

Statement Philippine Conference - Helsinki, Finland September 3, 2006

We, representatives of European and Philippine organizations participating in the Philippine Conference held 3 September 2006, in Helsinki, Finland are alarmed at the upsurge of politically motivated killings, increasing harassment of people in the community, and threats of assassination, indicating a general deterioration of the human rights conditions in the country

Amnesty International reports that over 50 political killings took place in the first half of 2006, compared to the 66 killings recorded in the whole of 2005.

The number of political killings targeting journalists and unarmed activists has been dramatically increasing, at times on a daily basis, since March 2006. Particularly worrisome is that the pattern of killings suggests that a policy of the Philippine government is underlying it.

The killings must stop – NOW! The main responsibility to make this happen rests on the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo government.

We stress the need to investigate all political killings and to prosecute the perpetrators and their accomplices. We urge the government to give justice to the victims and their families.

- We call on President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to use her executive powers to halt the killings of activists.
- We demand the formation of a genuinely independent citizen's commission to investigate the killings, ensure that the perpetrators are brought to court and punished and the victims' families compensated.
- We call on President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to fully and meaningfully implement the witness protection program.
- We call on the Senate and the House of Representatives to review and strengthen existing laws related to the protection and promotion of human rights of the citizenry, with the aim of fulfilling the letter and spirit of international human rights laws that the Philippine government has ratified.

We call upon governments in Europe – national governments and the European Union – to: firstly, convey to the Philippine government their concern about the widespread politically motivated killings, and urge President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to ensure an immediate end to these grave human rights violations, and secondly, to condition the continuation of the EU's and EU members' overseas development assistance to the Philippine government's ability to protect the human rights of its citizens.

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