Urgent Appeal for Solidarity and Action for Activists, Human Rights Defenders and Political Dissenters in the Philippines Tagged in Duterte’s Terror List

Dear friends and colleagues,

In the context of the intensifying human and people’s rights violations committed with impunity in the Philippines, we urgently seek your support in yet another wave of attack against critics of the anti-people policies and acts of the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte.

This involves the absurd, baseless, and arbitrary inclusion of names of individual activists, human rights defenders, and political dissenters in the list of supposed leaders and members of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People’s Army (NPA) in a Department of Justice petition proscribing the two entities as terrorist organizations under Republic Act 9372 or the Human Security Act of 2007, otherwise known as the anti-terrorism law.

While National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) as an organization was omitted in the proscription, those involved in the peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and NDFP were listed, including Peace Panel members Coni Ledesma, Juliet de Lima and Benito Tiamzon; Chief Political Consultant Jose Maria Sison; Senior Adviser Luis Jalandoni; Wilma Austria-Tiamzon and at least 29 other peace consultants; and former Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo, independent cooperator.

Filed on February 21, 2018, the petition named at least 567 individuals, among them nearly 50 human rights defenders, including the following:

Victoria Tauli Corpuz, current United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, former Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples and former Secretary General of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA);

Elisa Tita Lubi, current Karapatan National Executive Committee member, former interim Regional Coordinator of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and founding Vice Chairperson of Gabriela Women’s Party;

Beverly Longid, current global coordinator of the International Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation (IPMSDL), former CPA Chair and current Advisory Council member;

Joan Carling, current Member and Co-Convenor of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group for the Sustainable Development Goals, former Secretary General of the Asian Indigenous Peoples’ Pact (AIPP), and former member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues;

Atty. Jose Molintas, former Asia representative to the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), former CPA Chair and current Advisory Council member;

Joanna Cariño, member of the CPA Advisory Council and Co-Chair of the SANDUGO Movement of Moro and Indigenous Peoples for Self Determination;
Windel Bolinget, current Chairperson of the CPA and National Co-convenor of KATRIBU National Alliance of Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines;

Jeanette Ribaya-Cawiding, former Chairperson of CPA-Tongtongan ti Umili and current Regional Coordinator of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers – Cordillera;

Sherwin de Vera, Regional Coordinator of DEFEND Ilocos, member of the Save The Abra River Movement (STARM) and former Secretary General of the Ilocos Human Rights Alliance-Karapatan

Datu Isidro Indao, Matigsalog-Manobo village chief, council member of the PASAKA Lumad Confederation in Southern Mindanao and an active member of the Parent-Teacher Community Association of the Lumad school run by the Mindanao Interfaith Services Foundation, Inc.;

Datu Mandayhon Han-ayan, Talaandig village chief in Malaybalay, Bukid and member of the PIGYAYONGAAN Lumad organization;

Datu Mandayhon, a Talaandig village chief and member of the PIGYAYONGAAN Lumad organization;

Sergio Lumonday, a Manobo and the Tinananon Kulamanon Lumadnong Panaghiusa secretary general;

Zara Alvarez, Research and Advocacy Officer of the Negros Island Health Integrated Program (NIHIP) and former Campaign and Education Director of Karapatan-Negros chapter

Romulo Bito-on, Regional Coordinator of Makabayan-Negros and member of the Samahan ng Ex-detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto (SELDAA)

Rogina Navarro Quilop, Administrative Officer of the Center for People’s Resources and Services (CPRS)-Negros

Isidro Castillo, former Chairperson of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW)

Arnold Evangelista and Erlindo Baes, officers of the Batangas Human Rights Alliance-Karapatan

Even more unbelievable is the inclusion in the list of the names of the nine-member Karapatan quick reaction team arrested in November 2017 in Nasugbu, Batangas. These individuals vehemently deny any knowledge or participation in the alleged incidents cited in the petition. The list also contains numerous aliases and John and Jane Does, making it susceptible for inclusion of additional other names.

