



HUMAN RIGHTS WEEK CELEBRATION GUIDE 2017

*"The Mission of Advancing
Peace Based on Justice
by Upholding Human and
People's Rights in these
Critical Times"*



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FOREWORD FOR THE UCCP HR WEEK CELEBRATION GUIDE 2017

The year 2017 has come for the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) to observe, once again, the Human Rights (HR) Week Celebration comes December 10-16, this time with the Theme: ***“The Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People’s Rights in These Critical Times,”*** based on the two suggestive biblical texts: Exodus 3:7-15 and Luke 4:16-21. This has been an annual celebration for capability-building among our church’s constituents under the Justice, Peace and Human Rights (JPHR) Program of the UCCP.



Consistent with the goal number one of our Vision and Mission, ***“Strengthening the Faith Community,”*** the production of the UCCP HR Week Celebration Guide 2017 aims to enlighten, equip and encourage church’s judicatories, organizations and institutions (JOIs) to manifest such prophetic witness in today’s challenging times: **The Marawi’s Siege and State of Tyranny thru the declaration of Martial Law in Mindanao by the US-Duterte’s regime resulting to the on-going aerial bombing in Marawi City to exterminate the Maute’s composite group and the mass evacuation of survivors, the persistent capitalist’s plunder of natural resources thru the so called “development aggression” coupled with intense militarization resulting into forced displacement of indigenous peoples from their tribal communities, the Extra-Judicial Killings (EJK) related to illegal drugs and criminality perpetrated allegedly by state agents and the so called “vigilantes,” the rampant state political repression against ecumenical and multi-sectoral human rights defenders, the very ironic campaign against corruption and turning down the appointments of belittled nationalist and progressive Cabinet Members (Gina Lopez, Judy Tagiwalo and Rafael Mariano), the stalled Peace Talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP),** just to mention major burning issues, among others, in our country today.

To give contents of the material, the JPHR Program Office have selected and invited once again pool of writers/contributors to share Bible Study, Biblico-Theological Reflection, Sermons, Testimonies, Liturgies, and other Human Rights related writings and/or documents. They are persons whose commitment and passion to peacemaking based on justice in word and in deed have been proven as both their mission and a way of life in service to God and His people.

It is, therefore, our hope that this resource material will truly impact in strengthening our individual and collective response to the call of God of doing His mission for peace and justice by upholding the sanctity of human life and integrity of creation entrusted to His Church to live-out “in season and out of season.”

We are very much grateful specially to the following contributors who made this resource-material possible: The Rev. Dr. Victor Aguilan, Rev. Dr. Dennis Solon and Rev. Revelation Velunta for the Bible Study; Rev. Dr. Eleazar Fernandez and Rev. Carlton “Cobbie” Palm for the Biblico-Theological Reflection; Rev. George Lungay and CM Rev. Elaine Salem for the Sermon; Rev. Cathy Chang, CM Rev. Junwel Bueno and Rev. Reece Ven R. Vico for the Testimonies; and the Rev. Francisco Aviso, Jr. for the Liturgy.

Equally thankful to Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza for his Words of Greetings and Encouragement to our constituents not only to read but make prophetic witness as a way of life at all times. To Melinda Grace Aoanan and Zhara Jane Alegre for editing and Leandro Karlo Suarez for the Layout.

Above all, to the God who make all things possible we offer our praises and thanksgiving!

Bible Study Guides

Bible Study Guides

THERE IS ONLY “ALL OF US!”

*A Bible Study on Luke 4:16-30 from Prayerful Preparation
by Revelation Velunta*



When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this

Joseph’s son?” He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Introduction

Many students of the Bible do not read the Bible. They either read books about the Bible or very small parts. A lot are experts in proof texting. One of the best ways to understand scripture is to read each passage as part of a greater whole. Luke 4:16-30 is part of Luke 4. Luke 4 is part of the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke is one half of the two-volume work, Luke-Acts. One of the best ways to understand the text we call Luke-Acts is to understand the context that birthed it: the Roman Empire.¹

First century Palestine, according to historians, had the elite, the rich and the landed, composed mostly of monarchs and aristocratic families, representing the top 1%. Moving down the ladder, was a retainer class: tax gatherers, police, scribes, priests, etc. (9%). The bulk of the population, three out of every four, consisted of merchants, very few of whom were well off; artisans, almost all of whom lacked worldly goods; and farmers and fisher-folk. Finally, below these were the untouchables (i.e., 15%) who were cripples, prostitutes, excess children of peasant farmers sent away as day laborers and beggars, runaway slaves, who lived in the hedges outside the cities. Half of the population subsisted on 1,000 calories a day which meant they were slowly starving to death. The poor could afford only bread and fish, dried or salted, which were the basic food of the lower classes in the cities, slaves, and peasants. There was even a presumption then that when a poor person had fresh fish, the person was a thief!²

Good news to the poor

The empire preached good news to the rich. Luke’s Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor. Liberation theologians have argued for decades that Luke-Acts is the best source for underpinning the church’s

preferential option for the poor, its anti-imperial rhetoric. Mary's Song of Praise celebrates the God who takes sides, the Lord who scatters the proud, brings down the powerful, and sends the rich away empty. The same Lord who lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things. Luke's Jesus proclaims, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor." His Sermon on the Plain declares blessings to the poor and woes to the rich. The rich are challenged to sell everything they have, give all the proceeds to the poor and follow Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles tell of communities where no one was in need and where ministry to widows and orphans and strangers was a priority.

Historical Jesus scholars argue that the passage we are studying anticipates and summarizes the whole Lukan gospel story: the Christian mission is to carry good news to the poor beyond Israel, to the Gentiles and to the ends of the earth.³ To bring my point closer to home: this particular passage, specifically verses 18 and 19, is a favourite among many churches and church-related institutions in the Philippines, especially among those who confess that our mission and witness as followers of Jesus should take the poor and the marginalized as our preferential partners. Verses 18 and 19 are included in the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.⁴

Us, them, all of us

The pronoun "us" assumes belongingness. Being a part of a whole. More particularly, "us" are insiders. As far as the people of Nazareth were concerned, Jesus were "one of us." Isaiah was "one of us." The promises from Scripture was "for us." Jesus's proclamation of said promises fulfilled in their hearing was also "for us." Ultimately, all these presuppose that God is always and only "for us."

"Us" also presumes another group. Those that do not belong. Them. The outsiders. The empire, built on privilege, power, possession and commodification, divides and conquers peoples. The empire creates "us" and "them." What Luke's Jesus declares in verses 25-27 echoes the inclusive theme of the gospel and resonates with Paul's declaration in Galatians 3:28: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female..." Jesus actually proclaims the alternative to the Kingdom of Caesar, "In the Kingdom of God, there is no 'us,' there is no 'them.' There is only 'all of us.'"

At first, those who listened to Jesus read Isaiah were happy. Then as they listened to him interpret the challenge of the jubilee they metamorphosed into a mob bent on throwing Jesus off a cliff! Why? Because Jesus dared to change the beneficiaries of God's jubilee. Leviticus 25, the year of the Lord's favor, proclaimed land, liberty and cancellation of all debts. Jubilee meant gospel, good news to a people suffering under Roman occupation. Jesus challenged their interpretation of "us" to include "them."

For Jesus, there is only "all of us." If God is our parent, then we, all of us, are God's children. We are all sisters and brothers. Not just his fellow Nazarenes. Not just his fellow Galileans. During the time of Elijah, when drought and famine ravished the land, there were many widows in Israel, yet God sent Elijah to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, yet none of them were cleansed except Naaman the Syrian. For Jesus, God's children include the widow at Zarephath in Sidon and Naaman the Syrian.

To reiterate, for Jesus, the poor, the captives, the blind, the oppressed and everyone waiting for the year of the Lord's favor were not just "us" Israelites but also "them," the Gentiles, who were poor, captives, blind, oppressed and everyone waiting for the year of the Lord's favor. Thus, the jubilee is not just for "us" but also for "them," and therefore for "all of us."

If we do a quick survey of the gospel, Luke's Jesus includes a lot of "them" in "all of us." Shepherds, a leper, a paralytic, a centurion, a centurion's servant, a sinful woman, a Gerasene formerly possessed by demons, a hemorrhaging woman, a crippled woman, children, ten lepers, a blind beggar, a widow, one of the two who was crucified with him, Lazarus, The Samaritan, and Zacchaeus, the tax collector, to name

just a few.

And if we need more biblical and historical support for Jesus transgressing the widest divide empire created to separate “us” from “them,” then his challenge, “Love your enemies” (Luke 6.27f and Matthew 5.33f) removes all doubt. Even Jewish scholars agree that these statements are unique to this particular first century Jewish rabbi!⁵ In the gospel, we have “enemies who love,” who actually serve the least, who actually take the side of those whose only hope is God. There’s Zacchaeus, the rich, chief tax collector who gives back to the poor and pays back four times everyone he had defrauded. The centurion, who not only loved the Jewish people and built their synagogue, but loved his slave⁶ dearly and sought help when the latter was ill and close to death. Then, of course, we have the Samaritan who was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers.

And the book of Acts follows this transformed, alternative, expanding community—of Jews and Gentiles, of former enemies, now sisters and brothers in the faith—from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, into the heart of the Empire! And several centurions play important roles in bringing the gospel of the poor to Rome.

Lest we forget, postcolonial theories argue that the empire’s divide and conquer techniques pit one colonized group against another. The oppressed, the colonial subjects, become enemies. The oppressors, the colonizers, become benevolent masters. Empire perpetuates its self-serving paradigm by constructing one group, one race, one place or one people as superior to another. Imperialism, then and now, has always been about forcing a single truth upon a plural world. This creates alienation and enmity among the colonized groups. Thus, dynamics exist not only between the colonizer and the colonized, between the margins and the centre, but more importantly among various groups of the colonized, the margins. Some try to gain power to define national cultural identity, as well as to compete for the attention of their collective oppressor. Empire creates colonies that seek its favor. Empire also creates colonial mentality; when the colonized are possessed by the colonizer. Rome maintained its power by pitting different groups of “us” against different groups of “them.”

The Spanish occupation of the Philippines lasted for over three centuries. During those three hundred years, there were no more than five thousand Spaniards in the islands in any given time. There were revolts against Spain every nine months during those three centuries, but the Spaniards did very little fighting. The natives did most of the fighting among themselves!

There is only all of us

A life dedicated to the liberation of the poor, oppressed and marginalized was a dangerous threat to the empire. And so was the movement that followed that life. The empire crucified Jesus. The empire swallowed up Christianity. The empire strikes back. It always does. Divide and conquer. Insiders and outsiders. White and colored. Straight and gay. Men and women. Saved and heathen. The 1% and all the rest. Christians and those damned to hell. Us versus Them. Forcing a single truth upon a plural world.

Western Christianity has been closely related to empire since the Roman days and has thus spread throughout the world. It is now being used to provide ideological legitimization for today’s empire. Globalized Christendom and the “crusades” it embarks upon today are symbiotically intertwined with global capital and the power of the global empire. In its triumphalistic pursuits, it discounts if not condemns all other religious faiths and cultures. The indigenous religions of many communities are destroyed and Islam is vilified. The convergence of Christian religion with Western modernity has destroyed the religious and cultural life of peoples and their communities throughout the world. The powers and principalities of the global market and empire are being baptised by these theological distortions of “Christianity,” which promote religious conflicts and bigotry globally. The Christian religion of empire

treats others as “gentiles” to be conquered, as the “evil empire” to be destroyed or as the “axis of evil” to be eradicated from the earth. The empire claims that the “goodness” of the empire must overcome these “evils.” Its false messianic spirit is imbued with the demonic. Today, global empire, with its unprecedented reach, represents a massive threat to life. In the face of this pervasive and death-dealing reality of worldwide hegemony, we are inspired and empowered by Jesus of Galilee to resist empire and to renew communities of life. This new reality has economic, political, social, cultural, religious and spiritual dimensions. It presents life and death challenges for Christians, as the empire uses religion to justify its domination and violence and makes claims that belong to God alone.

We ask all churches whose missions and peoples have historically been involved in empire building to seriously scrutinize—in partnership with the victims of their imperial past—their structure, teaching, liturgy, funding agencies and policies as well as their political allegiances, in order to repent and reshape their life in all aspects in the spirit of the anti-imperial biblical heritage.⁷

In the Kingdom of God there is no “us,” there is no “them.” There is only sisters and brothers.

The fifteen million Africans we abducted and forced into slavery and kept chained in our basements while we sang our hymns and worshipped regularly upstairs are our sisters and brothers. The millions of Syrian refugees that we refuse entry into our borders are our sisters and brothers. The 25,000 children, aged five and younger, who starve to death every day because of poverty are our sisters and brothers. And the millions of indigenous peoples we have dispossessed, displaced, and exterminated throughout the centuries are our sisters and brothers. The borders that separate us, our comfort zones, our prejudices, the thick and high fortifications around our homes, our buildings, and places of worship, our accurate color-coded maps, even that Israeli-made apartheid wall in Palestine, the boundaries of caste, creed, race, gender, class—visible and invisible—that separate us, that alienate “us” from “them,” are all man-made. We put them up, which means we can tear them down!

We need to repent. We need to be transformed. We need to remember. We need to act. And many among us who have no idea what “give us today our daily bread” means need to sell everything we have, give the proceeds to the poor, and follow Jesus.

Study Questions

Where is your brother? Where is your sister?

What barriers do you see in your neighborhood?

What barriers have you constructed?

In what ways does your church deconstruct barriers? In what ways does it build walls? Bring down walls?

Who are our enemies? How do we, today, love our enemies?

God’s question to the first sibling, Cain, has not changed. It is the question Jesus’s whole life answered. It is the question we face every single day. It is the question most of us have failed miserably to answer. The day of reckoning is now. Where is your brother? Where is your sister? The Risen One enjoins us: In the Kingdom of God there is no “us,” there is no “them.” There is only “all of us.”

