

*...let us welcome peace in our hearts...
...let peace reign in our land!*

A Call for the Release of All Political Prisoners, for the Conclusion of *Comprehensive Agreement on Social Economic Reforms*, and for the Commitment to Continue the Peace Process.

We as church people hold on to our conviction:

Peace is God's covenant with God's people. Peace is God's ultimate purpose for his people and desires that people experience it. *God said through Prophet Ezekiel "I will make with them a covenant of peace" (Ezekiel 34:25). Prophet Isaiah proclaims: "You will go out with joy and be led forth in peace..." (Isa 55:12) Zechariah gave his assurance "...He will proclaim peace to the nations..." (Zec 9:10)*

Christ bestowed us peace. *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. --John 14:27*

We are called to be peacemakers. *We share the ministry of Jesus: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor". (Luke 4:18-19) Jesus urge us to be peacemakers: Blessed are the peacemakers for they will inherit the kingdom.-(Matthew 5:9)*

From our conviction, we welcome peace in our hearts and desire peace to reign in our land. Henceforth:

- 1. We call on the government, the Duterte Administration, to release all political prisoners being a significant step towards just and lasting peace.***

We welcome your proclamation to release political prisoners on your campaign promise. It was perhaps like Jesus proclamation during his public statement of his ministry "to proclaim release to the captives..." (Luke 4: 18). The people trust you on your word. That trust is the foundation of the stability of the present government. Reneging on that campaign promise is definitely a betrayal of people's trust; and that will certainly lead to instability and unpeace.

More than that, upholding freedom of conscience and free volition, from which political conviction emanates, is inherent to humans being created in God's image. Allowing people to exercise that freedom is essential to a just and lasting peace. Violating such inherent human freedom by detaining them because of their exercise of this freedom through political activities is anti-peace. Political prisoners are victims of such violation. Out of their moral and legitimate exercise of freedom of conscience and free volition by engaging in political activities, they were imprisoned on unjust accusation and trumped up charges. Restoring to them that freedom is essentially upholding the inherent humanity that we shared together as a divine gift.

Political prisoners are not guilty of anything against the people, not like common criminals, for they hold no selfish motives in their hearts but to serve the people especially the poor and marginalized. Their activity, while construed as threat to the state, is essentially an authentic conviction to fight for and uphold fundamental human

rights, to establish social justice and to attain national independence. Their social purpose and political activities are essential to achieve genuine and lasting peace in the land.

2. We call on the GPH and the NDF to Conclude and Sign the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms

We share with our view that the heart of the Peace Talks and ultimately the peace agreement is the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER). This CASER which include programs to address rural poverty and inequality, program for national industrialization, program for environmental protection, program for comprehensive delivery of social services among others will certainly benefit vast majority of the population. This is the very foundation of just and lasting peace.

The present social and economic condition breeds violence for it deprives people of basic needs for decent, humanely life. The control by the few of vast economic resource causes massive poverty and suffering for the great majority of the Filipino people. The farmers whose lives are nurtured by the land they till are deprived of that very land, relegating them to centuries of suffering. Workers who labor to produce the needs of the people and cause society to develop are deprived of the fruits of their own labor. Indigenous people who first inhabited the land planted the seeds of modern society are now the ones deprived of land they first inhabited. No decent shelter for urban poor; children and women are sold to slavery; OFWs are raped and abused. The list goes on. We put our confidence that the signing and implementation of CASER will resolve poverty and suffering and to end violence.

We foresee many possible obstacles to CASER coming from sectors that are against social change. These people have been for a long time feasted on wealth of the nation at the expense of the people. But the peace panels must not be discouraged. They must persevere in their mission. They must always find ways-- "To seek peace and pursue it." (Psalms 34: 13)

3. We call on the GPH and NDF to continue the peace process, always building up confidence with each other, honoring previous agreement, until the final conclusion of the Peace Talks and make peace reign in our land

Commitment to peace is seeing to it that this will be realized. Commitment must be the only precondition to be able to continue the peace talk and the whole peace process. Giving preconditions other than commitment is working against peace itself.

Commitment to peace is in itself confidence building. Both panels knowing that they are all committed to peace will certainly hold on to the real possibility to attain genuine peace no matter what. We urge you not to waiver on your commitment.

Honoring previous agreements is the actual expression of commitment to peace. The previous agreement are the building blocks, the stepping stones, the lighted path towards conclusion of peace agreement. Not honoring previous agreements is actually destroying all the initiatives for peace and dishonoring the lives of many who offered life and limbs to plant the seeds of peace.

As we welcome peace in our hearts we too commit to work so that peace reign in our land.

We commit ourselves to continue praying for peace like St Francis of Assisi, whose solemn prayer, “Lord Make Me an instrument of Thy peace”, continue to burn our hearts with passion.

We commit to educate people to the way of peace; organize and mobilize them, and become peacemakers themselves.

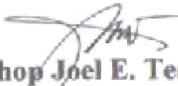
We commit our material and faith resources to assist people who are victims of violence and help them become agent of peace.

We commit ourselves to Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, who called us to be peacemakers.

Signed during the SLJ JAC Meeting held on January 13-16, 2017 at UCCP San Teodoro, Oriental Mindoro

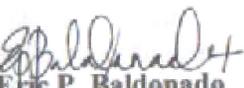
...let us welcome peace in our hearts...
...let peace reign in our land!

A Call for the Release of All Political Prisoners for the Conclusion of Comprehensive Agreement on Social Economic Reforms, and for the Commitment to Continue the Peace Process


Bishop Joel E. Tendaro
SLJA Jurisdictional Bishop

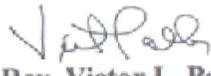

Rev. Joel E. Bayot
BAC Conference Minister


Rev. Junwel M. Bueno
STC Conference Minister

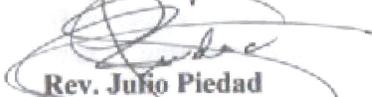

Rev. Eric P. Baldonado
UCC Conference Minister

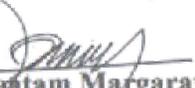

Rev. Samson Divino
NBC Conference Minister


Rev. Lemuel Igdanes
SBC Conference Minister

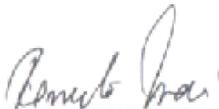

Rev. Victor L. Paller
NESTCON Conference Minister

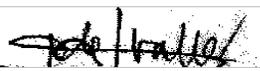

Rev. Ireneo Manalo
STC Deputy Conference Minister


Rev. Julio Piedad
UCC Deputy Conference Minister


Rev. Johtam Margarata
NBC Deputy Conference Minister

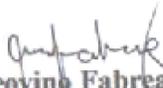

Rev. Josue Malto
SBC Deputy Conference Minister

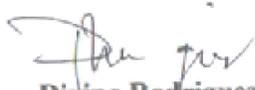

Rev. Romulo Mari
OMC Conference Minister


Rev. Elena del Valle
PAC Conference Minister


Rev. Gener Destor
OMC Deputy Conference Minister


Rev. Elideo Abad
PAC Deputy Conference Minister


Rev. Leovino Fabrega
OMAC Conference Minister


Divino Rodriguez
UCM SLJA President


Maribel Golloy
CWA SLJA Representative


Marilyn B. Apicete
CYF SLJA Coordinator