

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SOLIDARITY MISSION 2007

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Student Christian Movement of the Philippines

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Attention: NEWS DESKS

NEWS RELEASE

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International students present report on International Youth Solidarity Mission, demand to stop killings and enforced disappearances in the Philippines

Closing the five-day program of the International Youth Solidarity Mission (IYSM), international students from 15 countries in the Asia Pacific called to stop the killings and enforced disappearance in the country, especially against the Filipino youth.

In a press conference today, the fact-finding groups who went to Central Luzon and Bicol region will present their respective reports, including their findings and observations on the cases of fellow students Farly Alcantara (student leader killed in Camarines Sur), and missing UP students Karen Empeno and Sherlyn Cadapan (abducted by military men in Bulacan last year).

According to Immanuel Gopla Kitnan, a Sri Lankan student and spokesperson of the group, they are extremely alarmed over the killings and abductions of youth and student activists in the Philippines, which they believe are "human rights defenders."

"From our expedition it is clear to us that most, if not all, the killings and abductions of youth activists are coordinated by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and state agents. We found insufficient action on the part of the PNP, who have neglected to follow up on cases of human rights violations and also have interfered with the justice process by failing to keep correct documentation, such as preservation of crime scenes, custody of evidence, photo documentation and full autopsy reporting," Kitnan said, reading the Solidarity Statement which the group wrote as final output of the IYSM.

The IYSM also exposed the lack of real and effective victim and witness protection programs, as well as the lack of confidence in existing government mechanisms to protect the victims and witness from further harassment and threats from state agents.

"The Philippine government should address and recognize the rights of human rights defenders, the youth, as part of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, and being a signatory to international treaties on human rights.

They also presented demands and recommendations which include: justice for youth victims of killings and abductions, effective security for victims and witnesses, and honesty and integrity on part of government agencies like the Philippine National Police and the Commission on Human Rights.

For the part of the Philippine delegation, Student Christian Movement of the Philippines chairperson Dion Carlo Cerafon said their fellow students have committed to support the efforts of human rights groups, the victims and their families, and especially the youth groups who according to them are being "criminalized" by the Arroyo government.

The delegates come from 15 countries in the Asia Pacific – Myanmar, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, India, HongKong, Japan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Korea, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Taiwan, East Timor and the Philippines. ###