



14 March 2018

President Rodrigo Duterte
President of the Republic
Malacañang Palace,
JP Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila
The Philippines

E-mail: op@president.gov.ph

Letter of concern regarding the tagging of noted human rights defenders as 'terrorists'

Dear President Duterte,

We wish to add our voices to those condemning the recent filing, on 21 February 2018, of a legal petition to have a number of organizations, associations, and leaders declared as terrorists and outlaws pursuant to the National Security Act of 2007.

To our shock, and indeed the shock of the world, this includes Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Joan Carling, co-convener of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group on Sustainable Development, Joanna Cariño, member of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) Advisory Council and SANDUGO co-chairperson; Mr. Windel Bolinget, Chairperson of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA); Atty. Jose Molintas, human rights lawyer and former member of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) and Ms. Beverly Longid, global coordinator for the Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation; as well a number of indigenous peoples' leaders and human rights defenders.

The above-named people are internationally recognised civil society activists, with whom CHRP members have engaged on human rights related issues. Ms Tauli-Corpuz particularly has a long track record of working on indigenous rights issues, and has received a number of awards for her work, including the Gabriela Silang Award, which was awarded in 2009 by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

Other UN experts have rallied to defend Ms Tauli-Corpuz. As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, the Philippines is currently marked by a "context of widespread extrajudicial executions and ongoing attacks against voices who are critical of the current government, including human rights defenders."¹ The people named are clearly human rights defenders, and therefore, the Philippine Government has a duty under the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders to guarantee their right to strive for the realization of human rights. In a statement from Ms. Carling defending herself, she writes "I expect to have the possibility to take legal action to clear my name, and expect the Government to ensure the physical safety of those of us who are listed in the petition, as called for by UN experts."

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22783&LangID=E>

We are particularly concerned given the apparently deteriorating human rights situation and the historical grievous rights violations that have accompanied individuals being named on Government-sponsored lists of 'terrorists'. This seems to be a continuation, and escalation of a long conflict between defenders of indigenous peoples' rights and the Government of the Philippines. It is particularly concerning that it follows Presidential statements of wanting to develop indigenous lands in Mindanao. As a UK-based organisation we are also worried that this is happening at a time when surveillance equipment is being sold to the Philippine Government. In these circumstances we will do all in our power to stop such sales unless it can be proven that such equipment is not being used to monitor the activities of legitimate rights defenders.

We demand action to clear the names of those civil society advocates and human rights defenders named. We demand that the Philippine Government ensure the physical safety of those listed in the petition and respect international human rights law. We join in the global call of international concern that has followed these worrying developments.

Kaleb Lloyd - Secretary

Campaign for Human Rights in the Philippines (CHRP)

chrp.org.uk - secretary@chrp.org.uk [+447483990557](tel:+447483990557)

Twitter & Facebook - @chrpuk