

Statement of Condemnation on the Murder of 14 Farmers in Negros Oriental and Other Human Rights Violations in the Philippines

The Japan Lawyers International Solidarity Association or JALISA strongly condemns the serious human rights violations in Negros Island in the Philippines particularly the unprecedented killings, massive arrests, threats, suppression of people's movement and repression of the rights of farmers, fisherfolks, human rights advocates, lawyers, religious groups, and other sectors.

Data shows that under the Duterte administration, more than 20,000 people were killed in a "war on drugs" campaign and additional 222 people (farmers, fisherfolks, human rights advocates, lawyers, and religious members) were executed due to political issue, land dispute, etc.

In a press conference of international lawyers attended by our delegate in Manila, it was reported that the Extrajudicial Killing (EJK) in Negros island has drastically increased especially with the cancelation of the peace negotiation with CPP-NDF-NPA, the declaration of a state of national emergency in Negros island, Samar, and Bicol region (E.O. No. 32) and the institution of a national task force to end local communist armed conflict (E.O. No. 70). Under the present administration, the number of victims of EJK among members of people's organizations in the island reached 69 and 54 of which are farmers.

Some notable cases are:

- 1) Nine farm workers (Sagay 9) were shot dead over a land dispute in Sagay, Negros Occidental on 20th October 2018.
- 2) Atty. Benjamin "Ben" Ramos, a human rights lawyer who has rendered legal services to the families of the victims of Sagay 9, was also shot dead.
- 3) Human rights advocates were threatened.
- 4) Six farmers and *habal-habal* (motorbike) drivers were shot dead during Oplan Sauron on 27th December 2018 in Guihngan City and Santa Catalina.
- 5) Fourteen (14) people were shot dead in Oplan Sauron by combined forces of AFP and PNP on 30th March 2019 in Canlaon City, Manjuyod and Sta. Catalina.
- 6) A number of people were falsely arrested in both operations.

In the aftermath of March 30, 2019 massacre, a fact-finding mission was held and some of the findings are:

- 1) The victims were attacked at the wee hours while they were sleeping at home.
- 2) The AFP and PNP alleged and insisted that the "suspects" are sympathizers of New People's Army (NPA) and fought back so they shot the "suspects" dead.
- 3) A member of the victim's family testified that the victim had his arms raised as a gesture of submission but after his family was dragged out of the house, the victim was shot dead.

- 4) The search warrants served by the policemen contain errors such as the name of the person and so on.
- 5) Witnesses testified that firearms found at their houses were planted by PNP or AFP.

Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence nor to unlawful attacks on his honour and reputation. The Covenant likewise guarantees the right of a person to enjoy the freedom of thought and religion, political freedom and freedom of expression.

Similarly, the Philippine constitution guarantees that no person shall be held to answer for a criminal offense without due process of law. The killing of lawyers, political activists, and religious persons who have supported the struggling people implies that basic freedom and rights are not guaranteed.

We condemn these barbaric acts against humanity and appeal to the Philippine government to investigate, to punish the party/ies involved, and to take preventive measures that such atrocities will not be repeated nor tolerated. Thus, we appeal:

- 1) To investigate all killings, illegal arrests, and threats inflicted on farmers, fisherfolks, sugar workers, social and political activists, lawyers, and religious persons.
- 2) To accommodate and acknowledge the investigation initiated by United Nations Commission on Human Rights and International Criminal Court.
- 3) To punish the persons involved in the killings and illegal arrests.
- 4) To protect the families of the victims and the witnesses.
- 5) To take measures to defend the rights guaranteed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Philippine Constitution.

Japan Lawyers International Solidarity Association

11th April 2019

** Japan Lawyers International Solidarity Association or JALISA was established in 1957 and an affiliate of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers.*

Send to:

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