



Email us at [enjpph@gmail.com](mailto:enjpph@gmail.com) or call +491781778479

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## **Second Europe-wide Summit on the Philippines Human Rights Crisis**

### **Unity Statement 19 September 2020**

This 2nd Summit on the Philippines human rights crisis comes one year after the Emergency Summit that was held in Reykjavik, Iceland, on 21 September 2019. That meeting aimed to express the gratitude of the organisers to the Government of Iceland for their support in submitting a resolution to the 41st Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in July 2019 requesting the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, to prepare a comprehensive report on the human rights situation in the Philippines for presentation at the Council's 44th session in 2020. The resolution called on the Government of the Philippines to cooperate with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other Human Rights Council mechanisms and take all necessary measures to prevent extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, to carry out impartial investigations and hold perpetrators accountable, in accordance with international norms and standards, including on due process and the rule of law.

The Iceland-led resolution was adopted at the 41st Session, and on June 30, 2020 Michelle Bachelet presented her report to the UN Human Rights Council. This comprehensive report revealed the massive and systemic human rights violations that have taken place under Duterte, including the repression of and vicious attacks on political dissenters, human rights and environmental defenders, indigenous peoples, journalists, lawyers and the media and the killing of over 8 000 drug suspects and 248 human rights defenders between 2015 and 2019. She also pointed to the fact that these attacks are perpetrated in a climate of almost total impunity and that the harmful rhetoric used by high-ranking government officials "has risen to the level of incitement to violence".

Together with many other civil society organisations, the Europe Network for Justice and Peace in the Philippines (ENJPP) warmly welcomed the OHCHR report as a valuable tool that endorses the criticism of the Duterte administration that has been levelled by civil society organisations both in the Philippines and outside for several years and their calls for an end to the reign of state terror that is unfolding there and for those responsible for the massive rights violations to be made accountable.

The Bachelet report is an important battle in the lengthy struggle to bring about justice in the Philippines. However, we understand there is still much to be done. The need to keep up the pressure on the Duterte administration was clearly shown in the Philippine Government's reaction to the report; it denied the existence of impunity, maintained that "ensuring human rights was a fundamental national interest" and announced that it had established an inter-

agency panel on extrajudicial killings and other violations in connection with the anti-drug campaign. Included in that panel are the very agencies, such as the Philippine National Police and Drug Enforcement Agency, that are accused of being linked to human rights violations in the anti-drug campaign. This is tantamount to putting the fox in charge of the henhouse!

### **Actions speak louder than words**

Despite these declarations of respect for human rights and a direct appeal from Michelle Bachelet to Duterte not to sign a new Anti-Terrorism Bill (ATB) but rather subject it to review, the president signed it into law just three days after the UNHRC debate.

The Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL) is the latest in a series of repressive legislative acts introduced by the Duterte administration to suppress any form of criticism, following on Executive Order 70 and Memorandum Order 32, which have already led to violations of the rights of citizens by state forces, ranging from harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and the large-scale extrajudicial killings of peasant and indigenous leaders and members of progressive organisations.

The intentionally vague definition of “terrorism” in the new ATL can lead to even the mildest critics of the government being labelled as terrorists and will serve to stifle any form of dissent even more than before. Tragically, in recent weeks we have seen the repercussions of the ATL with the killing of Randall Echanis, an NDFP peace consultant and peasant leader, and Zara Alvarez, a young human rights leader shot dead in cold blood in Bacolod City, Negros.

Our commitment: to continue the struggle to attain human rights, justice and peace in the Philippines

The great sacrifices made by the many human rights defenders, environmental and peace activists, peasant leaders, journalists, lawyers and politicians in the Philippines are a call to us to further strengthen our commitment to the struggle to put an end to the killings and all forms of human rights violations and to support all those working for a society based on justice and peace in every way we can.

