Rejoinder to J. Crew re Labor Dispute at First Glory

We welcome the commitment of J. Crew for freedom of association in its suppliers and its action in this regard at the factory First Glory Philippines. We appreciate the initial steps taken by J. Crew though we wish to highlight additional facts and the request for further action.

The mass layoffs of 300 workers at First Glory was done in bad faith and with the purpose of busting the union which is preparing for the holding of a certification election. The majority of the 300 workers fired were union members, including all of the union officers and the union president. This means that despite First Glory’s declaration that it will respect that process of the certification elections, it had already subverted freedom of association by firing the entire union leadership.

In fact, we have documentary proof of management interference in the workers’ exercise of freedom of association. In the December 1, 2020 hearing called by the Department of Labor and Employment on the union’s petition for certification election, Mr. Michael Negad, production manager, presented himself as an employee representative and declared that First Glory employees do not want a union. Attached is the minutes of the hearing in which this is documented. That Mr. Negad came on behalf of the employer then misrepresented himself as an employee and made anti-union statements is in blatant violation of Philippine labor laws which prohibit managerial personnel from interfering in the workers’ right to unionize.

Moreover, in all the mediation meetings, First Glory management could not substantiate its claim of losses due to lost orders, thus the union’s allegation of bad faith by the company. First Glory’s stated reason for engaging in retrenchment in bankruptcy of J. Crew, which is its main customer. However, J. Crew already exited bankruptcy in September. That is why at the time of the mass dismissals, production was in full swing and workers were being asked to report even on holidays and Sundays.

In view of the hardline position of First Glory that it will not reinstate the workers despite its inability to provide evidence of losses, the union filed a notice of strike last week.

We thus ask J. Crew to exert moral suasion on its supplier First Glory to resolve the dispute by reinstating the 300 workers who were fired, including the union leadership and the union president Cristito Pangan. This is an imperative especially in the light of the fact that First Glory insists that J. Crew’s bankruptcy led to the mass layoff of November 27.