Consulate in Jeddah:



The situation of the 'stranded' Filipinos remain the same, including the waiting.

