

March 16, 2021

BY EMAIL

The Right Honorable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Concern re: Massacre of Nine Human Rights Defenders in the Philippines

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

We are writing to you on a matter of utmost urgency. We are profoundly concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in the Philippines. In recent weeks, Lumad (Indigenous groups in Mindanao) school children have been arrested, and the Tumandok (Indigenous group in Panay island) land defenders experienced a massacre. Human rights defenders and Indigenous leaders were arrested on fabricated charges, including Windel Bolinget (Indigenous leader in the Cordillera region).

We are horrified by the recent circulation of 'Kill Lists' (i.e. tantamount to an order to kill) by the Philippine military against Indigenous organizations in the Northern Philippines. Over the weekend of March 4-7, 2021, in a military operation known as 'Bloody Sunday', a state-sanctioned massacre left 9 dead. This targeted attack, which included raids, arrests, and executions, were directed at several Philippines based partner organizations of Canadian labour and faith-based organizations.

The 'Bloody Sunday' killings are clearly part of the implementation of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's so-called, and increasingly brutal, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism campaigns. International and local human rights groups, as well as United Nations experts, have warned that these campaigns no longer make any distinction between armed rebels and non-combatants activists, labour leaders, and human rights defenders.

All dissidents or critics of Duterte have been routinely accused of being members of the Communist Party of the Philippines and labelled terrorists under the Anti-Terrorism Law. This government sponsored red-tagging of activists has deadly consequences.

During a speech on March 5, 2021 at an event of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTC-ELCAC), Duterte's own direction was "Kill, kill them all. Finish them. Don't mind human rights," precipitating the blood bath two days later. The 'Bloody Sunday' raids were implemented by General Antonio Parlade Jr., who was appointed by Duterte to head the NTC-ELCAC.

According to your government's *Voices at Risk: Guidelines on Supporting Human Rights Defenders*, promoting respect for human rights is at the heart of Canada's international policies and engagement. The guidelines specifically mention women, Indigenous Peoples, human rights, and land defenders as vulnerable groups that the Canadian government

engages to protect. And yet, to date, Canadian officials in Ottawa and Manila have been deafeningly silent on the question of human rights in the Philippines. Since your public statement of concern regarding the human rights situation in the Philippines in 2017, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) officials have indicated a preference for quiet diplomacy. The time for quiet diplomacy with the Duterte Regime is over. Tens of thousands have died in Duterte's so-called 'War on Drugs', and at least 300 farmers, indigenous peoples, human rights defenders, including 55 lawyers and judges, have been killed since Duterte came to power in 2016.

We call on the Canadian Government to publicly condemn this state-sponsored terror against the Filipino people. We further call on the Canadian government to end all support to, and cooperation with, the Philippine military and police. This includes withdrawal and ending of financial assistance for anti-terrorism and training provided directly to the Philippine government or through other entities such as the ASEAN and Interpol.

We urge you to follow through on your commitment to protect and promote human rights and to use this commitment as a lens for any ongoing and planned Canadian cooperation with the Duterte government.

Sincerely,

Signatories:

Anakbayan Canada (Youth of the Philippine Nation)
Anglican Church of Canada
BAYAN Canada (New Patriotic Alliance)
Canadian Foreign Policy Institute
Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
Canada Palestine Association
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
FILCASA – Filipino Canadian Student Association (in 27 member schools)
Global Pinoy Diaspora-Canada (GPDC)
International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Malaya Movement in Canada
MIGRANTE Canada
Mining Justice Alliance (MJA)
MiningWatch Canada
National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)
Partera International
Public Service Alliance of Canada – Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada
SAMIDOUN (Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network)
United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada
Unifor

Regional and Local Organizations

Alliance for People's Health (APH)
Association des Parents d'origine Philippine (Filipino Parents Association in Quebec)

Bayanihan Empowerment (Toronto)
Beaconsfield Initiative (Quebec)
Campaign to Defend People's Struggle in Iran
Canada-Philippines Solidarity for Human Rights (CPSHR)
Canada-Philippines Solidarity Organization – CPSO
Centre d'appui aux Philippines/Centre for Philippine Concerns
Criminalization and Punishment Education Program (CPEP)
East Indian Defense Committee (EIDC)
ECTASE- Études contemporaines et transdisciplinaires sur l'Asie du Sud-Est, Univ. de
Montréal
Église unie Saint-James, Montréal, QC
Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Eastern Canada Deanery (Philippine Independent Church,
Eastern Canada Deanery)
International Indigenous Youth Conference (IIYC2005)
Homes not Bombs
Makulay Atbp (Filipino LGBTQ+ collective in Toronto)
Nowar-Paix
Ontario Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines (OCHRP)
Ottawa Raging Grannies
Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)
Palestinian Youth Movement – Vancouver
Peace and Social Concerns Committee of Ottawa Quaker Meeting
People's Defence
Pinay
Pinoy Pride Vancouver Society
Solidarity Notes Labour Choir (SNLC)
Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights – University of British Columbia
South Asian Network for Secularism and Democracy (SANSAD)
Sulong University of British Columbia
Toronto Urban Native Ministry
Tulayan Filipino Diaspora Society
Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC)

Prominent Community Members and Individuals

Flor Marcelino, Former Leader of the Opposition (NDP), The Legislative Assembly of
Manitoba
Malaya Marcelino, Member of The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba (Notre Dame)
Enrique (Ricky) Castelvi, President of the National Congress of Filipino-Canadian
Associations
Rhea Gamana, Host and Producer, Radyo Migrante
Marissa Corpus, Columnist, Atin Ito (Filipino community newspaper)
Aimee Beboso, Host, Talakayang Bayan, 93.1 CKCU FM (Canada)
Guy Camacho, University of the Philippines Alumni Association in Toronto - UPAAT
Olivia Camacho, University of the Philippines Alumni Association in Toronto – UPAAT
Dr. Leonora Angeles, Associate Professor, University of British Columbia (UBC)
Dr. Valerie Raoul, Professor Emerita, University of British Columbia (UBC)
The Very Rev. The Hon. Lois Wilson, CC (Retired Member of the Senate of Canada)
Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson, General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches

C.c.

Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Honourable Michael Chong, Official Opposition, Foreign Affairs Critic

MP Jack Harris, NDP Foreign Affairs Critic

MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, Bloc Québécois

MP Elisabeth May, Green Party

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Subcommittee on International Human Rights

Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights

Kevin Lamoureux, Chair of the Canada-Philippines Interparliamentary Group

H.E. Rudolfo D. Robles, Philippines Ambassador to Canada

Peter MacArthur, Ambassador of Canada to the Philippines