Let us work together in solidarity with all concerned individuals and groups to expose the massive human rights violations, killings, political persecution, and silencing of the media perpetrated by the Duterte administration to the attention of the world through campaigns, lobbying and advocacy work, press statements and organising cultural events in Europe.

Furthermore, ENJPP echoes the many calls from civil society worldwide to the members and observer states of the UNHRC to establish an independent and impartial investigation into the extrajudicial killings and human rights violations being perpetrated in the Philippines, as recommended in the recent UNHRC report, to continue to closely monitor the situation of human rights and call for an end to the killings and for accountability.

For the respect of human rights, justice, and peace in the Philippines, we hereby affix our signatures...

**Bishop Antonio Ablon, IFI**  
Hamburg Germany

**Julie Smit**  
Luxemburg

**Jake Clemencio**

Migrante – Bern, Switzerland

**Bishop Dirk Jan Schoon**

Old Catholic Church, The Netherlands

**The Revd Fr. Herbert Fadriuela**

Filipino Chaplaincy, Leicester, England

**Isabel Friemann**

East Asia Desk, Lutheran Church in Northern Germany

**Hadje C. Sadjé**

Paal, Belgium

**Dr. Rainer Werning**

Cologne, Germany

**Revd Canon Salvador Telen**

CHRP – United Kingdom

**Andreas Kunz-Lübcke**

FIT - Hermannsburg, Germany

**Ikuko Ueba**

INTAL – Brussels, Belgium

**Jesper Klemedsson**

Independent Journalist Filmmaker  
RECAPTO, Sweden

**June Mark Yanez**

Filipino Ecumenical Migrant Ministry

**Phoebe Zoe Maria Sanchez, Ph.D.**

Full Professor  
University of the Philippines-Cebu  
Universite Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve  
Belgium

**María Martín Quintana**

Coordinadora de Incidencia  
Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras  
de Derechos Humanos,

**Revd Rudolf Scheltinga**

Egmond aan Zee, Old Catholic Church

**Manuel Sarmiento**

ENJPP – Vienna, Austria

**Paula Polanco**

President, INTAL – Brussels, Belgium

**Stella Matutina**

Aachen, Germany

**Marlon T. Lacsamana**

Secretary General, Migrante Europe

**Paloma Polo**

Spain

**Gabriele Beckmann**

FIT - Hermannsburg, Germany

**Rev. Dr. Franz Segbers**

Old Catholic Church

**Theo Droog**

PSA - Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**Emma Bridger**

USPG – United Kingdom

**John Lester Aguila**

UPB, Belgium

**QUINOA Asbl**

Belgium

**Clarizza Singson-Dagatan**

Secretary General  
KARAPATAN - Negros

**Do Hung**

Thanh Nien News, Vietnam

**Sr. Emma Teresita Cupin**

Zurich, Switzerland

**Elnora Held**  
GABRIELA-Europe

**Lawyer Symone Gaasbeek-Wielinga**  
President  
Dutch League for Human Rights Lawyer project

**Revd Fr. Ulf-Martin Schmidt**  
Old Catholic Church, Berlin, Germany

**Dr. Christian Hohmann**  
Institute for Mission, Ecumenism, and  
Global Responsibility of Evangelical Church of  
Westphalia, Germany

**Donnie Mapanao**  
President, Buklod Kabayan (Solitarité Philippine)  
Geneva, Switzerland

**Romelito Corpuz**  
President, Ugnayang Pilipino sa Belgium

**Maitet Ledesma**  
International Migrants Alliance - Europe

**Clarisa Ramos**  
ENJPP - Belgium

**Lawyer Hans Gaasbeek**  
Coordinator / Initiator  
International Day of the Endangered

**Matthias Ristau**  
Regional Port Chaplain, Hamburg

**Fr. Aris Miranda**  
Co-Chairperson, PCPR - Europe  
Rome, Italy

^ **Fatima Sarah Rico**  
Anakbayan Europe

**Daisy Bongay**  
Nagkakaisang Pilipino sa Pransya

**Julia**  
German Filipino Friendship