This is the first time that the Human Security Act of 2007, or the anti-terrorism law, is used against numerous activists. Karapatan and other human rights advocates and people’s organizations have previously warned that such counter-terror measures contain broad, vague, and malicious provisions, with far-reaching implications on the people’s exercise of their civil and political rights.

This petition is a clear manifestation of how the anti-terror law can be easily and arbitrarily used by those in power to suppress legitimate dissent. It is part of the whole scheme and design of the Duterte administration in its desperate attempt to silence critics of tyrannical rule, amid the rising opposition to its fascist and anti-people policies. It is meant to harass, target and criminalize persons and defenders who have been working for people’s rights and welfare, and endanger their lives and security, as well as that of their families and fellow activists.
Prior to this, Duterte created the Inter-Agency Committee on Legal Action (IACLA) on October 11, 2017 to go after perceived “enemies of the state.” He subsequently threatened a crackdown on progressive groups, using draconian measures such as the anti-terror law to arrest leaders and members of mass organizations, after unilaterally terminating the government’s peace talks with the NDFP. He has also threatened to behead human rights advocates, repeatedly throwing vitriol and ad hominem attacks against independent experts seeking to investigate extrajudicial killings and other rights violations. Duterte has justified and incited rights violations and war crimes. Since Duterte’s assumption to the presidency, Karapatan had already received several cases of illegal arrests and detention involving development workers, rights defenders and peasant leaders. Spates of arrests intensified after Duterte’s ramblings, with more violations on people’s civil and political rights blatantly perpetrated by the police and the military.

This listing is a take-off from the creation and enforcement of Order of Battle (OB) lists during the Gloria Arroyo and Noynoy Aquino regimes. Persons listed in the OB often ended up arrested based on false charges, incarcerated and even tortured, missing or killed. Not only do such lists incite human rights violations, they also legitimize and make "normal" to the public the government's abuse of power in suppressing dissent and decimating the supposed “enemies of the state.” The creation and enforcement of the said lists are also part of the government’s counter-insurgency programs which, under Duterte, is now named Oplan Kapayapaan (Operational Plan Peace).

The inclusion of Tauli Corpuz’s name is also a clear case of reprisal from the Duterte government for Corpuz's expressed concern over possible cases of human rights violations against indigenous communities affected by the imposition of martial law in Mindanao. She and another UN SR released a statement in response to a letter of allegation submitted by Karapatan to her office.

In this light, join us in calling for the junking of the baseless, malicious and arbitrary Justice Department petition, and in urging the Duterte administration to stop the harassment of activists, human rights defenders and political dissenters. Let us amplify the call to resist this worsening curtailment and disregard for people’s rights and an end to all fascist policies peddled by the Duterte regime. We call on friends, networks, and all organizations to mobilize to collectively show that the people will not tolerate such blatant violations to people’s rights.

We urgently appeal for your support and solidarity through:

1. Issuing statements of solidarity for circulation to the public and media circles. Publish these on your websites, social media platforms among others. Please send a copy to karapatan@karapatan.org.

2. Sending letters of concern through post, email or fax to Philippine authorities (names and contact details appended), to Philippine embassies in your respective countries and locality, to members of parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in countries. Attached is a letter-template which you may use and edit. Please send a copy to karapatan@karapatan.org.

3. Conducting or joining mass actions in front of Philippine embassies/consulates, initiate discussions and fora, and disseminate advocacy materials on the issue, including those in social media; and

4. Assisting efforts to raise financial and material support for the legal defense and safety fund for the activists and human rights defenders. Please email karapatan@karapatan.org on the details.
Dear {Addressee},

We wrote this letter to express our concern on the recent spate of attacks against human rights defenders, activists, and political dissenters in the Philippines, through the inclusion of the names of more than 600 individuals in a Justice Department petition to proscribe the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People’s Army (NPA) as terrorist organizations. Such listing endangers the lives and security of these individuals, as well as that of their families and fellow activists, given the baseless, arbitrary, malicious and repressive motives behind the said act.