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Endnotes

- ¹ Musa Dube expounds on empire and imperialism in her Bible Study (<http://wcrc.ch/gc2017/prayerful-preparation/on-being-gods-living-sacrifice>)
- ² The works of John Dominic Crossan and William Herzog are excellent resources on this topic.
- ³ *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*.
- ⁴ <http://uccpchurch.com/what-we-believe/>
- ⁵ According to Amy Jill Levine. *Who did he say he was? Jesus in Text and Context*. Available at <https://youtu.be/wbE87SHRQ3A>
- ⁶ I have argued elsewhere that the slave was the centurion's lover.
- ⁷ Excerpted from the Manila Declaration, July 2006. World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Theme: *“The Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People’s Rights in These Critical Times.”*

DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS: Our Calling, Our Mission

by Dr. Victor Aguilan

Exodus 3:7-15 and Luke 4:16-21

Introduction

Human rights are perhaps the most important politico-ethical concept of the present era. The promotion and defense of Human rights are the litmus test of governmental legitimacy. Human rights are those basic standards without which people cannot live in dignity. Human rights are the rights a person has simply because he or she is a human being. Human rights are held by all persons equally, and universally. Human rights are inalienable. To violate someone's human rights is to treat that person as though she or he were not a human being. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) has made human rights advocacy part of its ministry. The 1993 Constitution and By-Laws incorporated human rights as one of UCCP’s declared principles. Section 10 says:



In accordance with the biblical understanding that all persons are created in the image of God, the Church affirms and upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements on human rights, the international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights, the 1984 Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and those that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights.

The provision indicates that the Church’s understanding of human rights is associated with political and legal norms. This is one of the critical characteristics in the human rights advocacy of the UCCP. The Church is willing to use legal arguments in its human rights ministry. The Church acknowledges the following United Nations (UN) documents on human rights, namely:

(1) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. Forty-eight members voted in favor with, and eight abstained. The Declaration serves “as a standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.” The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not a treaty. It did not direct members of the UN to enforce them. No sanctions or enforcement machinery was set up. Although it is not a legally binding document, most nations have recognized the principles of the Declaration. Its principles have been adopted in most state constitutions including that of the Philippines.

(2) The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which were adopted in 1966. These two Covenants were designed to be legally binding in all the States that ratify them. These two International Covenants provide wider, and in more detail, the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration. Also, the two Covenants set up mechanisms through which the United Nations can oversee the implementation by the State parties.

(3) The Convention against Torture and other Cruel or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

(4) Other agreements on human rights that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights which include non-combatants and “prisoners-of-war.”

It is the only Church in the Philippines that incorporated human rights instrumentalities and UN declarations as part of its ecclesiology. For the UCCP, these UN documents are important for the Church ministry. The documents are concrete standard of State obligation to its citizens. Though human rights are violated around the world, nevertheless a commitment to human rights has increasingly become a plumb line for evaluating the behavior of governments, transnational corporations, multi-lateral agencies, and political parties. Moreover, human rights are especially important as an arena in which Christians can find common ground with others searching for a common good that protects the life and dignity of persons.

We also know human rights violation cause violence and un-peace in the community. There can be no peace when human rights are violated. This is expressed in the *Peacemaking Our Ministry* document of the Council of Bishops, which states “Genuine peace comes when justice is served.” The document further states that the kind of peace the church seeks should result in “building structures that promote human development and uphold human dignity.” To quote from the statement:

For as long as peasants remain landless
For as long as laborers do not receive just wages
For as long as we are politically and economically dominated by foreign nations
For as long as we channel more money to the military than to basic social services,
For as long as the causes of social unrest remain untouched,
There will be no peace.

Today, the defense of human rights is necessary to end violence and to have peace in the community.

The Church has consistently emphasized that the protection of human rights is integral with its peacemaking. There is no lasting peace without respect for human rights. Promotion of human rights and democracy is one important practice in the just peacemaking approach. According to Stassen, “Extensive empirical evidence shows that the spreading of democracy and respect for human rights, including religious liberty, is widening the zones of peace.”

It is but fitting that we return to the Bible for guidance and wisdom as we celebrate the HR week. Two biblical texts are selected for our bible study: Exodus 3:7-15 and Luke 4:16-18

Exodus 3:7-15

7 Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10 So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” 11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” 12 He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.” 13 But Moses said to God, “If I

come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.”^a He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” 15 God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD,^b the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

Luke 4:16-21

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

I. God, the first Defender of Human Rights

And in verses 7 and 8 the LORD said: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.” These verses reveal the very nature of God. A God who sees, who hears, who knows and who come down to deliver the oppressed.

Yahweh, the God of Israel, our God was and is the First Human Rights Defender. God saw how the Hebrew people labored under inhuman and harsh conditions. How their young men were the targets, with Pharaoh ordering that all Hebrew children should be thrown in the Nile (Exodus 1:22). Under this Pharaoh, the Hebrew people were deprived of their fundamental human rights. God saw the Pharaoh and his officials violating the human rights of the Hebrews.

In the Philippines, the poor, the lumad, the peasants and workers continue to experience human rights violations. One of the most heart-wrenching images in the war against drugs was the extra-judicial killing of 17-year-old Kian Loyd Delos Santos in a police operation. Let us not forget the killing of Rabenio Sungit, 44 years old on 5 September 2011, who was an active lay leader of the UCCP and a leader of the indigenous group Pagsambatan (Unity of Indigenous People). In Quezon, Palawan. His brother Avelino Sungit was a victim of extra-judicial killing in 2005. Like the Hebrew people, victims of human rights violations “cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.” (Exodus 2:23).

II. God calls us to defend human rights

In verse 10 God said to Moses “come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” The text describes why God called Moses. God, the Human Right Defender, wanted Moses to be a human rights defender and send him back to Pharaoh to lead the Israelites out of their miserable slavery in Egypt.

The calling of Moses to be God’s instrument is a constant theme in the Scripture. God called Abraham. God’s call was not simply a voice calling his name but a mandate that would require him to change his whole life. Abraham was quite old when God told him to exchange a comfortable life that he knew since childhood for something totally new and uncertain. Prophet Samuel was called in his early childhood years. Samuel did not have a chance to grow up like a normal kid. Jeremiah’s call is another story. Even before he was born, God called him to be a prophet. And Mary called by God to bear the Messiah. God has always called someone before to be God’s instrument, and He will most certainly do it again.

As we celebrate Human Rights week, let us remember that we are like Moses, called by God to defend human rights. The UCCP has responded to this call in history. In 1974, the UCCP General Assembly Statement on National Issues, raising concern about the possible abuses of the military under Pres. Marcos’ martial law. The Statement says –

Under the regime of Martial Law, the military has a big hand in the carrying out of government programs. We pray that they will have the strength equal to the task. We are deeply concerned by the fact that many of those being detained have not been charged in court. We appeal for a more speedy dispensation of justice. Furthermore, we express disapproval of any maltreatment of citizens, believing that every individual, however lowly and humble he may be, is a child of the Heavenly Father.

And in 1978, the UCCP General Assembly approved The *Statement on Human Rights*. The Statement provided for the creation of “a desk for human rights” within the structure of the Church. The Statement was brief and concise. In just one sentence the *Statement* said, “We believe that human rights are gifts from God, and that His will is for us to enjoy the fullness of our humanity.” The biblical and theological basis of this resolution was apparent.

These historic statements continue to be relevant today considering that the whole island of Mindanao is under Martial Law since May 23, 2017 (Proclamation No. 216). Today, God is still calling men and women to be God’s instrument to fulfill the Divine mission.

III. God empowers human right defenders

And like Moses, we are reluctant to accept the call. In verses 11- 14, Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” Moses is reluctant, and we should not be surprised. He is supposed to challenge the Pharaoh and tell him to let the entire nation go free.

However, Yahweh empowers Moses saying, “I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain” (Ex 3:10-12). This a biblical truth when God calls someone to do God’s mission, he receives powers from God. Like Moses, human rights defenders receive powers from God to do the task. We have received the power of speech and language, the power of companionship, and everything we have, e.g. time, talents and wealth. We deceive ourselves when we do not use what the Lord has given us. God does not look at what we hold in our hands; he looks at what we have in our hearts.

Defending human rights is a difficult task. But God has given us an assurance saying, “I will be with you.” When we defend human rights, God is with us. This is what Jesus meant in the parable of the last judgment in Matt 25,40 “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

IV. God fulfills human rights

God was and is the defender of human rights. And God calls us to be one, a human right defender like Moses. But what is the purpose of defending human rights? The purpose of defending human rights is to fulfill human rights. Verse 8 says, “to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” To fulfill human rights means to make sure that the human rights standard is attained. To fulfill human rights is to guarantee the full realization of these rights. To fulfill human rights is to ensure people live in peace based on justice, with dignity, freedom and protection.

God the defender of human rights was also the one who fulfilled the human rights of the Hebrews by the gift the land. God rescued the Hebrews and brought them to the land of milk and honey to realize their human rights so that they can live in peace, justice, freedom and freedom. And finally, Jesus Christ would fulfill the promise of liberation. Luke 4:21 Jesus announces “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus was able to fulfill God’s mission. His life and ministry fulfilled the Scripture. He had compassion on poor widows. He raised the dead. He forgave sinners. He healed the sick. He condemned the rich who exploited the poor, especially the orphans and the widows. He released people from captivity and other forms of slavery (spiritual, economic and political). Jesus was the one who fulfills the human rights of the poor and oppressed by restoring their humanity and dignity.

Today, Churches are called to work for the fulfillment and realization of human rights. We can play vital roles raising awareness about human rights, advocating the protection of rights, and providing services that implement rights. We can be active in the peace process. We remind the government and rebels to strictly abide by the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) which may alleviate to some extent the threats to personal, community and political security.

Human rights violations often happen in the workplace, schools, churches, in the barangay, in the local jail, and in everyday places. We can start by having a regular human rights education in our various ministries and programs, e.g., Sunday School, liturgy, and CTE. We can campaign for city, municipality or barangay declarations on human rights to shows the local commitment to the protection, promotion of human rights, and improvement of public services. Human rights are everybody’s responsibility.

Bible Study Questions

1. In this passage, we hear that God was moved by the cries of the Hebrews in Egypt. What affect have the cries coming from victims of human rights violations had on you? Have they moved you to compassion, anger, sadness, indifference, or in some other way?
2. Moses initially felt inadequate to the task God to which called him. What are the hurdles or challenges you face to taking a more active role in advocating for peace based on justice?

3. How do we realize and fulfill human rights in our community? What are the steps you can take to help?

¹ Douglas J. Elwood, *Human Rights: A Christian Perspective*, (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1990), 21-22.

² Ibid.

³ Protocol II: Protocol additional to the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Victims of Non-International Armed Conflict and Rights of Protected Groups (workers, women, children and juveniles, aliens, prisoners, aging persons, disabled persons, peoples and minorities) in Alvaro Senturias Jr. and others, eds., *Human Rights, Justice and Peace: Manual of References* (Quezon City: UCCP, 1989), 113-146.

⁴ Peacemaking our Ministry, CB 1986

⁵ Council of Bishops, "Peacemaking our Ministry, 21 August 1986."

⁶ Glen H. Stassen, *New Paradigm: Just Peacemaking Theory* (2003, accessed 20 March 2004); available from http://www.fullerseminary.net/sot/faculty/stassen/cp_content/homepage/Resource_files/1what_is_just_peacemaking_.htm. and Glen Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War* (Cleveland: Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998).

⁷ Church worker and brother of EJK victim also gunned down by suspected state security forces in Palawan, Philippines <http://www.karapatan.org/UA+Church+worker+gunned+down+by+suspected+state+security+forces+in+Palawan> accessed May 1, 2016. See also Philippines: indigenous activist killed in the latest of a series of deadly attacks - See more <http://www.minorityvoices.org/news.php/en/829/philippines-indigenous-activist-killed-in-the-latest-of-a-series-of-deadly-attacks#sthash.1iB5Yqrp.dpuf> accessed May 1, 2016.

⁸ Ibid.

“The Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People’s Rights in These Critical Times”

By Dr. Dennis Solon

Biblical Text: Romans 5:1



„Therefore, after having been justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.“

I. Introduction

This year’s theme, „The Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People’s Rights in These Critical Times“ invites us to reflect once again on two important, yet elusive, terminologies that could summarize the essential nature and character of the UCCP as God’s called out assembly – *justice* and *peace*. As stipulated in our church documents, these two words are intertwined. For instance, our Statement of Faith says:

„WE BELIEVE, that God is at work to make each person a new being in Christ and the whole world God’s Kingdom in which love, *justice* and *peace* prevail.“ [italics added]

Our constitution also clearly expresses UCCP’s commitment to justice and peace as an active response to God’s call:

„In faithfulness to Jesus’ proclamation of his own mission (Luke 4:18-19), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), the Church, as the People of God, is called to a ministry of love and service and the search for *peace* based on *justice* and reconciliation, in obedience to, and as exemplified by Jesus Christ“. [Art. IV, Sec. 1, italics added]

The gospel narratives describe Jesus’ personal dedication to peace and justice, such as those found in Luke 4–7. We can always turn to the Gospels – namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – whenever we want to be reminded of the seriousness of peace and justice in the life and ministry of the Church as demonstrated by Jesus himself in his proclamation and action.

The epistolary writings of Paul also convey a similar message of peace based on justice, albeit in a different way. One example is the text of this Bible Study – Romans 5:1 (see proposed translation above).

