

# **Philippines: For a definitive end to the prosecution of Walden Bello on charges of “libel” and “cyberlibel”**

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**Anti-globalization activist Walden Bello was arrested on August 8, 2022 on charges of “libel” and “cyberlibel,” a charge that carries very heavy penalties in the Philippines.**

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Walden Bello, with whom we have shared many struggles, was arrested on August 8 in Manila-Quezon City on charges of “libel” and “cyberlibel”, and later released on bail.

The charge of “libel” (and more particularly “cyberlibel”) is commonly used in the Philippines by people in positions of power to silence opposition, or simply to exact revenge. This is clearly the case this time, with the accusation being made by Jefry Tupas, a former collaborator of Sara Duterte, herself former mayor of Davao City (territorial base of the family clan), daughter of the previous president Rodrigo Duterte and current vice president.

An incisive critic of Rodrigo Duterte’s murderous regime (extrajudicial killings have claimed tens of thousands of lives), Walden Bello, himself a vice presidential candidate in last May’s elections, had challenged Sara Duterte to a televised debate - she retaliated by declaring him persona non grata in Davao City, accusing him of being a narco politician and of cyberlibel.

A former parliamentarian for the Akbayan (Citizen Action Party), Walden Bello (76) is internationally known for his involvement in the anti-globalization movement. He has been awarded the Right Livelihood Award (the alternative Nobel Prize) and the Most Distinguished Sociologist Award from the International Sociological Association. His arrest is a message to anyone who attacks the vice president and the government: not even fame will protect you.

The penalties for being charged with defamation are very high (up to eight years in prison), as this is a criminal charge in the Philippines, not a civil one, as it often is in other countries. What is at stake are the fundamental freedoms of expression, of the press, of investigation, of criticism - freedoms that are increasingly challenged by the new law against cybercrime.

The international solidarity association Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF) stands against the persecution of Walden Bello and demands the definitive end of the proceedings against him.

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**Europe solidaire sans Frontières** (Europe in Solidarity Without Borders, ESSF), France

