



Ambassador Romualdez: Put your money where your mouth is

Tanggol Migrante Network continues to urge immediate government action after hypocritical Independence Day statement

On June 16, the Philippine Embassy issued a [press release](#) on its recent celebration of Philippine Independence Day, while also using the opportunity to claim that the “government has not forgotten” vulnerable Filipinos in need. In a speech to attendees, Ambassador Jose Romualdez urged others to do “[m]ore than the fiestas and galas” to support Filipinos in “practical and meaningful ways.” In response, the Tanggol Migrante Network (TMN) says: “Romualdez, put your money where your mouth is.”

According to credible sources, the very celebration where Romualdez spoke cost at least \$15,000 to host and cater. The following day, the consular section of the embassy had its own celebration. “While the ambassador and other state officials donned Filipiniana and dined the night away, Filipinos who have been unjustly detained continue to be stripped of their dignity and fed inedible meals,” said Jhong Cruz of Migrante USA. “This really shows that the embassy is out of touch with the realities of migrant Filipinos in detention and the needs of the Filipino people.”

“This is sad,” reacted Lani Madriaga, a family member of a formerly detained Filipina. “They could have put that money toward those who need help instead of the cost of the event.” Families of Filipinos who have been detained under Trump have been actively organizing not only for their loved ones, but all migrants who have been persecuted under Trump’s administration. The embassy’s claims that they have not forgotten vulnerable Filipinos misrepresents the experiences of detained Filipinos and their family members when seeking assistance from the Philippine government. In reality, it has only been the persistence of families together with the broader community to advocate for their loved ones that has compelled Philippine consular officials to uphold their duty to support Filipino migrants in distress.

The network urges the embassy to fulfill its “commitment to help kababayans overseas.” While Tanggol Migrante welcomes the embassy’s recent signing of a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with the Filipino American Legal Defense and Education Fund (FALDEF), family members of those in detention have been pressing the Philippine government to secure full legal representation for them.

Maximo Londonio, a father of three and a green card holder detained at NWDC, was one such Filipino in need of immediate legal representation. Despite a month of constant pressure on the Philippine Embassy and San Francisco Consulate to take immediate action, the Philippine government had not been able to provide adequate legal aid to Londonio. Thankfully, the tireless work of his family and advocates secured him legal representation, the latest in a series of community wins including the release of four Filipinos from NWDC. The fight to free Londonio from “segregation”—a practice that isolates detainees—and ultimately, to release him from NWDC continues.

“If Romualdez is sincere in his concern for the most vulnerable among us, we again urge him to meet with us in Tanggol Migrante—with the people most directly impacted by Trump’s criminalization of migrants,” reiterated Cruz. ###