

# **Letter of Concern to the United Nations Human Rights Council from the Faculty Regent, U.P. System**

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September 26, 2006

*Honorable Luis Alfonso d Alba*

*President*

*United Nations Human Rights Council*

*C/o ONCHR-UNORG, 8-14 Avenue de la PAIX,*

*1211, Geneva 10*

**SWITZERLAND**

Dear President Alfonso d Alba:

I am Roland G. Simbulan, Full Professor at the University of the Philippines (U.P.) where I have taught for the past 25 years. I am also currently serving as elected Faculty Regent representing the 3,600 university system faculty in the U.P. Board of Regents, the highest policy-making body of the University. Prior to this, I served as Vice Chancellor of the University for three years. I have written four books and several scholarly articles on Philippine-US security relations and on Philippine military and security affairs.

I write to thank you for your concern regarding the political murders in the Philippines, and the deteriorating human rights situation in my country, the Philippines.

I write to you to add to the voices from my country who have expressed indignation to the continuing nationwide extra-judicial killings and abductions of leaders and activists of legal mass organizations, social development workers, human rights workers and lawyers, doctors and journalists, including priests and church workers who are closely working with the poor. Just last June 26, 2006 two of our university students, Ms. Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan, who were both conducting field research on peasant conditions in a province north of Manila, were awakened and abducted by

armed men whom witnesses claimed to be military intelligence operatives in civilian clothes. These two students remain missing up to this day, and we and their parents have not given up hope on our students. But our students have now become part of the growing statistics of 81 victims of enforced disappearances from 2001-2006 under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. In addition, during the same period, 748 have been killed, 78 of whom are women and 55 children. 317 of those murdered are legal political activists, non-combatants who are mostly farmers while 47 are journalists. They were murdered cold-bloodedly by mostly hooded and motorcycle-riding men after they were demonized publicly in the media by the military and police forces as “the enemy” working for front organizations of the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People’s Army. And what is more chilling to this is that, in this atmosphere of a murderous reign of terror, there is the dismal failure of the state authorities and law enforcers to apprehend the perpetrators, giving away the conclusion that these murders or abductions are state-sponsored.

This is the situation, despite the fact that last year, President Arroyo created the “Task Force Usig” of the Philippine National Police. Recently, the “Melo Commission” chaired by former Justice of the Philippine Supreme Court was formed but whose members are mostly known syncophants of the president or subordinates of political hacks. We doubt if any of these known loyalists will even dare to take on the President or her generals. It is like expecting the Mafia to investigate itself for murders and killings it is suspected of committing. Take for example the notorious General Jovito Palparan, known as “the butcher” for, wherever or whatever region he was assigned, he left behind an inexplicable trail of political murders and abductions committed by hooded assassins against leaders and members of people’s organizations, mostly peasant associations and coordinators of the grassroots political party BAYAN MUNA. Instead of being investigated, General Palparan was promoted meteorically by President Arroyo, and before her recent trip to Europe, was even eyed to a higher position upon his retirement – as a “deputy national security adviser for counter-insurgency.”

President Arroyo has in fact, chosen to ignore the Commission for Human Rights (CHR), an independent constitutional body, which has already pointed to military and police elements as responsible for some of the political killings it has so far investigated. CHR’s initial findings of the involvement of Philippine and police forces in the killings are consistent with the recent reports of Amnesty International and Philippine human rights organizations like KARAPATAN and PhilRights.

These developments make a mockery of the rule of law and due process in our country and I can only look forward to the need for more international pressure by yourselves to effectively blunt these conditions of state terror that I have described.

Thank you again for your concern and actions to discourage the continuing threats to human rights, threats to human dignity, and the erosion of the peace situation in the Philippines.

Truly yours,

Roland G. Simbulan

Full Professor and Faculty Regent

University of the Philippines System