II. Rom 5:1 and justice and peace

The beautiful thing in Romans 5:1 is its direct lexical reference to justice and peace. Perhaps this is the only verse in the New Testament where the two lexemes can both be found. But this may not be seen easily because the semantic field of justice appears here as a verb. For that, a brief study of this lexeme would be in order. It comes from the Greek root *dikē*, which basically means „justice“, from which cognates are formed, such as *dikaïos* („just“, „righteous“), *adikos* („unjust“, „unrighteous“), *dikaïosynē* („justice“, „righteousness“), *adikia* („injustice“), *dikaïōma* („regulation“ [in relation to justice]), *dikaïōsis* („justification“), *dikaïokrisía* („[just] judgment“), and *dikaioō* („to justify“). A close counterpart of *dikē* in Filipino is „tarung“, from which words like „katarungan“ or „pagkamatarung“ are derived.

It is worth noting that the rich semantic field of *dikē* („justice“) is scattered in Paul’s letter to the Romans, let alone its many occurrences in his other letters (e.g., Corinthian letters and Galatians). At least all of its cognate forms listed above are mentioned in Romans. In this letter alone, the „justice“ vocabu-

lary has 77 occurrences in 60 verses. Due to a limited space here, we can only discuss some that are directly related to the theme of our study, especially those found in the first six chapters of the letter (Romans) where our main Biblical text appears.

III. Justice of God in Romans

Paul's use of the „justice“ terminologies in Romans revolves around his understanding of God's justice in Jesus Christ. This we see right away in Rom 1:16–17, where the word first appears in the letter:

„For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power toward salvation for every believer, to the Jew first and to the Greek as well. For in it God's justice (*dikaiosynē*) is revealed from faith for faith, just as it has been written: „the just (*dikaioi*) shall live by faith.“

Most English Bible translations render the word *dikaiosynē* with either „righteousness“ (e.g., HCSB, ESV, NIV, NAB, NRSV, CEB) or „justice“ (NJB). Although the translation „justice“ for *dikaiosynē* is quite a minority among English translations, it effectively captures the social nuances of *dikaiosynē*, especially in view of the social and economic crises in our land, where the truly guilty but has influence usually get away with their crimes. As a social terminology, it describes a person's character based on how s/he treats another being. When a person oppresses or exploits another being, we can say that such a person is committing injustice and is therefore, on the basis of his/her activities toward the other, unjust. The translation „righteousness“ for *dikaiosynē* seems to lose the social nuance of *dikaiosynē*. In courtroom settings, the word „katarungan“ (justice) can be more often heard than „pagkamatarung“ (righteousness). The idea of justice as a social terminology is presented in the Old Testament in forensic images (e.g., Micah 6:1–8; Amos 5:1–24).

We chose to translate the Greek word *dikaiosynē* with „justice“ not just because of the emphasis of this Bible study, but because justice is a fundamental meaning of *dikaiosynē*. We do not, however, dismiss „righteousness“ as an inaccurate translation for *dikaiosynē*, since the nuances of justice and righteousness can also overlap (see, for instance, Amos 5:24). In order not to let „righteousness“ overshadow the social aspect of *dikaiosynē*, some Bible scholars propose the translation „justice-righteousness“ (e.g., Gordon Zerbe).

Going back now to Paul's letter to the Roman Christians, we can identify some descriptions of God's justice:

1. God's justice abhors human injustice.

- 2.

Paul conveys this thought immediately after presenting the theme of his letter: „For the wrath (Gk. *orgē*) of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (*asebeia*) and injustice (*adikia*) of humankind, who by their injustice (*adikia*) suppress the truth“ (Rom 1:18).

With two occurrences of injustice in this single verse, Paul wants to emphasize it as an offense before God. Along with ungodliness, human injustice has invited God's wrath. Other words that can translate the Greek *orgē* are „anger“ and „indignation“, associated with readiness to punish the offenders. This is reflected in the Old Testament writings. For instance, against exploitation of other beings the prophet Jeremiah says,

„Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing...“ (Jer 22:13, ESV).

The Deuteronomist recalls that Israel's rebellion induced God's wrath:

„Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord“ (Deut 9:7, ESV).

Although sin is not yet mentioned in chapter 1, human ungodliness and injustice point to what it is about – failing to practice reverence to God (*eusebeia*) and justice (*dikaioynē*) in daily life. Paul supplies sample images of sin in chapter 3. We will just describe here two activities in the passage, esp. in vv. 9–18, that correspond to injustice as far as their social dimensions are concerned:

- „Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps [snakes] is under their lips“ (v13). In Philippine contexts, we know how far human deception can go. Due to false accusations and false witnesses innocents are jailed or killed and the really guilty go free. Fake news flooding online can destroy even those of impeccable integrity.

- „Their feet are swift to shed blood“ (v15). This statement simply refers to the readiness to kill people. The appetite for killing is still very much a reality in our time as it was at the time Paul wrote his letter to the Roman Christians. In the Philippines reports about getting killed by two unknown men riding-in-tandem seem to be always a recurring news headline. Regardless of whether the helpless and defenseless victim was innocent or guilty, killing appears to be a mode of pursuing justice.

Paul implicitly contends in vv 16–17 that those who uphold injustice in words and deeds are moving towards „ruin and misery“, ignorant of „the way of peace“, and have no regard of God. Based on what Paul already explains in chapter 1, the failure to acknowledge God results in erroneous thinking and doing.

„They were filled with all [forms of] injustice, wickedness, greed, malice. [They are] full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. [They are] gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, contrivers of evil, disobedient to parents, void of understanding, faithless, heartless, ruthless“ (Rom 1:29–31, ESV, slightly modified).

The passage above effectively describes some forms of injustice committed in our time. Just exactly how Paul describes them, today’s perpetrators of injustice have lost not only a sense of God but also that sense of humanity. And the sad thing about it is that some people indirectly participate in such wicked acts by applauding „those who practice them“ (cf. Rom 1:32).

2. God’s justice corrects humankind.

We have discussed above that on account of justice God hates the injustices committed by humankind and is ready to punish them. God’s love in Christ has, however, overcome God’s wrath, so that those who put their trust in God’s faithfulness may move from „ruin and misery“ to „justice and peace“. Paul explains in Rom 3:21–26 that God’s justice in Christ makes way for redemption of all – implicitly including both the perpetrators of injustice and their victims. All are justified (Gk. *dikaioō*) by God’s grace as a gift (cf. Rom 3:24a). Here we read a verbal form of justice, where the doer of the action is God. The verb „to justify“ may roughly mean „to make [someone] just“. But to be sure it is more than rendering someone not guilty. Otherwise, God’s justice in Christ would be wrongly interpreted to mean an endless recurrence of human injustice, since God anyway justifies. Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls this a misunderstanding of God’s grace.

In the Gospels (and Acts), repentance is a key term in connection with the life of those who receive God’s saving grace (e.g., Mt 4:17; Mk 6:12; Lk 13:3; Acts 3:19; 8:22). Paul does not use the lexeme of repent-

ance in his letter to the Romans. Instead, he uses the language of transformation of humankind from being agent of injustice to becoming doer of justice:

„Do not present your members to sin (Gk. *hamartia*, „error“) as instruments for injustice, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments (Gk. *hopla*, „weapon“, „armor“) of justice“ (Rom 6:13).

„... For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness (Gk. *anomia*) leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves (Gk. *doulos*) of justice leading to holiness“ (Rom 6:19).

The word „lawlessness“, which translates the Greek *anomia* is a human behavior or lifestyle that manifests „complete disregard for the laws or regulations of a society“ In today’s context, *anomia* may not only apply to those getting jailed because of their lawlessness. It also applies to those commit injustice and are „lawless“ (*anomos*) in their living and are not arrested or jailed because they can manipulate established justice systems at any level. Thus, *anomia* could also refer to „living lawlessly with impunity“.

The manner of life that serves the God of justice as mentioned in Romans 6 is what Paul anticipates when he speaks of having „peace with God“ as justified individuals in Romans 5:1. The main clause of this particular verse actually has textual variants. Some Greek manuscripts have the indicative „we have peace with God“, while some rather have the cohortative „let us have peace with God“. The phrase „peace with God“ (Gk. *eirenē pros ton theon*) indicates the abolition of hostility between God and humankind on account of ungodliness and injustice.

„For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life“ (Rom 5:10).

Whatever Paul actually wrote in 5:1 – whether *echomen* („we have...“) or *echōmen* („let us have...“) it may not matter so much because the two forms introduce two aspects of God’s justice in Christ: a) the believer is justified, and b) is called to a life of holiness.

There is emphasis on the second aspect of God’s justice in Rom 5:1 as the believer is encountered daily by the challenge of obedient conduct before God. Based on what we have seen in chapters 1, 3 and 6 in Romans, having peace with God is for believers (or loyalists of Jesus) to make their lives available for the work of justice. This lifestyle is a concrete evidence of a justified life. Yes, there may be no such thing or thought as „human rights“ in the writings of Paul, or in the New Testament or in the Bible as a whole. But protecting and pursuing every person’s dignity, integrity and life is an integral part of Christian living. Having peace with God entails no less than the call to uphold human and people’s rights – in every aspect of existence – especially in these critical times of ours.

IV. Guide/Questions for further discussion:

1. Read again Rom 1:16–18 and 3:12–18. Share your observation(s) of the relationship between justice and peace based on these passages.

Note: Let us be reminded that some Bible versions translate *adikia* with „unrighteousness“. So, every-time we encounter this word in Romans, we also need to think of „injustice“. The same is the case with *dikaiosyne* as righteousness/justice.

2. Identify some situations in our society and politics in which doing and pursuing justice as an ethical aspect of having peace with God becomes an urgent call.

3. Explain some factors that hinder Christians and churches from pursuing justice in local and broader settings.

4. Share your thoughts about how justified individuals can together effectively pursue justice in these critical times.

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¹ Cf. Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: American Book Company, 1889), 452.

² In *Rechtfertigung der Sünder und Solidarität mit den Opfern: Eine befreiungstheologische Auslegung des Römerbriefs* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2015), I put forward such a double dimension of salvation in and through Christ. See also Dennis Solon, "The Justification of Victims in Romans," in *500 Years of Reformation: Contributions for the Reformation of the (Asian) Churches Today* (ed. Joane Beuker, Deonal Sinaga, and Berend Veddelier; Yogyakarta and Wuppertal: PT Kanisius and UEM, 2014), 201–216.

³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1979), 47f.

⁴ J. P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (2 ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 758.

Sermon Guides

Sermon Guides

WHEN HEROD RULES....

Matthew 2:1-22

*by Rev. George A. Lungay
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Our Church, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES is now observing the Human Rights Week Celebration with the theme, “The Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People’s Rights in These Critical Times.” This theme refers to the claim of our faith community that upholding human rights is a very part and parcel of the total life and mission of the Church toward creating a just and peaceful society.

Facts of current realities are indeed so critical and life threatening due to the rapid violations of human rights. Hence, the Filipino people are crying for real change. The excitement of people for real change manifested after the overwhelming result of 2016 election. Here comes a new administration in the government who took and promote platforms for real change. A man who spoke bluntly and would achieve his goals by any means necessary. A new image of strongman leader who was particularly appealing among middle- and upper-classes but also strongly resonated with the broader public. A leader seen as a man-from-the masses despite coming from a local political clan. He projected sympathy to the poor from his track record in local governance. A leader proudly declares himself a socialist who is “for the people”; openly admonishes police, military, and oligarchs; asserts against the US government; he is remarkably open to mainstream Left activists. Yet also allegedly involve in controversial support for vigilantism against petty criminals in the name of peace and order, alleged links to the Davao Death Squad (DDS), outrageous statements, and disorienting variability on issues. A new leader whose position on crime and illegal drugs is most widely publicized and has anchored his strongman image. Likewise with various ordinances against smoking in public, restrictions on when liquor can be sold, banning firecrackers, and reduced speed limits.

Moreover, there is a good sound promise for the people to put an end of contractualization, give free health care for the poor, provide free public education, increase social security pensions, give free irrigation, release the coco levy fund to farmers, and stop demolitions of urban poor communities in the absence of relocation sites. He announced that Freedom of Information (FOI) will be institutionalized in the executive department. The appointment of some individuals who are considered with nationalist and progressive background to helm the agrarian reform and social welfare departments, which promises major reforms in these portfolios particularly on land distribution, farmer support, cash transfers, and calamity response. Having a known environmentalist in the environment department could also bode well against destructive mining and energy projects. Showing of support to the Lumad struggling against environmental plunder of their communities and militarization. For majority of the Filipino people, it was quite promising indeed.



However, most of those sweet promises remains to be an elusive dream for the Filipino people; Extra judicial killings using the mindset of war against drugs are rampant which resulted to even killings of the innocents and teenagers; peace talks process was delayed and even cut off, guns or fire arms instead of talks and dialogue; nationalist and progressive cabinet appointees were turned down; war took place like in Marawi City where all shuttered through fires and air strike bombings to eradicate the Maute group which resulted to mass evacuation to the neighboring cities and provinces and around the country and used it as a reason to validate the declaration of Martial Law in Mindanao, the continuing displacement of our indigenous people from their community in the name of development coupled with strong militarization. And many to mention. This is the context that we are now facing while we emphasize the Human Rights Week Celebration 2017.

In this reflection, let us try to take a look at the passage according to the gospel of Matthew 2:1-22 which is commonly known to us the story of the coming of the Magi from the East with the encounter of the ruling king at that time, Herod, the Great. I believe that there is a strong connection with this emphasis especially that we are now on this advent season.

King Herod was the villain in the Christmas story, a wicked king who saw the new born Jesus as a threat and wanted to murder him. During a civil war in the Empire, Herod won the favor of Octavian, who later became the Roman emperor Augustus Caesar. Once he was king, Herod launched an ambitious building program, both in Jerusalem and the spectacular port city of Caesarea, named after the emperor. He restored the magnificent Jerusalem temple, which was later destroyed by the Romans following a rebellion in A.D. 70.

