

PRESS STATEMENT

Philippines: Kalipunan calls on the government to end impunity

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The on-going crackdown and intensified attacks of the Duterte administration on legal progressive forces, who are suspected of being part of or playing a vital role in the rebel movement has reached a disturbing level. As organizations grounded in the experiences of communities, we condemn the violence that has resulted in the loss of lives. We are alarmed by the current situation marked by increased tension at the grassroots level, and the instilling of an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, which can allow the setting up and justification of authoritarian rule in the country.

On Monday, Fr. Marcelito “Tito” Paez of the Diocese of San Jose, who was committed to communities and victims of human rights violations in Nueva Ecija and Central Luzon, was gunned down hours after facilitating the release of a political prisoner. On the same night, the arrest of transport leader George San Mateo was ordered. Prior to these attacks, Pastor Lovelito Quiñones of King’s Glory Ministry was shot by soldiers while on a motorcycle on his way home. Several other cases of human rights violations have transpired in provinces in the recent weeks following the pronouncement of the President “to surrender or die.” The intensified crackdown reminds us of how military and police personnel committed atrocities and abuses against civilians, including opposition leaders, journalists, and activists, 30 years ago during the authoritarian Marcos regime.

Before these recent attacks, we have already witnessed how state forces have disregarded their constitutional duty to serve and protect the people as they have in fact, done the opposite as evidenced by the thousands of men, women, and children silenced by the War on Drugs and extra-judicial killings. We are threatened by the continued disregard and disrespect of our rights, the silencing of dissent, and the escalation of violence and deaths.

We in the Kalipunan ng mga Kilusang Masa, a growing assembly of social movements, lament the senseless violence and the loss of lives of our fellow Filipinos. We call on the government to end impunity by doing its job of finding the culprits as well as prosecuting and punishing them. We, likewise, urge the government to stop playing with the Filipino people’s lives and instead, protect it and end the assault on human rights. We stand indignant against the intensification of police and military operations and the targeted attacks of progressive groups. In a society where the loss of life and violence have become commonplace and widespread, it must be realized that this should not be the norm. If anything, the government must be bettering the lives of all, not ending them.

KALIPUNAN

Kalipunan ng mga Kilusang Masa

P.S.

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