The use of Human Security Act of 2007 to suppress legitimate dissent is a dangerous and underhanded move that indubitably worsens the climate of impunity in the Philippines. We deplore this and other acts that intimidate, threaten, harass, target and criminalize persons and defenders who have been working for people’s rights and welfare.

We call on the Philippine government to:

• Junk the baseless, malicious and arbitrary Justice Department petition and stop the criminalization of the work of activists, human rights defenders, and political dissenters through the practice of filing trumped-up criminal charges;
• Stop the labeling of members and leaders of progressive people’s organizations and patriots as “terrorists” both in the national and international forums. Stop the threats, intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders;
• Repeal the Human Security Act of 2007 and all legislative, administrative, executive and judicial acts that violate human rights;
• Effectively address and immediately prosecute and punish acts of terrorism and human rights violations by agents of the State;
• End the counter-insurgency program Oplan Kapayapaan which directs and funds State security forces to threaten, harass, arbitrarily and illegally arrest individuals tagged as “enemies of the State”;
• Immediately abolish the Inter-Agency Committee on Legal Action (IACLA), a body created by the PNP and the AFP, which further legitimizes and systematizes the political persecution and illegal arrest and detention of rights defenders and activists;
• Continue the peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and comply with its obligations and commitments under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL), which includes the right to freedom of thought and expression, freedom of conscience, political beliefs and practices and the right not to be punished or held accountable for the exercise of these rights, and the right to free speech, press, association and assembly; and
• Adhere and respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and all major Human Rights instruments that it is a party and signatory.

Sincerely,

Name, Organization and/or Community
You may send your communications to the following Philippine-based authorities:

H.E. Rodrigo Duterte  
President of the Republic  
Malacañang Palace,  
JP Laurel St., San Miguel  
Manila Philippines  
Voice: (+632) 564 1451 to 80  
Fax: (+632) 742-1641 / 929-3968  
E-mail: op@president.gov.ph or send message through http://president.gov.ph/contact-us/

Hon. Jesus Dureza  
Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process  
Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP)  
7th Floor Agustin Building I  
Emerald Avenue  
Pasig City 1605  
Voice:+63 (2) 636 0701 to 066  
Fax:+63 (2) 638 2216  
Email: stqd.papp@opapp.gov.ph, feedback@opapp.net

Secretary, Department of National Defense  
Room 301 DND Building, Camp Emilio Aguinaldo,  
E. de los Santos Avenue, Quezon City  
Voice:+63(2) 911-6193 / 911-0488 / 982-5600  
Fax:+63(2) 982-5600  
Email: info@dnd.gov.ph, webmaster@dnd.gov.ph

Hon. Vitaliano Aguirre  
Secretary, Department of Justice  
Padre Faura St., Manila  
Direct Line 521-8344; 5213721  
Trunkline: 523-84-81 loc.214  
Fax: (+632) 521-1614  
Email: communications@doj.gov.ph

Hon. Jose Luis Martin Gascon  
Chairperson, Commission on Human Rights  
SAAC Bldg., UP Complex, Commonwealth Avenue  
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
Voice: (+632) 928-5655, 926-6188  
Fax: (+632) 929 0102  
Email: chairgascon.chr@gmail.com

Please send us a copy of your email/mail/fax to the above-named government officials, to our address below:  
KARAPATAN Alliance for the Advancement of People’s Rights  
National Office  
2/F Erythrina Bldg., #1 Maaralin cor Matatag Sts., Brgy. Central,  
Diliman, Quezon City 1100 PHILIPPINES  
Voice/Fax: (+632) 435 4146  
Email: karapatan@karapatan.org  
Website: www.karapatan.org