In the gospel of Matthew, the Wise Men met King Herod on their way to worship Jesus. He tried to trick them into revealing the child's location in Bethlehem on their way home, but they were warned in a dream to avoid Herod, so they returned to their countries by another route. When Herod learned he had been outwitted by the Magi, he became furious, ordering the slaughter of all the boys who were two years old and under in Bethlehem and its vicinity. Hence, he was a brutal man who killed just to preserve his power and possessions; historical evidence showed that in 35 BC he ordered to have Aristobulus III (his brother-in-law) drowned at a party. In 29 BC Herod had planned to murder his wife Mariamne I but she found out and stopped sleeping with Masada where the last Jews committed suicide in Aerial photo of Herodium (a fortress constructed by Herod) AD 73 him. He put her on trial for adultery and using the testimony of her mother, Alexandra, he had her executed. Meanwhile Alexandra declared herself Queen by stating that Herod was mentally unfit. Herod executed her without trial. In 28 BC, Herod executed his brother-law Kostobar for conspiracy. In 12 BC Herod suspected both of his sons from Mariamne I (Alexander and Aristobulus) for conspiracy and had them tried. Augustus reconciled the three. Then in 7 BC Herod again brought his sons through Mariamne I to court for conspiracy and they were executed. In 5 BC, Herod charged Antipater, another of his sons, was with intending murder him and he was executed with the approval of Augustus in 4 BC. He ignored what are those necessary for the people's welfare to suit himself and chose the favor of Rome over his own people. Herod's heavy taxes to pay for lavish projects forced an unfair burden on the Jewish citizens. Herod sustained his power through brute and ruthless force.

Furthermore, to maintain the so-called peace in the whole empire, there was a so-called Pax Romana which started during the time that Octavian defeated ark Anthony and Cleopatra in the battle of

Actium on 31 BC, and became an emperor named Augustus who favored Herod, and declared and gave name to Herod as “King of the Jews.” Pax Romana literally means “Roman Peace” which the Roman Empire considered it as lasting peace, yet peace by force. When Augustus led with the desire to manage and maintain the Empire, he created strong and expanded army. The ever-growing empire and expanded army took a toll on the empire’s limited treasury. To solve this problem Augustus ordered a complete census of the resources in all of the provinces as well as among its citizenry, creating a “framework for assessment” to impose taxes. The aim was not only to maintain internal order but also to extract resources through taxation even though these demands were often made on limited resources. From the perspective of Augustus, it was for the welfare of the whole empire, but from the people, it was a heavy burden. Through Pax Romana – a peace propaganda by force, all who are in power like Augustus and Herod have gained political and military control and built an empire. Such propaganda led people into silence, fear, suffering, unpeace, and rights violated. In other words, the time of Herod portrays a vast violation of human rights in various forms and evil actions that led the people lives into so much depressed and miserable.

This was the reality that Jesus, the Emmanuel – the God with us reveals and in solidarity to His struggling people. God in Jesus Christ take side to the oppressed, the poor and the powerless. Even in His ministry especially in confronting authorities at that time. It was portrayed that Jesus directed a radical movement—a movement not only in its rejection of the present political status quo of the Roman Empire, but also a radical movement in presenting an alternative vision for social order. The language of “kingdom of God” itself indicates that Jesus understood himself to be posing a contrast between his community and Rome Empire. In rejecting authoritarian leadership, Jesus rejected Rome’s politics: “You know that among the Gentiles (that is, the Romans) those whom they recognize as their rulers’ lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It must not be so among you” (Mark 10:42).

Moreover, Jesus’ experience with Pilate during his trial reflects the tendencies of great powers. Pilate’s actions expose the fact that empire’s agents care about coercive power much more than they care about truth. Pilate asks “what is truth?” a sarcastic response to Jesus’ statement that “everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice” (John 18:37). As if to emphasize that he is not listening to Jesus’ voice, Pilate walks away from Jesus right after his obviously rhetorical question. The revelation of the great powers’ true colors in relation to Jesus’ truth should, for those who would follow Jesus, have the effect of fostering great suspicion toward those powers. Followers of Jesus, all people, should be unrelenting critics of imperial pretensions and coercive policies whenever they arise.

Jesus’ confrontation with empire also exposes the actual violence and human rights violations of empire toward any and all perceived threats. When Jesus made the metaphor of the “kingdom of God” his centerpiece, he sought to create a social order in this world that would serve as an alternative to the kingdom of the Empire. Jesus’ contrast between empire’s leadership style -lording it over and his compassionate service was not meant to be a statement of the two distinct realms where people of faith dwell—expect service to predominate in the church and power politics to predominate in the world. Rather, Jesus meant to say, the servant-oriented approach he embodied should govern your lives in all settings, and is normative for life everywhere at all times. When you insist on this truth, though, expect to find yourselves in conflict with the powers-that-be. Jesus made this clear when he told all of his followers to prepare to take up their crosses when they follow him.

This is the great challenge for our faith community in this critical times, to stand firm for the sake of justice and peace, and to promote life free from any domination, as well as being active and faithful enough in prophetic ministry especially in our advocacy against human rights violation.

I know and believe that until this very moment, this call for our faith community still may encounter some debate or exchange of ideas. Yet this is always considered in our Church as a concrete response of our costly discipleship and servanthood as followers of Christ.

As Faith Community recalling the behind reason of this Human rights Week celebration is the UN Declaration of Human Rights pointing to the “Recognition of the inherent and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” Thus to ask why should UCCP and all other Christian Community should considered important to promote and advocate for human rights? Because human rights are based on a belief of “inherent dignity” of each and every human being. Now for the Church people, the “inherent dignity” of human beings is not just a good and uplifting words or idea. It comes straight from our belief that God created human beings in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). Oftentimes however, People in the Church feel uncomfortable when we talk about the language of justice and human rights, as if this theme is just belong to the secular ideology. Accordingly, Christian Theology does not often used the language of human rights. But when it comes to human society, we can see the social dimension of Christian ethics that is standing up for the rights of others and help to make sure that our society is a place where people’s right and dignity is affirmed and where we can live life with its fullness. May the Church through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, help not to allow Herod to rule over again. Amen.

Theme: “The Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People’s Rights in These Critical Times.”

Sermon Title: God sees. God hears. God knows.

*By: Rev. Elaine Grace Calalang-Salen
OIC, West Central Luzon Conference*

Biblical Texts: Exodus 3:7-15 and Luke 4:16-21



Month of October, we had a forum with the Ayta leaders of different Ayta Communities of Pampanga, Bataan and Zambales. The objective was to know their different situations and for them to draw encouragement from one another. In one particular area, one of their pressing issue concerns about a leader not from their tribe who wish to dominate them. He was not invited on the forum so it took us also by surprise that he was there.

One ayta woman approached me and asked, ‘Paano po kami makapag-sasalita niyan, eh andito siya?’ (How can we express ourselves if he is here?). What I have seen in her eyes and hear at the sound of her voice is both fear and worry. There stood in front of me, a woman who want to be courageous and speak of their welfare but in the midst of that courage is a more powerful individual preventing her to do so.

Many people in different parts of our country are in the same shoes she’s wearing, and oh! Not only the same but worse situations even.

From national issues to localized issues, many people are like her, without voice, without right, without a name.

The Good news is... God sees. God hears. And God knows.

What did God see?

“I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt”

Their Sorrows.

God saw their sorrows. Of being treated cruelly. They were not able to complain to their task masters. Of how heavy the load compared to their strength. No relief to be found. No grievances spoken to the Pharaoh. And perhaps, they were not even able to seek relief from one another. How can they? They share the same misery of being slaves. No voice. No right. No name.

At this point we are reminded of the victims of extra judicial killings on war on drugs. What deeper sorrow than that of a mother who have lost a teenage son. This was a testimony I’ve heard from one Ecumenical gathering I attended. In between her tears of lament, she tried to share her story of how her son was killed. It was heartbreaking. How many are like her?

But God sees. “I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt”. It’s as if hearing God saying, ‘I have seen how my children, the least and the lost are being treated cruelly in the hands of those in power.’

God hears. God heard their cry. "I have heard them cry out to be rescued from slave drivers"

Can a mother neglect the cries of her baby? Can a father bear to hear the cries of his boy of hunger without doing anything? In the same way, God cannot keep silent when His children are crying from injustice. Hindi bingi ang Dios sa iyak ng Kanyang bayan na pinahihirapan at inaalipin.

God knows. "I know all about their sufferings and so I have come down to rescue them..."

What a relief that God knows! And He doesn't only know. He plans to do something! We Filipinos are fond of saying, 'bahala na ang Dios' (let God take care of it). Most probably behind those lines is the belief that God knows. And we are letting Him to take care of it.

'Bahala na ang Dios' may also mean, 'mananagot kayo sa Dios'. God knows. He doesn't only know who the oppressed are but hear this! He knows WHO OPPRESSED THEM! Take heed oppressors! God knows!

God sees, God hears, God knows. And His way of deliverance, of showing people that He sees, He hears and He knows is by calling and sending Moses. But this person that God sees fit to do this mission is saying 'I am nobody'. He used to be a prince in Egypt and had good training on leadership perhaps but he is seeing his present status as a commoner. Therefore, not worthy of the task. But God saw a courageous heart in Moses. This was a man who took a stand when someone is being beaten to death.

How would you feel if you are sent to the President and asked him to 'stop EJK'? It was something like this for Moses. 'Let My people go', would be the blatant demand Moses would bring to the Pharaoh. The task was so great and vast. Not even the once in his life prince would feel fit of doing. But he did it anyway. It was after the assurance of God, 'I will be with you'.

Moses has done his bidding. Israel was eventually lead to Promised Land. But the entire humanity became a cycle of Israelites event. The need for deliverance is like an outbreak. And fortunate for humanity that the God of Moses that sees, hears and knows this time sends His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Our hope now relies on the mission statement of Jesus. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

To bring good news to the poor. The Good news is good news already. One has to read and he'll know it's good news. What we need to discover is **'how'** to bring it.

The Mission Statement of Jesus should be taken as a whole and not by parts. We cannot say that we bring the good news without thinking of the poor. Without thinking of their welfare, of their struggles, of their lives that is still far from the fullness of life. We cannot say that we bring the good news without pursuing justice. Our theme is simply saying, there could be no peace without justice served. If we wish to advanced peace, let us work on justice.

There are many people who lift only the first line of the mission statement, 'preach the Good News' and make it the whole mission. But eventually one would discover that in preaching the good news, the very content that would have to be preached is the rest of the statement.

God sees, God hears and God knows. The challenge for us is to see, hear and know as well, so we can take part on the mission statement of Jesus.

If we, as church people cannot see, how can they experience the God that sees? If we, church people cannot hear, how can they believe that God can hear? If we, as church people doesn't know, how can they have hope that God knows?

The ayta woman I mentioned, didn't easily took courage to speak. It took a while. It was after she saw other people – church people, other ayta from other places, standing and speaking for them. Suddenly, she was speaking, then joined by another, then another. We started to clap our hands. We could not contain the joy of seeing how they were empowered by each other. It was a liberating experience to see how God works.

We went there without much knowledge of what to expect: what to see, what to hear and what to know. But God has always been ahead of us. He has His ways how to put things together, how to put people together for common good.

When God sent Moses, His intention was not only to rescue the Israelites out of Egypt but to bring them to a spacious land, one which is rich and fertile. And up till now, this is the intention of God for all of us. As Jesus have said, '... I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' I would say, we are still on our way and the journey could still be long and hard. We are living in these critical times and it could still get worse if we do not act now. We are called to be part of the journey. Called to lead people entrusted to us.

The task maybe so great that we tend to ask ourselves 'Who am I?' And just like Moses, to appeal to God, 'I am a nobody?'

Perhaps you're a pastor, a lay leader, a Sunday School teacher, a youth, a housewife, a farmer, a commoner. But before you are communities in need, a problematic church, a family victim of injustice. You are but one, what can you do? And hey, look at the newspapers, the television: BIG WORDS, OVERWHELMING ISSUES, SUFFOCATING NEED IN ALL CORNERS. You are but one, what can you do?

Like Moses, let us be affirmed that God will always be with us. Moses was not alone. God gave him Aaron and Meriam as help. Eventually he had Joshua and other leaders. We are not alone. When God say that He will be with us, let us be assured that He means to send us partners, fellow workers, communities, wider body with the same heart to pursue His mission.

By the way, the Ayta woman I mentioned has a name. Her name is Nena. And just like you and me, she has her rights. And finally, with the help of collective people concern for their welfare, she found her voice. This is how God works. Because God sees. God hears and God knows.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Biblico-Theological Reflections

Biblico-Theological Reflections

FOR IF YOU KEEP SILENCE AT SUCH A TIME AS THIS...

Esther Chapter 4:1-17

Carlton J. "Cobbie" Palm



It is October 2017 in the Philippines. The clarity of purpose that was visible just one year ago with the ushering in of a new Administration that boldly broke barriers and tore down dividing walls of hostility, has now sputtered and faltered. The excitement of seeing peace talks take unprecedented steps forward in a war that has lasted 50 years; the elation of witnessing the releases of both political consultants and elements of the armed forces; the hope of work paving the way toward a joint interim cease fire; the trust in appointing staunch environmentalists, peasant and labor leaders into the President's Cabinet, has all suddenly come to an end.

Trust has eroded into condemnation, guns again are sounding their feared and deadly fire, the peace talks are suspended and our attention is drawn deeper into the war on terror and drugs that continues to be much more about death than life, about silencing than talking.

This is our reality as we walk toward the celebration of Human Rights Week in the life of the Church. There is the feeling of a Human Rights eclipse, like the darkened surface of the earth during a solar eclipse, the noble word Human Rights has lost its light and is under assault. Most revealing of this assault was the vote by Congress just last month, to reduce the budget of the Human Rights Commission from P649 million Pesos to a mere P1000.00 Pesos. This was a shameful act of cooptation and self- preservation by elected leaders to abuse their power to silence an important voice of Human Rights.

