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Green Card Holders' Ordeal Highlights Detention System Concerns

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Maximo Londonio, a legal U.S. permanent resident originally from the Philippines, is speaking publicly about his difficult experience in U.S. immigration detention after being held for nearly two months at the Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) in Tacoma, Washington. Known to his community as “Kuya Max,” Londonio, 42, was detained upon arrival at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on May 15, after returning from a vacation in the Philippines with his family.

Although his wife and daughter, both U.S. citizens, were released without issue, Londonio was taken into custody by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), then transferred to ICE custody. He was held in solitary confinement for 27 days. According to Londonio, this period was mentally and emotionally grueling, with limited access to food, hygiene, and legal counsel.

Londonio credited his release in part to the efforts of advocacy groups such as Tanggol Migrante and Migrante USA, which mobilized legal and public support on his behalf. During a virtual press conference after his release, he thanked the community that fought for his freedom but expressed deep disappointment over what he described as the Philippine government's lack of meaningful support. "My own country didn't fight for me," he said. "I had Tanggol Migrante, and my union stood by me."

During his detention, Londonio said he was moved to solitary confinement due to his tattoos, a decision he believes was made without justification. He noted that the isolation significantly intensified an already challenging and distressing experience. He described long hours with nothing to do, inadequate nutrition due to irregular meal times, and minimal access to showers.

The Philippine Consulate General in San Francisco, which has jurisdiction over Washington State, stated it had been monitoring the case and maintained communication with Londonio and his family. However, his wife, Crystal, painted a different picture, one of repeated unanswered calls and frustrating delays. "Where were you when we needed you?" she asked tearfully during the press conference.

Crystal shared how she had to navigate the complex legal and immigration system with little guidance, relying mostly on community groups for help.

"Tanggol Migrante provided me with the support, clarity, and direction I desperately needed when I had nowhere else to turn," Crystal said. In contrast, she described her interactions with the consulate as frustrating and disorganized, often finding herself responsible for providing them with updates instead of receiving assistance.

Their daughter, Beayanca, also spoke emotionally about her family's ordeal. "For 57 days, I watched the light vanish from my father's eyes," she said, expressing a sense of betrayal by the system and disappointment in both the U.S. and Philippine governments.

Under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR), consulates are obligated to provide consular assistance and ensure the protection of their nationals abroad. Advocates such as Jess Roxas of the International Migrants Alliance (IMA) have underscored this responsibility, pointing to countries like Ireland as examples of governments that take a more proactive and decisive role in protecting their citizens abroad.

Londonio, now reunited with his family, says he will continue to advocate for others still in detention, including fellow Filipino migrants whose cases remain unresolved. “We must stand together for justice and accountability,” he said, urging the public to remain vigilant about how legal immigrants are treated within the U.S. immigration system.

His case underscores growing concerns about detention conditions at facilities like NWDC, including the use of solitary confinement and limited access to legal representation. As immigration enforcement continues to be a matter of national interest, stories like Londonio’s raise important questions about due process, humanitarian standards, and the responsibility of both foreign consulates and U.S. authorities to uphold the rights of lawful residents.