

# Ecumenical Advocacy Network on the Philippines

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## STATEMENT ON THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS ASIA-PACIFIC SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN SE ASIA, 7-25-2019

We of the Ecumenical Advocacy Network on the Philippines (EANP) thank Chairman Sherman and the other members of the Asia-Pacific Subcommittee present at the hearing and those witness who spoke out on the human rights situation in Philippines. It is important that the hearing emphasized the continuing and escalating human rights abuses by the Duterte Administration's "war on drugs", the extrajudicial killings of indigenous leaders and human rights defenders by paramilitaries, the harassment of journalist Maria Ressa, and the imprisonment of an Amnesty International Prisoner of Conscience, Senator Leila de Lima. The statement by witness Francisco Bencosme of Amnesty International about the very recent killing of a human rights lawyer, followed by total silence of Philippine government officials at all levels, illustrates the alarming impunity felt by the perpetrators of crimes against human rights defenders. In addition Mr. Bencosme spoke about sedition charges that have been filed against 36 persons who have openly opposed human rights violations, including Catholic Bishops, Catholic nuns of the Rural Missions of Mindanao, human rights defenders, former Senatorial candidates, a Senator, and the Vice President.

In response we call on :

1. Congress to take action on the recommendations proposed by Amnesty International's recent report, "They Just Kill Us", that include the following:

"A call on the Philippine government to cooperate with an independent, impartial and effective investigation led by the UN into alleged crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations in the context of the "war on drugs" and to ensure that individuals responsible for violations of domestic law and international human rights law are held accountable, regardless of rank or position, in fair trials before civilian courts."

2. The Appropriations Committees to include human rights restrictions on Foreign Military Financing to the Philippine Army and International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement assistance to the Philippine National police.

3. Support H Res 233 and S Res 142 that condemn the incarceration of Sen De Lima, the harassment of human rights defenders, and politically motivated harassment and charges against journalist Maria Ressa, executive editor of online news outlet *Rappler* and advocate of press freedom.

In addition we urge the US Department of State to refuse an export license for the purchase of weapons by the Philippine National Police.

The archived video of the hearing is available at; <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/2019/7/human-rights-in-southeast-asia-a-regional-outlook>