In these times, I am drawn to a small book in the Old Testament, a powerful book of only 10 Chapters, that speaks to accountability in leadership and the courage to act when in positions of power. This is the book of Esther and the story of her rise from orphan to holding an important place in the halls of power.

The story takes place at time when Jerusalem had been conquered and a whole ethnic group which God brought out of Egypt and across the Red Sea were now suffering discrimination under the Babylonian captivity. As an orphan woman, born to this discriminated ethnic group known as the Hebrew people, Esther begins her life as a nobody in a despised and neglected community under Babylonian captivity.

The story tells us she is adopted by her older cousin Mordecai, a devote and loyal member of the Hebrew community who raised Esther to love her people and to fear God (Es 2:7). The early tension that unfolds is how Mordecai and Esther will reveal or hide their discriminated ethnic identity among the dominant and powerful Persian people as a strategy for survival. The struggle in the early chapters of the book is surviving the abuse and exploitation that came with being in the discriminated ethnic group until Esther matures into a woman and is discovered, favored and loved by the King Ahasuerus, ruler of the Empire.

Esther now finds herself in the halls of power beside the King. She had risen from her status among a marginalized Hebrew people into one of the most important positions of power. During this time, her cousin Mordecai angers Hamas a high General of the King for defending the Hebrew people (Es 3:3). The reaction of Hamas was to turn to killing the despised Hebrew people. The people of Mordecai and Esther (Es 3:13).

Mordecai turns to Esther for help in stopping the killings because he knew she was in position to sway the King to put an end to the destruction of their people. But to Mordecai's disappointment, Esther seemed detached and now absorbed in her new world of power. Esther sends a message back to Mordecai that she will play safe because getting involved could jeopardize her position and maybe her life. (Es 4:11). To intervene was a risk that she was not willing to take, even for her own people.

The words of Esther pained Mordecai deeply who sent a message back to Esther telling her, "Do you think in the king's palace you will escape any more than the other of our Hebrew people? (Es 4:13). Mordecai is trying to awaken her dying soul that has lost its way in the halls of power. Mordecai continues and this time appeals to her conscience by saying, "For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Hebrews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish" (Es 4:14). Mordecai is calling to his cousin Esther to remember the God of her people, who delivered them out of the land of Egypt and helped them through the wilderness delivering them to the Promised Land. The God of the Hebrews who has come and will always come to defend those that worship and remain loyal to God and not to comforts of their privilege and power.

Then Mordecai makes one more important point by saying to Esther, "Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this" (Es. 4:14). Mordecai is asking her to think differently now, to think that her place beside the King is all part of God's great design so that she can use her place to make a difference in the world. His powerful message to Esther is that when we find ourselves in the places of power, we need to make sure we are clear about our role and purpose there. We need to make sure we use it for the interest of all God's people and not just for self-preservation.

The words of Mordecai pierced the heart of his younger cousin and Esther is awakened and moved to act. The act she is to take is not just an act of accommodating a relative, but an act of defiance and courage on behalf of her people that may cost her more than her place of privilege, but even her life. "I will go to the king" she says, "though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish" (Es. 4:16). Esther who appeared to be intoxicated by power and was slowly digressing into a social climber interested only in her own life suddenly offers to risk it all for the good of others. The time had come when she understood her people are worth even the sacrifice of her own privilege and comfort. Her high position now becomes a means of service to others, instead of service to self.

With this decision to act comes a dynamic redemption created between Esther and God. Her awakened action to speak and not to stay silent and her courage to risk all her comfort for her suffering people is met with God's positive action. This then leads to the transforming of her society for the wellness and liberation of her people. The king revokes the judgment against the Jews (Es. 9:11-14) and her people are set free. The beautiful synergy that is a recurring theme throughout the Bible is again revealed - When we do our part, God will do God's part!

This is a powerful story for us as we celebrate Human Rights Week at a time of so much death and suffering is felt among our people and the right to due process and freedom is violated from the halls of power. Times like these call us to remember Esther who leaves us with these lessons for our own lives:

Esther began on the side of compromise and self-service. Esther is a model of a person that had fallen short of the glory of God but was still able to turn her life to God and be used by God. Let not the present or prior misuse of our lives prevent us from knowing that God can still use us for good purposes and change if we courageously choose to be used for selfless service to our people instead of blind service to ourselves.

Esther's position gave her a unique opportunity to serve her people. Mordecai's position gave him a

different opportunity to serve his people. Both made a difference although coming from their different positions in society. We must learn to work within the particular opportunities and situations in which we find ourselves. Do not say, "I could do something great for my people, if only I had the opportunity," Instead, say to yourself, "Perhaps I have come into this position because I am called to do something for my people."

Esther's position became intoxicating. We are no different and we may come to value ourselves and our very existence with our positions of power and comfort. The higher our positions and the more power we have, the more we can be lost in our own self or vested interest. When there is nothing as important as keeping our privilege or position, then we have lost ourselves. This is the root of the sin of omission, when we see the wrong but will not act.

Esther will always be remembered not for her beauty or power but for the risk and courage she took in her life. Serving God and our people may require the courage to risk and even lose our positions when we use our position honestly to serve God and people. This was the dilemma of Esther. But as a people of faith we also believe that our positions are never safe and secure unless we are serving God and our people. Because as followers of the Bible we believe we are given our time and place by God to serve and to offer our lives that all may have life in fulness. When we use our positions for other agendas displeasing to God consequences are not far behind.

Carlton J. Cobbie Palm
October 18, 2017

Cobbie, as he is known to the UCCP, has served as a Mission Co-Worker of the PCUSA to the National Office (1990-2000) and to the Divinity School of Silliman University beginning in 2001 where he is presently the Director for Spiritual Formation.

Never Again to Tyranny, Never Again to Dictatorship

Text: Ezekiel 45:9

Event: 45th Anniversary of the Declaration of Martial Law

Place: Central UMC

Date: September 21, 2017

Preacher: Eleazar S. Fernandez

Today marks a historic moment in the life of our country. It is the 45th Anniversary of the Declaration of Martial Law by President Ferdinand E. Marcos. For those who have experienced its horrors, the possibility of its coming back in whatever form or expression is alarming. There are those who say that Martial Law is a relic of the past that should be laid to rest in the dustbin of history. The victims and their friends will not, however, allow us to forget Martial Law and its atrocities. The ghosts of the victims are haunting and are making a demand on us the living, to remember. By remember I don't simply mean to recall a past, but to re-member the dismembered or the broken for the sake of healing and liberation.



But there is more to this re-membering that is critical at this point time besides the general warning that he or she who does not remember history is bound to repeat it. In the words of Dr. Jose Rizal, "To foretell the destiny of a nation, it is necessary to open the book that tells of her past." It matters, however, who is writing our nation's past: the victors or the victims. As an African proverb puts it: "Until the lions have their historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter."

Our remembering of the 45th Anniversary of the Declaration of Martial Law has taken on an urgent and critical significance because there are "ominous signs" that we are drifting fast toward tyranny or authoritarianism.

"The people never give up their liberties, but under some delusion," warned Edmund Burke. "Today," says a *Huffington Post* writer, "there is a specter haunting the democratic world, the specter of *autocratic nostalgia* (emphasis mine). With interest groups and oligarchs coopting democratic institutions, average citizens are desperate for a secular savior who will put an end to the dysfunction and insensitivity of everyday politics. The illusion of autocratic miracle—the misplaced belief that a strong decisive leader can single-handedly save a whole nation—has gained ground across the [world]... We are in many ways slipping into an *age of global authoritarianism* (emphasis mine)." When dreams are constantly betrayed, distressed populations are once again beginning to "lash out" their frustrations against the traditional ruling elites and have rallied around "strongman" figures, often offspring and supporters of former dictators that have skillfully filled in the power vacuum.

We know the dangers when power is concentrated in the hands of the few. The greater the power is; the greater is the abuse. We must always be on guard against the abuse of power. In the lines of philosopher Nietzsche: "The pursuit of power makes [one] cunning, the possession of power makes [one] stupid." Or, following Lord Acton, "Absolute power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Tyranny and corruption are bedfellows: they feed and nourish each other.

On the other hand, it is also true that powerlessness corrupts and can be corrupted absolutely. When people are powerless, or when they feel powerless, they are more susceptible to any corrupt power. Impoverished by the corruption of the power wielders, the impoverished people participate in the very corruption that continues to impoverish them.

Sadly, this phenomenon of *global authoritarianism* is showing its ugly head in the Philippines. There are ominous signs that we are drifting fast toward tyranny.

Yes, there are "ominous signs" that any decent and concerned citizen can see, hear, smell, and recognize. There are expressions of tyranny in the making and unfolding that any alert and vigilant citizen of the republic should not fail to notice. There is a deliberate marginalizing and silencing of any dissent, criticism, and opposition, through various ways and means. When you have this, you have signs of *tyranny in the making*.

Social media, through the use of automated and paid human trolls, has been deliberately and effectively used to attack and humiliate dissenting voices. This online trolls is part of a "keyboard army" that the regime has mobilized to silence dissenters and to create an illusion of widespread public support. This is a sign of *tyranny in the making*.

The killings of journalists, the militarization of the government bureaucracy, the threats of impeachment by complicit Congress, and the move to immobilize the Commission on Human Rights by giving it a measly budget, are signs of *tyranny in the making*.

Making public statements that give total blanket support for police operations without much accountability, instigation of police violence, and inciting vigilante killings all in the name of a cause, such as war on drugs, are signs of

tyranny in the making.

Disregarding calls for thorough investigations of alleged police violence for the sake of not demoralizing police officers in the performance of their mission is a sign of *tyranny in the making*.

When perpetrators continue to do their business as usual without any serious consequences of their actions, how do you call this situation? It is a situation marked by a “culture of impunity.” And when a culture of impunity reigns, we have the signs of *tyranny in the making*.

Who benefits and who suffers from a “culture of impunity?” You know well the answer: It protects the powerful but hits most the poor and powerless because they lack the means to protect themselves.

When impunity reigns, cynicism and demoralization invade the social life. The integrity of our whole political life is at stake. When integrity is compromised, people lose faith in the system, and all the more corruption, poverty, and criminality spread like cancer. Demoralization and cynicism produces a climate conducive to crime and graft and corruption. The vicious cycle continues. It is no wonder that criminality, poverty, and graft and corruption pervade our land.

You must have heard of a political joke that has been circulating around. It said that when Pope Francis visited Sri Lanka, elephants greeted him. When he arrived in the Philippines, he was greeted at the NAIA by crocodiles.

Our drifting toward authoritarianism cannot, however, be fully understood apart from the larger context and forces around us. Wherever we see violation of human rights in the most pervasive, sophisticated, and systemic ways, we see the interest of predatory capitalism at work. Wherever we see large-scale plantation (banana, pineapple, palm oil, etc), logging, and mining interest at work, we see militarization, repression, and extrajudicial killings. Because the areas of indigenous peoples are often the targets of developmental aggression, it is not a surprise that many indigenous people have become victims.

It is in this context of demoralization, cynicism, and desperation that is conducive to crime that desperate people are all the more vulnerable to false promises and panaceas, including the leadership of heroic-strongman figures to liberate them from their sorry mess. We can observe the rise of populist-authoritarian leaders around the world, all stoking the fears of the desperate and threatened multitude.

Sadly, many of our intellectuals, both in the church and the wider society, have succumbed to the lure of autocratic nostalgia, because of their desire for autocratic miracle. They have forgotten that nostalgia is often sweeter than reality. They have let their intellectual and prophetic guards down because of their desire to fast track change in the name of a noble cause. When the church does not fully conform to their thinking, they criticize the church as irrelevant.

But, what is a noble cause when, in the process, we sacrifice our own children. How many “collateral damages” can we allow in the name of noble objective? Is it one, two, three, a thousand, or a million? But even one is far too many. Every life is sacred; every life counts.

We are in the midst of a deep crisis or, to change the metaphor, a deep darkness. The darkness around us is deep, but it seems that we don't get it.

Following William Stafford's lines: [Like elephants, we] parade holding each [others] tail,/but if one wanders, [our] circus won't find the park,/I call it cruel, and maybe the root of all cruelty/to know what occurs but not recognize the fact. For it is important that awake people be awake,/or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;/the signals we give—yes or no, or maybe—should be clear: The darkness around us is deep.

Are our signals clear? Yes, no, or maybe? Remember, the darkness around us is deep.

There are three things in the world that deserve our clear and unequivocal stance, which, following Frederick William Robertson, deserve no mercy: hypocrisy, fraud, and tyranny. We must be always on guard to spot early signs of tyranny and dictatorship. “The time to guard against corruption and tyranny is before they should have gotten hold of us. It is better to keep the wolf out of the fold,” says Thomas Jefferson, “than to trust to drawing his teeth and [claws] after he shall have entered.”

Are our signals clear? Are our signals clear? We must make our signals clear. That's what the church and civic society must do. That's what we can learn from our text in Ezekiel 45:9. We must with our text say, “That's enough *tyranny*, you princes of Israel! Stop your abuse and persecutions! Do the right thing; choose to be just in your actions. Stop cheating and depriving my people *of their land*. I, the Eternal Lord, insist!” Another version says: “You have gone far enough, princes of Israel! Give up your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Stop dispossessing my people, declares the Sovereign Lord.”

There comes a time when we must say, *Tama na! Sobra na!* Stop now! Never again! We must say this, loud and clear!

“All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent,” says Edmund Burke. There is only one element left for a dictatorship to reassert itself in our country: the people’s silence or apathy.

Silence may momentarily protect us, but not forever. We may have thought that we can run morally scot-free by remaining silent. No, not at all. To paraphrase the theologian José Comblin, silence is a lie when truth needs to be spoken. So, beloved community, let’s raise our anguish and voices to the heavens and public places of our land.

