

UNITY STATEMENT ON EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS IN THE PHILIPPINES

World Student Christian Federation - Asia
Pacific Region

We, Christian youth from the different parts of the world representing our Student Christian Movements and the World Student Christian Federation, would like to express our deep concern in the alarming Human Rights situation in the Philippines.

We strongly condemn the killings of members of the clergy, church workers, activists, journalists and media practitioners, and ordinary citizens from the ranks of the workers, peasants, professionals and youth in the Philippines. We are saddened that the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo government failed to solve the killings, even when lives are taken almost every day, including a significant number of church leaders and youth.

Since Arroyo assumed the presidency through popular uprising in 2001, there have been 692 victims of extrajudicial killings in the country - 106 of them were killed only during the past six months. Meanwhile, 44 journalists and media practitioners were also killed, making the Philippines the second most dangerous place for journalists next to Iraq.

The number of cases of abduction is also increasing, involving 179 victims who are all still missing until now. The long lists of human rights violations continue worsening (attempted killings, torture, harassment, forced evacuation, military surveillance and harassment). Even peaceful rallies in urban areas are dispersed, with leaders being accused of inciting to sedition and demonstrators suffering from physical injuries.

With much value for life and human dignity, we join the Filipinos and international community in demanding justice for the victims

of extrajudicial killings and other cases of human rights violations. We demand that the missing be resurfaced, and the abductors immediately release them unharmed.

We hold no less than the Arroyo government answerable for the massive loss of lives and the grave human rights violations, and which can be considered the worst after the dark days of Martial Law in the Philippines. It is every government's responsibility to uphold the people's civil liberties and human rights.

We call to stop the "all-out war" against insurgency declared by the Arroyo government that leaves no distinction from the armed revolutionary movement to the legal democratic organizations. We demand justice for all the victims of the Oplan Bantay Laya (Guarding Freedom), the government's counter-insurgency plan which blatantly brands progressive and legal organizations as "front organizations" of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army and threat civilians as "collateral damage".

We believe that no one should be a target of repression because of one's political beliefs. Those who are active in social issues and concerns including being critical of the Arroyo government should not be made victims of this mad killing spree. This gravely violates the basic and fundamental rights of Filipinos to freedom of speech, political belief, association and most especially, freedom to live in peace and without the constant threat to one's life.

We urge the Catholic Church, Protestant Churches and all other church organizations in the Philippines to lead in the investigation of the killings and other human rights violations. Let us play an active role in the pursuit for justice for the victims and their families. We also call on more Churches in the different parts of the world to create pressure to the Philippine government to stop human rights violations and demand justice for all the victims and their families.

Moreover, we enjoin all Christian youth to unite and act on these killings. There is no greater imperative for us right now but to stand with our brothers and sisters who are persecuted because of the aspirations for a peaceful and just society. Let us all share their struggles and work for a genuine Exodus of the people from an oppressive and unjust Arroyo rule.

We vow to closely monitor the development in the Philippine human rights situation and commit ourselves to be in solidarity with the Filipino people until the long-aspired justice, genuine democracy and peace is achieved.###