



SANGGUNIANG PAMBANSA NG MGA SIMBAHAN SA PILIPINAS

National Council of Churches in the Philippines

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Member Churches

- Apostolic Catholic Church
- Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches
- Episcopal Church in the Philippines
- Iglesia Evangelica Metodista En Las Islas Filipinas
- Iglesia Filipina Independiente
- Iglesia Unida Ekyumenikal
- Lutheran Church in the Philippines
- The Salvation Army
- The United Methodist Church
- United Church of Christ in the Philippines

Associate Members

- Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities
- Consortium of Christian Organizations for Rurban Development
- Ecumenical Church Foundation, Inc.
- Kaisahang Buhay Foundation
- Lingap Pangkabataan, Inc.
- Manila Community Services, Inc.
- Philippine Bible Society
- Student Christian Movement of the Philippines
- Union Church of Manila

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April 30, 2019

Rev. Dr. Jochen Motte

Executive Secretary for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation
United Evangelical Mission

Dear Dr. Motte,

Warm greetings from the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP).

During the meeting of the NCCP Executive Committee held last April 1, 2019, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) presented a resolution (please see attached) asking the NCCP to lead an international ecumenical campaign to stop the killings and other human rights violations in the Philippines and to reach out to international ecumenical partners for participation, support and accompaniment. The said resolution was unanimously adopted by the Executive Committee with all representatives of the member churches present and some of the associate members.

This is a Kairos moment.

Two days before the said meeting, 14 farmers were killed inside their homes by police officers in separate operations in Canlaon City and Manjuyod and Santa Catalina towns in Negros Oriental. The mass killings follow the same script of the all too familiar “nanlaban” (they fought back) that is used to justify those killed in anti-drug operations. This time the farmers were accused as being members or supporters of the New People’s Army which is vehemently being denied by their families and relatives. Two of the victims were even elected village officials and according to Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Carlos, one of those slain was a lay leader of their mission station.

The mass killing of the farmers being accused as rebels or sympathizers come at the heels of the government’s termination of the peace negotiations with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and the dissolution of its peace panel. The killings in Negros foreshadow more operations to come as the military has stated that they will crush the communist insurgency by the end of President Duterte’s term.

The killings show the ever worsening climate and culture of impunity under the government of President Rodrigo R. Duterte. Serious human rights crisis and growing authoritarianism are escalating in the country. Credible sources have already sounded the alarm regarding the human rights crisis including the following:

- According to the US-based Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) in its 2018 Annual Report, more civilians were killed in the Philippines during that year than in Iraq, Somalia, or the Democratic Republic of Congo. The said report

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” - John 10:10b RSV

highlighted the “lethality of President Rodrigo Duterte’s “War on Drugs”-cum-state terror campaign.

- The UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Mr. Michel Forst, underscored that the Philippine government’s deadly campaign on illegal drugs “has created a climate of insecurity and impunity for extrajudicial killings that affects human rights defenders”. Citing figures and reports from various human rights groups, he especially noted that those who face higher risks are those who defend farmers’ rights, land and environmental rights, peasant rights, indigenous rights and labour rights.
- Global Witness reported that 48 environmental defenders, the highest in Asia, were killed in the country in 2017, almost half of which were linked to struggles against agribusiness. The report further underscored that President Rodrigo Duterte’s aggressively anti-human-rights stance and a renewed military presence in resource-rich regions are fueling the violence.
- The Global Analysis 2018 of Front Line Defenders also stated that 39 rights advocates who were working for defenders of land, indigenous peoples and environmental rights were killed in 2018.
- There were 99 documented cases of direct and indirect assaults, including 12 killings, against journalists and media organizations in the first two years of the Duterte administration.
- According to Karapatan, since the beginning of President Duterte’s term in office until December 2018, victims of politically-related human rights violations include over 222 extrajudicial killings, 381 frustrated killings and 8 forced disappearances, 440 illegally arrested and detained, and 225 political prisoners under his term, bringing the number of political detainees across the country to 548.

Given this situation, the NCCP, based on the UCCP resolution, once again asks its international partners for solidarity and accompaniment. At the outset, we would like to ask you to send a Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace delegation of the World Council of Churches to our country. We have started the conversations about this with our partners in the US and Canada and we may extend the invitation to other partners as well.

We would also like to get your support for an international lobbying campaign. Specific focuses are the US and Canadian governments, member states of the European Union, as well as the United Nations, all of whom could exercise varying degrees of influence upon the government of the Philippines. Churches and human rights groups in the US and Canada can call for congressional and parliamentary hearings that will greatly help in putting pressure for the government of President Duterte to stop the human rights violations. We also would like to explore pressure from Australia and South Korea due to their military cooperation and/or arms sales to the Philippines. We also ask for financial support for an ecumenical delegation from the Philippines to attend the UN Human Rights Council session this June and in September and possible itineration in selected EU member states including Germany and Belgium. We also request your support in preparing members of the Philippine UPR Watch which the NCCP co-convenes, to submit reports for the mid-term UPR review on the Philippines.

For further coordination, please communicate with Mr. Mervin Sol H. Toquero, Acting Program Secretary of Faith, Witness and Service at mtoquero@gmail.com.

Thank you very much and may the Lord our God bless us in this endeavor.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Mata-Calub". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "M" and a decorative flourish at the end.

Ms. Minnie Anne Mata-Calub
Acting General Secretary - NCCP