“Basagin ang pananahimik at pagsawalang bahala! Makiisa para sa katarungan, kapayapaan, at kabanalan ng buhay! (NCCP)

True, the large majority is still silent and, sadly, this is true of many churches. Nonetheless, even as the number of victims grows each day, the cries and protests of the people are also getting louder and mightier. The people are slowly gaining back their courage.

Courage is not the absence of fear, but is founded on the belief that there is something greater than fear, in which fear itself cannot hold us back from pursuing. Courage does not deny the danger, but demands a full recognition of what is to be feared. But it is precisely at this point when, in the lines of Annie Dillard, “we start feeling the weight of the atmosphere and learn that there’s death in the pot,” that is, when we learn what really is to be feared, that the atmosphere is ripe for the birth of courage.

Knowing what is to be feared can paralyze us, but courage refuses to let that happen. Courage comes from the often-neglected side of knowledge. In courage we know not only what is to be feared, but also what is to be dared. What is to be dared is human dignity in the face of its desecration and violation; what is to be dared is the just and democratic society in the face of corrosion to its very core; what is to be dared is the sanctity of life that is terrorized by the forces of death. These are reasons to dare, and dare we must!

But there is something more that courage requires us to dare and to do. The fate of the victims will remain sealed in the graveyard, and the new tomorrow will not dawn on us, if we do not transform our knowledge of what is to be feared and what is to be dared into people’s movements.

Daring to transform our knowledge of what is to be feared and what is to be dared into a movement is both crucial and urgent. The Gospel demands it, and the victims are also demanding it of us, the living. The fate of the victims or the dis-membered is not sealed in the graveyard but is tied to our daring acts of re-membling. Those who “died before their time” have a future as well as those who are “yet to come,” but that declaration of faith is tied to the way we live our lives now and to our embodiments of transforming movements in the present.

There is a time to mourn and wail for our losses. But it is not enough.

The only antidote the power of tyranny is an organized people. The only antidote to the power of organized money is the power of organized people. The awakened and empowered people have no choice but to confront the powers that be. Only an empowered people can truly be a participant in the making of a just, humane, and democratic society.

Where do I see seeds hope? I see seeds of hope among those who have claimed their voices and have taken the courage to speak truth to power. I see seeds of hope in the groaning, greening, socially conscious, and empowered people who have decided to join the organized and mobilized multitude to make our socio-political institutions serve the common good. I see seeds of hope among those who have raised their voices to the highest heaven, *Never again to Tyranny!*

Perhaps too much is being asked of us. Too much is being asked of us frail human beings who have many urgent things to attend to, but who also have physical limitations. Perhaps that is true. But now I am going to ask you one more thing: I would like you to stand up and turn to the nearest person beside you. Look that person in the eye and shake hands. Tell that person, “You are not alone.” Now turn to the other side. Look that person in the eye and shake hands. Tell that person, “You are not alone.” Now hold each others hand and look around. Now you know that kindred spirits are surrounding you. Hold your neighbors’ presence and keep reminding yourself, “I am not alone. I am part of a movement.”

So, people of the new tomorrow, the awakened and empowered multitude, let us go as a movement to re-member the dismembered and the broken; let us go as movement to challenge tyranny and promote democracy; let us go as movement to create a society in which everyone will have access to the table, and let us go as a movement wherever we can, when we can, and while we can, until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness an ever-flowing stream! Amen.

Liturgical Guide

Liturgical Guide

AN OPENING LITURGY FOR THE WEEK LONG CELEBRATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

By Rev. Francisco Aviso, Jr.

*"The Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People's Rights
in These Critical Times"*

Opening ourselves to a just and loving God

Prelude

Symbolic Act of Gathering

An indigenous musical instrument is played while worshippers congregate in a manner of processional and assembling in circle to manifest unity in spirit and desire to fellowship with God and with another in the quest for upholding human and people's rights. Lighting of Christ's candle and the opening of the Bible follows. Then everybody is seated.

Call to Worship

- Liturgist:** Amidst hopelessness, we affirm God's hope seen in the work and ministry of the faithful and the struggling masses of people.
- People:** **Praise be to God who dwell with us in times of trouble and injustice.**
- Liturgist:** Being the church of the marginalized and oppressed people, we envision a society ruled by love, justice and compassion.
- People:** **Praise be to God in Jesus Christ who proclaimed and lived out such Kingdom values.**
- Liturgist:** Such kingdom values move us in faithfulness to the Gospel mandate and not to give in to evil but standing and resisting all forms of evil, especially those evils that victimize our hapless brothers and sisters.
- People:** **Praise be to God's Spirit who moves us all to sincerely work towards the realization of a transformed church and society, the "new heaven and earth".**
- All:** **Come and let us worship the living and loving God of life and history!**

†Hymn of Praise:

~The Loving God We Shall Worship~ HFJ#8

1. The loving God we shall worship,
In God's name we shall glory
Draw near with reverent fervor
Singing praises evermore.

Refrain:

God of mercy, God of caring
Do accept our glad offering
Of our worship hearts souls commit
Ever praising you at your feet.

2. Sins of us we are confessing
And God's pardon experience
Yield our cares for daily living

Blessings good God will not withhold.
 3. God's will discern and live out
 Following all God's teachings
 Showing in life our commitment
 To obey God to the end.

†**Invocation:**

In Unison

We come before you, O Lord as a people in fellowship desiring to worship you in spirit and in truth. We come before you because you are the one who called and we are just now responding to the voice calling us to come together this morning, calling us to remember you as our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer and reminding us of you as our master and ourselves as your servants. Enable us, O Lord, to keep remembering and not to forget who we are and who you are and how we are related to you and how you want us to respond to your call. Amen.

Confessing our sins of silence and indifference

Liturgist: Cries of violence and injustice are heard here and there...

People: Thousands have already been extrajudicially killed under the pretext of the war on drugs. Killed without due process, mostly from urban poor communities, more and more political related killings are taking place here and there.

Liturgist: Let us confess our sins of silence and indifference:

People: Forgive us Lord for failing to listen to these cries and for the comfort that paralyzes us.

Liturgist: Cries of violence and injustice are heard here and there...

People: The Duterte administration continues to implement its counter-insurgency program, Oplan Kapayapaan, hence, more AFP troops by battalions are being sent to Mindanao. Worst, many communities suspected of supporting rebel groups have been targeted for aerial bombing, thus displacing thousands of families here and there.

Liturgist: Cries of violence and injustice are heard here and there...

People: No improvement so far in terms of economic, social and cultural rights condition of the Filipino people. What we experience is inaccessibility of education and health services and housing. Sadly, we see and hear people in inhuman predicament.

Liturgist: Let us confess our sins of silence and indifference:

People: Forgive us Lord for many of us surely know what we should do but choose to remain inutile for fear of being identified with those who opt to join movements for change and those whom the government call as enemies of the state

Liturgist: Cries of violence and injustice are heard here and there...

People: Dsplaced Marawi people cry for peace and freedom from senseless war and whose communities were destroyed by aerial bombings and other military operations, with US commandos helping Philippine troop battle the Islamist militants and the Maute group.

Liturgist: Let us confess our sins of silence and indifference:

People: Forgive us Lord for we think its enough to pray for those victims of war and violence, believing that Jesus has taught us just to pray and that working with those who struggle for genuine and lasting peace is not the turf of the church.

All: **O God, we appeal for your redeeming mercy and love. Lead us to where Christ went when he chose to follow your will and found himself amongst the hapless people event if it meant his very life on the cross. Amen.**

Moment of silence for sustained self-examination

Assurance of God's Pardon:

Minister

And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:4-7)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, here's the Good News of God's forgiveness. Receive it and be light of the world. Resist evil. Pursue peace based on justice and work for it. Amen.

Listening to the Proclamation of God's Word

†Through the Reading of the Scriptures:

Romans 5:1

Song Response: Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path. (Ps 119:105)

Through Choral Song

Through the Word Spoken

Recommitting ourselves to the *Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People's Rights in These Critical Times*

Call to Offering:

Liturgist

Our mission is precisely a mission to advance peace based on justice as work together to uphold the rights to life of the people we minister unto. Doing mission entails dedication of our lives and the resources that we have to support such a mission. We do this to show how thankful we are for the privilege of sustaining God's mission. Let us now with joy give our share with our offering of money.

Offertory

†Doxology:

*Praise God the Source of Life and Birth,
Praise God the Word who came to earth
Praise God the Spirit, Holy Flame,
All honor, glory to God's name. Amen.*

†Offertory Prayer:

In Unison

Accept this our offering, gracious God, as proof of our commitment to hasten the fruits of your kingdom where people's rights to food, healing and liberty are given and where a just and compassionate social order become the order in Philippine society and the world. Most importantly, we thank you for sustaining grace. In Christ's name we pray and will pray always. Amen.

†Hymn of Commitment:

"We've a Story to Tell to the Nations"
Words & Music: H. Ernest Ni-chol

We've a story to tell to the nations,
That shall turn their hearts to the right,
A story of truth and mercy,
A story of peace and light,
A story of peace and light.

Refrain

*For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
And the dawning to noonday bright;
And Christ's great kingdom shall come on earth,
The kingdom of love and light.*

We've a song to be sung to the nations,
That shall lift their hearts to the Lord,
A song that shall conquer evil
And shatter the spear and sword,
And shatter the spear and sword. (*Refrain*)

We've a message to give to the nations,
That the Lord who reigns up above
Has sent us His Son to save us,
And show us that God is love,
And show us that God is love. (*Refrain*)

We've a Savior to show to the nations,
Who the path of sorrow has trod,
That all of the world's great peoples
Might come to the truth of God,
Might come to the truth of God. (*Refrain*)

†Prayer of Commitment:

Minister: The God in Jesus Christ is with you in the Spirit

People: And also with you.

Minister: Go and receive the blessings
of earth
of life and story
of parents
of heroes and martyrs of the people
of the promise of liberation and abundance
of the kingdom of the Most High.

People: We shall go with joy in serving to defend human rights and life abundant for all.

All: Glory be to God our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer!

†Threefold Amen

†Benediction

Postlude

References:

1. UCCP Hymn of a Faith Journey
2. <http://bulatlat.com/main/2017/04/30/hr-violations-impunity-persist-duterte/>

Testimony

Testimony

THE PATUNGAN EXPERIENCE: AN ECUMENICAL EXODUS

Exodus 3:7, John 10:10b

By Ptr. Reece Ven V. Bico and Rev. Junwel S. Bueno



THE NARRATIVE

The Following are the articles published by Rev. Junwel S. Bueno, Conference Minister of the Southern Tagalog Conference and the President of the Southern Tagalog Region Ecumenical Affairs Movement to Diyaryo Bali-song on August 26, 2017

BALACBACAN NOON, PATUNGAN NGAYON

"Ang daigdig lahat ng naroon, ang may ari ay si Yahweh, ating Panginoon" - Awit 24:1

*"Humigit kumulang ika-10 ng umaga noong ika-22 ng Agosto, 2016 ay biglang dumating ang mga may 6 bus na puno ng demolition crew, mga kapulisan na humigit kumulang 300, mga military na humigit kumulang sa 100 na nakabantay sa mga kalsada at nagkasa ng checkpoint. Nagkaroon ng negosasyon at ang banggit ng **2 Sheriff ay 35 pamilya lamang ang ididemolis**, sabalit hindi pinaniwalaan ng mga lider ng **Save Patungan Now***

***Movement** at mga taga suporta ang nabanggit ng Sheriff sapagkat lahat ng 353 pamilya ay nakaambang idemolis. Nagkaroon ng komosyon at nagsimulang pumasok at mangwasak ang demolition crew. Humigit kumulang sa ika-4 ng hapon na natapos at 10 kabahayan ang nademolis mula sa Silangang bahagi ng **Brgy. Patungan, Maragondon, Cavite**. (Mula sa Factsheet sa naganap na Demolisyon)*

Land Grabbing at Demolisyon

Demolisyon sa Balacbacan noon, Patungan ngayon! Katulad ng nangyari sa minana at napakagan-dang ubasan ni Nabat (mula sa Biblia sa Lumang Tipan, 1 Hari 21:1-19) noong paghahari ni Haring Acab, ang **Brgy. Patungan, sa Maragondon, Cavite at Balacbacan sa Brgy. Laiya, San Juan, Batangas** ay patuloy na nasa gitna ng pagkawasak bunga ng "land grabbing at demolisyon" dahil sa sabwatan ng mga makabagong Haring Acab na walang respeto sa buhay at kultura ng mga pangkaraniwang tao.

Development Aggression, Labanan!

Magkatulad na dumanas nang marahas at di-makataong paraan ng pagpapaalis alang-alang na lahat sa pangalan ng mga programa at proyekto na diumanoy magdudulot ng kaunlaran ang mga magsasaka/mangingisda sa Balacbacan at Patungan. Tayo'y patuloy na hinahamon upang makipag-kapit bisig sa kanila para sa kanilang karapatan, kabuhayan at kinabukasan.

Tuloy ang laban... Kasama natin ang Diyos!

Nagpapatuloy ang pagdaloy ng pakikibaka sa **Sitio Balacbacan sa Brgy. Laiya, San Juan Batangas at sa Patungan** ang kanilang karanasan at kalagayan ay larawan at salamin ng ating lipunan ngayon na patuloy na nakararanas ng pang-aabuso at pagkawasak bunga ng pag-iral ng kasakiman (reign of greed).

