

Petition Concerning Extrajudicial Killings in the Philippines

- H.E. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, Malacañang Palace, J.P. Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila, Philippines
- Hon. Purificacion Valera Quisumbing, Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights, SAAC Bldg., UP Complex, Commonwealth Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines

Dear President Macapagal-Arroyo and Hon. Purificacion Valera Quisumbing:

Sadly, we have read many recent reports about killings or disappearance of civilians in the Philippines, which have escalated over the past five years to be near those of the Marcos government. This year alone, there is the U.S State Department Report on Human Rights in the Philippines (Year 2005), the “Report on the attacks against Filipino Lawyers and Judges” from the Dutch Lawyers for Lawyers Foundation, July 24, 2006, and the Amnesty International report of August 15, 2006 entitled, “Philippines – Political Killings, Human Rights and the Peace Process”. There are also nearly daily urgent actions from the Asian Human Rights Commission, Task Force Detainees of the Philippines and Karapatan, as well as reports by visiting religious leader teams.

These show a common **pattern to the killings**: surveillance and threats to the victims *a priori* by officers, finding their names on an Order of Battle by military commanders, affiliation with lawful activist or leftist movements and political parties (including labor, journalism, women, peasants, environmental and other sectors), assassination (often in front of families and friends) by hooded persons driving motorbikes or unlicensed vehicles, scant investigation, and witness intimidation and sometimes murder. It appears up to 90% of these killings could be attributed to security forces or sanctioned vigilante groups, which often are allowed to carry weapons.

All of these incidents are deplorable, and inexcusable. The right to life is the most elemental right of a citizen. It is nonderogatory, meaning it cannot be suspended even in war. There must be adequate investigations. The legal system must begin to work in these cases, and perpetrators must be brought to justice.

We find statements and actions to date taken by the executive branch of the Philippine government to be inadequate. There must be statements and announcements by your offices - by you personally - to bring justice and to stop these extrajudicial killings and “Disappearances”. The chain of command needs to be clear, and persons doing these crimes must be stopped.

In particular, the Amnesty International report mentions activities by General Jovito Palparan ten times. Each of his commands, from Mindoro to Samar to central Luzon, was marked by a huge increase in torture, human rights violations and murders of civilians. In a radio address, he said his command would kidnap citizens, and if activist groups complain, kill them. The word “Berdugo”, executioner, seem appropriate. Yet recently it was suggested that in his retirement, he would take over running all the counterinsurgency for the country. He should not be praised, rather, allegations against him need to be investigated!

The Amnesty Report emphasizes that negotiations leading to peace with the armed persons on the left (NPA) and NDF, cannot make progress if these killings are not stopped. A statement was signed by you that communists are “international terrorists”, and also recently, a proposal made to stop them in two years. Murdering of lawfully-acting, non-armed activists and community leaders is not going to do this. It will increase recruitment for the very groups you are trying to diminish.