Sa ganitong kalagayan, alalahanin natin ang katotohanan na *"ang daigdig lahat ng naroon, ang may ari'y si Yahweh ating Panginoon"*. Tayo'y mga katiwala at



*hindi ang may-ari; tayo'y may tungkulin na labanan at baguhin ang lahat ng mga anyo at paraan; pro-grama at batas na nag-ating pamayanan, lad ng mabuting pakikibaka ng mama-**at Patungan** para sa kasiya-siya para sa la-*

On September 30, Bueno published emphasize the Southern Tagalog Affairs Movement on demolition in Brgy. for the government to rights of the residence



*wawasak sa buhay sa bansa at daigdig, katu-halimbawa ng mayan ng **Balacbacan** buhay na ganap at hat.*

2016, Rev. Junwel another article to statement of the Region Ecumenical condemning the Patungan and the call listen and respect the of Brgy. Patungan

SAVE BARANGAY PATUNGAN NOW!- PART 2

"Ang daigdig lahat ng naroon, ang may ari ay si Yahweh, ating Panginoon" - Awit 24:1

Noong Setyembre 13-14, 2016 nakiisa ang **STREAM** sa inilunsad na **Ecumenical Mercy Mission sa Brgy. Patungan, Maragondon, Cavite**. Narito po ang panalangin at panawagan bunga ng inilunsad na Mercy Mission:

OUR URGENT CALL AND PRAYER: SAVE BARANGAY PATUNGAN NOW!

The Brgy Patungan is not simply a land area or a site which can be used for whatever purpose by any enterprising individual. Brgy Patungan is a birthplace of a distinct, sacred community of people with rich memories and stories of struggles. This is a place where people planted and nurture their dreams, band together and acquired their dignity as a people.

Out of these evolved and developed a distinct tradition, social values and norms of life that give meaning and wealth to Brgy Patungan. Simply demolishing the homes and evacuating the people from the land which is the very source of their lives, their culture, their histories, their memories to give way to "development project" is a crime against life and humanity itself. As church people we cannot bear to see such destruction and desecration of life of peoples and communities.

We condemn the illegal demolition attempted earlier by the MTV led by sheriffs of RTC Naic aided by hundreds of demolition screw, hired goons and police personnel of which about ten were already destroyed. We now stand with them and call to stop the demolition of their homes and forced relocation. We demand the immediate pull out of police and security forces which have no legal basis to stay there and only causing fear and insecurity among the people of Brgy. Patungan.

The people of Brgy. Patungan today are not just number of families residing in the area. They are a community of people, third generation from the earlier inhabitants of the place. Their grandparents lived there, developed and enriched it according to the natural rhythm of life. They learn to value life from their daily interaction, acquire social values from the institutions put up in the community, value each other as neighbors, and cherish the natural environment from which they source their livelihood.

As church people we are morally bound to assert that the people of Brgy Patungan today have all the right to own the land and live together according to the dictates of common good and well-being of the entire community. Such right transcends whatever legal claims by any entity which has no moral and legitimate

connection to the land.

We urge the government to assert its rightful and legitimate mandate to uphold the people's right to life and keep the community of Brgy Patungan together and its valued institutions by distributing the land to the people and ensure their access to land, river and seas as source of their livelihood as well as to basic public and social services like safe water, electricity, education and health care. We assert further that it is the most just and righteous act of the government to dismissed the trumped up charges, like trespassing and malicious mischief, filed against some leaders of Brgy Patungan community.



THE UCCP IN THE PATUNGAN EXPERIENCE

The presence of the UCCP church workers and members is very evident in the advocacy of human rights especially in the case of Patungan. First to be noted is the person leading the Ecumenical movement, Rev. Junwel S. Bueno who is also the present Conference Minister of the Southern Tagalog Conference. The Commission on Christian Witness and Service headed by Ptr. Jessie Abinales, called the Local Churches of the STC to support the Ecumenical Mercy Mission through financial and personal response through conducting a special offering for said mercy mission. The CWS of the conference then proceeded to the Ecumenical Mercy Mission on September 13, 2016 in solidarity with the people of Patungan. Hand in hand, prayer and action has been done through conducting ecumenical worship, listening to their stories and struggles, sharing of food and financial assistance and giving solidarity messages to the people.



THE CHALLENGE

Let us listen to the call of the people who are being oppressed due to development aggression and are being harassed by big corporations though political connection like what happened in Brgy. Patungan.

Let us learn from the experience of the people in their struggle to assert their rights and to be united in the cause for a peaceful life based on justice like the story of the people of Brgy. Patungan

As a church, we are strong when we are united thus our ecumenical witness and ministry has to be cultivated and needs to continue in order to be effective in the advancement of God's Reign of peace based on justice.

Let us widen our perspective and work hand in hand for change through upholding the advancement of human and people's right by challenging the unjust system in these critical times

UCCP Migrant Ministry and More

From Rev. Cathy Chang & Mr. Juan Lopez

In full affirmation of the theme “The Mission of Advancing Peace Based on Justice by Upholding Human and People’s Rights in These Critical Times,” we submit our first-ever contribution to the UCCP Human Rights Guide 2017.

Rev. Cathy Chang and Mr. Juan Carlos Lopez Carrasco began their service as international mission co-workers with Presbyterian Church (USA), in October 2015. Rev. Cathy is working with the UCCP Migrant Ministry with the UCCP national office. She, Juan and their daughter Aurelie moved to Quezon City in March 2016.

As an extension of the UCCP Migrant Ministry, she is working with partners such as Migrante International, National Council of Churches in the Philippines, and Churches Witnessing with Migrants (<http://nccphilippines.org/cwwm/>). She is also seeking to facilitate partnerships with other Asian churches and organizations, as well as between these partners and U.S. church entities.

Rev. Cathy’s contributions to this Human Rights guide come from her past writings and more recent efforts related to forced migration and human trafficking. Many of these writings resonate with today’s peoples’ experiences, that date back to the Hebrew slavery in Exodus 3:7-15, and express the prophetic hope found in Luke 4:16-21.



- The article “Walking Between Life and Death” comes from a PCUSA quarterly newsletter that she and her husband write for the U.S. churches and individuals, as well as other church-related entities, who are interested in and actively supporting their ministry. Although the letter was written during Lent, it is still timely for these critical times. To view past letters and subscribe for future newsletters, check out this link at: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/rev-cathy-chang-and-juan-lopez/>
- Both the pastoral statement from General Secretary Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza and UCCP-PCUSA joint letter addressed to President Rodrigo Duterte were pieces of the larger campaign for Jennifer Dalquez.
- Update about Jennifer Dalquez: Thanks to the international campaign for Jennifer Dalquez, she was removed from death row at the end of June. Based on her self-defense plea, the judge overturned the death penalty, although she still must serve two additional years imprisoned in the United Arab Emirates. We rejoice that justice has prevailed for Jennifer and her family!
- Around that same time in June, the ongoing trial between Mary Jane Veloso and her recruiters Cristina Sergio and Julius Lacanliao, hit a roadblock. The defense lawyers for Veloso’s recruiters issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) which was later approved by Court of Appeals, to block the Regional Court Judge from receiving the deposition of Mary Jane Veloso. Although Mary Jane was granted temporary reprieve from execution in April 2015, she still languishes in prison. It remains to be seen how much longer and whether she will be granted justice!
- In early August, Rev. Cathy attended a meeting in Hong with PCUSA regionally-based mission

personnel from Asia Pacific. There she met Rev. Joram Calimutan, UCCP church worker and commissioned ecumenical worker based in Hong Kong, serving as the Faith, Partnership and Solidarity Coordinator, of Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants. From this meeting came an invitation to participate in the Asia consultation for migration and human trafficking, a pre-event before the CCA's 60TH anniversary celebration and Asia Mission Conference.

- During this Asia consultation in Yangon, Myanmar, on August 9-11, the Philippine delegation included Rev. Rex Reyes Jr. (NCCP General Secretary), Mervin Toquero (NCCP Faith and Witness Service Unit Coordinator), (Migrante International Rights and Welfare Assistance Coordinator), Rev. Marie Sol Villalon (United Methodist Church and PIMAHT), and Nanay Celia Veloso (mother of Mary Jane Veloso), and Rev. Cathy Chang (UCCP-PCUSA). Mr. Toquero and Rev. Cathy, along with other representatives, served on the Drafting Committee, which presented and received approval to share this attached communique with a wider audience. It is a resource for churches, church workers, and anyone else interested in seeking to partner in this ministry.

**THE COMMUNIQUE OF THE ASIA CONSULTATION ON
“HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND FORCED MIGRATION:
A CALL FOR DECENT LABOUR AND A LIVING WAGE”**

*a pre-event to the 2017 Asia Mission Conference
9-11 October 2017*

1. We the participants of the Asia Consultation on Human Trafficking and Forced Migration are representatives of churches, church councils, ecumenical bodies, mission partners, grassroots migrant organizations, and migrant-serving institutions in Asia. We gathered under the auspices of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), on the occasion of its 60th anniversary and on the convening of the 2017 Asia Mission Conference. The consultation was organized in cooperation with the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM), the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) and the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC). We gathered around a shared concern, indeed alarm, at the increased occurrences of forced migration, including trafficking in persons, and their labor and services. This shared concern propelled us to a clear focus on forced migration: real people called who are in various stages of forced migration, including human trafficking.
2. We came from all parts of Asia, with its cultural diversity and religious plurality. The region is economically diverse, with countries that are either migrant-sending, migrant-transit or migrant-destination. It is a venue and witness to both historic and contemporary injustices that demonstrate the violations of human rights including the freedom of movement.
3. We lamented the rampant disregard for the human dignity of migrants and the wanton violation of their human rights. We asserted that all human rights are rights of migrants and refugees. We affirmed that “...we may not all be migrants, but we are all human beings laying claim to the same human rights that are equally the rights of migrants. The safeguards and protections we afford to refugees, migrants and displaced peoples speak to that common dignity in humanity that human rights are founded on”. The biblical reminder that we may “entertain angels unawares” challenged us with a new ethical demand brought about by our increased awareness that the strangers amongst us are God’s people in diaspora—needful of our hospitality and mercy as much as our advocacy for the justice they seek and the human rights they deserve.
4. We listened to stories of human beings caught in the vicious cycle of victimization under conditions of forced migration, especially human trafficking in all its forms (trafficking in labor, drugs, human organs, sex, baby-selling, mail-order brides). We were particularly moved by the personal testimony of Celia Veloso, whose daughter, Mary Jane Veloso, is a victim of trafficking for which reason she currently languishes in Indonesian prison with a death sentence. Her case is emblematic of the precarious situation that many trafficking victims and migrant workers in forced migration experience today. The relentless campaign by family, friends, churches and advocates in the Philippines, Indonesia and around the world, is equally emblematic of what united action can do—which is to gain a reprieve from execution from the Indonesian government. But the plight of Mary Jane is far from over. To seek justice for Mary Jane Veloso means seeking the commutation of her death sentence and her release, back to her family and community. It also means seeking redress from her traffickers and bringing them to justice.

¹ The 58 participants came from Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Vietnam and New Zealand, and from diaspora in the United States of America.

² *Speaking Our Truths as Migrants and Refugees: Claiming and Mobilizing Our Narratives to Address Forced Migration and Enforced Movement, Dhaka Assertions (2016)*, in *Turning Strangers Into Friends: Hospitality, Mercy, Justice—A Workbook on the Framework Documents of the Churches Witnessing With Migrants (CWWM)*, Bautista, Liberato, C. (ed.), National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Quezon City, 2017.

5. The power of personal testimonies as both stories of faith and social critique were abundantly demonstrated at the consultation. We heard stories of people striving for abundant life, by persevering in their search for gainful employment as a way to address the worsening poverty that afflicts many Asian peoples and households. We heard accounts from migrant-serving institutions about peoples who have been forced to flee their homelands due to ongoing wars and conflicts, climate change, including environmental disasters arising from extractive practices that have rendered both the planet and the people vulnerable. We also heard about hapless victims of complex nation-state relations who have been rendered stateless.
6. These stories reflect what migration today is like and what drives people to move, in unprecedented massive numbers and frequency. The facts and figures we heard from each country varied, but the drivers of migration are the same. Human trafficking thrives under conditions of wanton poverty, uneven development of economies, and ongoing violence. These same conditions make this modern-day slavery a scourge.
7. Forced migration, including trafficking and smuggling of persons, is aided and abetted by: (a) migrant-sending governments whose labour export program is deemed a solution to underdevelopment; and (b) migrant-receiving governments whose demand for cheap labour is exploited by some for greed and profit. Forced labour migration makes poor people vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including dirty, demeaning and difficult jobs, starvation wages and non-protection. Their bodies ache from hard labor as much as from psychological trauma of their working conditions and separation from family members while working abroad.
8. Migration today is gendered and sexualized. The tragically high number of women, youth and children who are forced to migrate and are trapped in modern-day slavery, must rally us to address age and gender-based economic, political and cultural systems and structures that are disempowering, leaving them more vulnerable to exploitation.
9. Under such forced migration, human beings are then commodified, in the trafficking for sex, in human organs and baby-selling, turning their bodies into collateral for economic benefits. Forced migration has also made commodities of migrants, turning their labour and services into instruments of cheap labour.
10. Migration today cannot be isolated from concerns for decent labour and the struggle for a living wage. Decent work requires a living wage, not a starvation wage, with a safe and secure working environment. Decent work and a living wage are denied for many by the uneven development of economies. Decent work and a living wage should be global public goods, protected and enforced by law including human rights and international labour laws.
11. Migration today is globalized and xenophobically nationalistic, racialized and ethnicized, heightening racial discrimination and hatred among peoples. Migrants are criminalized, reduced to the documents that they possess and do not possess.
12. Migrants are people. They are not documents or the financial contributions that they make. As one migrant said: Do not talk about us without us. We have answers and we have been voicing them. Listen and talk with us about migration, development and human rights. [All over the world] migrants are collectively struggling and organizing to make our dreams come true.
13. Looking ahead, we commit to organizing that gathers us in common lines of action together. We will work towards cooperation and solidarity as we endeavor to help and be with our migrant brothers and sisters. From service provision to pastoral care and advocacy to public awareness, we can build on each other's energies and on each other's strengths as migrants, migrant-serving institutions, member councils and member churches, and ecumenical bodies.
14. Our concerns that brought us together in Yangon arise out of our faith conviction that all persons are bearers of the divine image and of sacred worth. Migrants are strangers waiting to be welcomed with hospitality and into our neighborhood. In the compassion of Jesus, we cannot rest until we turn strangers into neighbors and friends. Our commitment is to the abundant and sustainable life which is God's purpose for all.

15. Forced migration today is redefining our Christian and ecumenical mission. In the light of the Gospel, the characteristics of and challenges to migration today demand that our faith communities and ecumenical bodies revisit and even re-examine the mission of the church and the way we organize our churches to deliver its ministries and make visible its mission. This requires an ecclesiology that recognizes the diversity of God's people, in both their gathered and dispersed nature, brought about, not least, through migration. It also requires a Christology that not only recognizes the multi-faith and multi-religious character of the Asian population and its diaspora but also what makes for an evangelistic task with dignity and integrity in such situations. Missiology today too must understand how to do mission in a plural and diverse diaspora, and in a manner that is obedient to God's will for the entire oikoumene.
16. We arrived in Yangon as strangers to each other, but now we are friends and co-workers, connected by our common desire to address forced migration and human trafficking. The shalom we seek for all is none other than the peace the prophets have proclaimed: "They shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken" (Micah 4:4). The life we dream for all is none other than what our Lord Jesus has willed: "I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). We disperse as a faith community impelled by the call to "Keep loving each other like family. Don't neglect to open up your homes to guests, because by doing this some have been hosts to angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:1-2).

Yangon, Myanmar
11 October 2017

Sambang Pasasalamat sa Buhay ni Rev. Corazon Cadiz Abugan

UCCP Tondo Evangelical Church
2224 R. Fernandez corner Antipolo Streets
Gagalangin, Tondo, Manila
(9:00AM, Nobyembre 11, 2017)
By: Rev. Jerome C. Baris

"CORAZON: PARA SA DIYOS AT SA BAYAN"

Lukas 10:25-37; Mateo 25:31-46



Magandang umaga po sa ating lahat. Magandang umaga, dahil kahit sa gitna ng realidad ng kamatayan, atin pa rin mai-pahayag ang magandang balita tungkol sa mapagligtas na pag-ibig ng Diyos para sa **Buhay na Banal at Buhay na Walang Hanggan!** Nawa'y ang makatarungang kapayapaan ng Diyos kay Jesu-Cristo at sa Espiritu Santo ay suma-ating puso kahit sa gitna ng kalungkotan at pagluluksa.

Sabi ng pumanaw na na si Rev. Dr. Proceso Udarbe, sa ganitong okasyon, *"tayo'y naririto dala ang ating kolektibong pighati dahil sa pagpanaw ng isang presyusong buhay,"* sa ngayon, ni Rev. Corazon C. Abugan, isang kapatid, tita, kapatid sa pananampalataya, kapwa manggagawa sa Iglesia, kaibigan, kapitbahay at kasama sa masa. Nauunawaan ko po ang ating nararamdaman pighati dahil ako rin po ay nagkaroon ng katulad na karanasan ng mamatay ang pangalawa naming anak na si Liwayway Grace Baris sa kanyang labing apat (14) araw na gulang pa lamang. Napakasakit po.

"Ang pagdalamhati ay kasama po sa ating namanang karamdaman mula mismo sa ating Panginoong Jesu-Cristo na nagsabi, 'Mapalad ang mga nahahapis sapagkat aaliwin sila ng Dios.' (Mateo 5:4). Si Jesu-Cristo din po ay tumangis sa pagkamatay ng kanyang kaibigan na si Lazarus. Naramdaman

din po nya ang malungko't magpighati.

"Ngunit sa kabila nito, naririto din po tayo upang dalhin ang ating kolektibong pag-asa at pananampalataya kasama sa mga Apostololis na nagsasabi, 'Tayo'y naniniwala sa buhay na walang hanggang.'" (translated mula sa English)

Nakabatay nitong dalawang katotohanan, ako'y naniniwala na tayo nga'y naririto ngayon dahil sa "Corazon" ng Dios na ipinagkaloob kay Rev. Corazon Abugan, kaninong buhay ay inialay dahil sa kanyang paging tunay na Corazon sa panglilingkod sa Dios sa pamamagitan ng paglilingkod sa bayan, lalo na sa mga aba't mahihirap biktima ng mapagsamantalang uri sa ating lipunan! Kaya sa espiritu rin ng ating Pag-ibig sa pagkatao ni Corazon, tayo ay nag-aalay ng ating kolektibong paggalang, pagparangal at pagpugay!

Kung aksidente man lang ang nangyari na pinangalanan si Ate Cora ng kanyang mga magulang ng Corazon, para sa akin, ang mahalaga ay kanyang inunawa, pinahalagahan at isinabuhay ang kabulohan at kahulogan ng presyusong pangalang iyan.

Sa isa sa mga gabihang Vigil Services ay meron daw isang taong nagpahayag ng malasakit na ipinaabot kay Ate Evelyn A. Bertoldo, nakababatang kapatid ni Ate Cora, **"Bakit walang kapamilya si Ate Cora na sana nakalagay/nakadikit sa kabaong ang mga pangalan."** Sumagot si Ate Eve, **"baka hindi magkasya, dahil napakamalawak po ang pamilya ni Ate Cora. Kayong lahat ay kasama na sa kanyang pamilya!"**

Sinabi ni Ate Evelyn noong gabi ng PCPR at Multi-Sectoral na pagpangulo sa Vigil Service, **"Salamat po sa inyong Pag-ibig kay Ate Cora,"** (paabot niya sa kongregasyon ng mga taong

dumalo mula sa ibat-ibang sector). Pagkatapos, siya po ay tumingin sa kanyang kapatid, **Ate Cora, Salamat po sa napakaraming mga taong Umiibig sa'yo."**

Sabi ni Annet, isa sa mga malapit na kaibigan at kasama, ito ang ilan huling mga salita ni Ate Cora bago siya mamatay doon sa kanyang bahay sa Alfonso, Cavite noong November 1, 2017: **"Pag nag retire na ako, dito na ako magpapahinga."** Bilang pagmalasakit siya ay nagsabi, **"Salamat MJ,** (batang babae kasama nila sa Alfonso) **naappreciate mo ang buhay ng mga magsasaka, tutulongan kita makahanap ng scholarhip sa pag-aaral mo."** Kahit sa kanyang planong mag retire at pagpapahinga na ay mithiin pa rin sa kanyang paging "Corazon" ang maglingkod sa kapwa na higit nangangailan.

Buhay na Banal

Isa sa pinakamataas na mithiin ng tao sa mundong ito ay ang makamit ang pinakamaligaya, pinakabulohang at pinakamapayapang buhay. Iyan ang mithiin ng Jewish Lawyer nabanggit sa una nating texto. Ngunit kung paano iyon makakamit at anong katangian ng buhay makikilala, ay siyang makahamon na katanungan. Ang makamit ang buhay na walang hanggang o buhay na banal ay hindi lamang sa pamamagitan ng paging memoriado o maisaulo ang mga kautosan at gawain sa loob ng templo sa Jerusalem tulad ng paniniwala ng Pari at Levita, bagkus, para kay Jesus, ang antas ng uri at katangian ng buhay minimithi ng Dalubhasa sa Kautosan, ay buhay na hindi kailangan humihiwalay o lumilihis sa katangian ng buhay na tumutugon sa mga suliranin nararanasan ng kapwa o bayan.

Mungkahe ng ilang biblical scholars, ang biktima, sa Parabola ng Butihing Samaritano, ay simbolo lamang ng mas malawak na masang Palestinian na matagal nang biktima't nagdurusa sa kamay ng mga mapagsamantalang uri ng nagmama-maykapayarihang iilan sa lipunan. Ang mga tulisan/magnanakaw naman, sa mas malawak na pagtingin ng realidad, ay ang sistemang umiiral sa panahong iyon kung saan mismo ang estado ni Herodes, Pontious Pilato at relihiyon ng Judaismo sa pamumuno ng High Priest na si Caiphas ay silang magkaanib na mga tuta ng Empirialistang Roma upang kitilin ang mga presyosong buhay ng mga maralitang uri sa kanayonan at kalunsoran sa pamamagitan ng walang humpay na pagkamkam sa yaman ng bayan ng iilan, sa sakripisyo ng nakararaming mamamayan. Ibig sabihin po na ang Pangliponang Inhustisya ay ganap na umiiral sa panahong iyon. Ang ginawa ni Jesus na pagbaliktad sa mga mesa ng mga money changers sa templo ng Jerusalem ay isang halimbawang protesta laban sa naturang katiwalian. Isang masugid (radical) na pagpahayag sa makatuwirang kaharian ng Diyos!

Yaong uri ng biktima ang tinulongan ng Butihing Samaritano, na sinabi ng Dalubhasa sa Kautosan, siya ang nagpakita bilang tunay na nagmamahal sa kapwa. Para kay Jesus, iyan ang banal na buhay. Actually, si Jesu-Cristo, sa kanyang pangkabuoang misyon at ministeryo, ang ipinapahayag ng manunulat ng Lukas, na Butihing Samaritano.

Sa kanyang komentaryo sa textong ito, si Rev. Luna Dingayan, Presidente ng Ecumenical Theological Seminary (ETS) ng UCCP sa Baguio ay nagsabi, **"A Holy Life, is a Life for Others"** (Ang Buhay na Banal, ay Buhay para sa Iba).

Mula Nobyembre 3 hanggang ngayon umaga, Nobyembre 11, iyon ang sentrong tema ng mga naka saksing nagbigay ng mga salita sa pag-alaala sa buhay ni Rev. Corazon C. Abugan, mula sa personal, pamilya, Iglesia at ang mas malawak na masang kanyang pinaglingkoran, sa pamamagitan ng pakikiisa at pakikibaka para sa karapatan tao, kapayapaan nakabatay sa katarungan, at integridad ng sangnilikha.

Batid po sa karamihan, kung hindi man ng lahat sa atin, ibig sabihin na tayo mismo ang mga buhay na saksi, na ang buhay ni Rev. Corazon C. Abugan ay isang misyon tapat na inialay sa paglilingkod para sa kapanan ng kanyang kapwa at bayan nakaangkla sa kanyang pananampalataya at paglilingkod sa Dios! Kanyang isinabuhay ang tunay na "Corazon" ihinalimbawa ni Cristo, ang Butihing Samaritano! Corazon, Buhay na Banal, sa Dios at sa Bayan.

Buhay na Walang Hanggang

Ano naman po ang kahahantongan sa ganitong uri at katangian ng buhay na banal? Ang buhay na mga salita ng Diyos sa ating pangalawang binasang texto sa Mateo 25:31-46, na may apocalyptic na mensahe, ay nagbibigay katotohanan sa katiyakan ng huling hantongan sa buhay na inialay sa paglilingkod sa Dios, sa kapwa at sa bayan lalo na para sa kapakanan ng mga aba't dukha pinag-sasamantalang sa lipunan. Iyan ang isang Buhay na Banal, Buhay na Walang Hanggan! Ang kato-tohanang ito ay pangako at pagpasya mismo ng ating Panginoon at Taga-pagligtas na si Jesu-Cristo.

Buong puso tayong naniniwala na ang makabuluhang buhay na Corazon, ni Rev. Corazon C. Abugan, ay kasama sa aanyayahin at tatanggapin ng Hari ng Buhay na Walang Hanggan, ***"Halikayo, mga pinagpala ng aking Ama! Pumasok na kayo at manirahan sa kahariang inihanda pa-ra sa inyo mula pa nang likhain ang sanlibutan. Sapagkat ako'y nagutom ay inyong pinakain, nauhaw at inyong pinainom. Ako'y isang dayuhan, at iyong pinatuloy. Ako'y walang maisuot at iyong pinaramtan, nagkasakit at iyong dinalaw; ako'y nabilanggo at iyong pinuntahan. Sasagot naman po ang mga katulad kay Ate Cora, "Panginoon, kailan po naming kayo nakitang nagutom at aming pinakain, o nauhaw at aming pinainom? Kailan po kayo naging dayuhan at aming pinatuloy, o kaya'y walang maisuot at aming pinaramtan? At kailan po naming kayo nakitang may sakit o nasa bilangguan at aming dinalaw? Sasabihin ng Hari, "Sinasabi ko sa inyo: nang gawin ninyo ito sa pinakahamak sa mga kapatid kong ito, ito ay sa akin ninyo ginawa." ". . . ang mga matuwid ay ta-tanggap ng buhay na walang hanggan."*** (Mateo 25:34-41, 46b)

Ikaw, ano po ba ang mithiin mo para sa isang makabuluhang buhay dito sa mundo? Kayamanan material ba, karunungan bulag sa katarungan at malasakit, pagkadakila sa sariling kapakakan? Hindi, huwag po iyan! Mga mahal kong kapatid, kaibigan at kasama, ako'y nagpapayo at humahamon. Makiisa ka sa tribu ng **Corazon**, marangal na pangalan at katangian sa mata ng **Dios at ng Bayan** na isinabuhay ni Rev. Corazon C. Abugan. At iyong makakamtan ang **Buhay na Banal at Buhay na Walang Hanggan!** Sa pangalan ng Dios Ama, Dios Anak at Dios Espiritu Santo. AMEN. **Isang taas kamao na Pagpugay sa Makabuluhang Buhay ni Rev. Corazon Cadiz Abugan!!!**

PHOTO EXHIBIT PROGRAMME

Philippine UPR Watch 2017

10:00AM 5, May 2017

Ecumenical Center

World Council of Churches

Geneva, Switzerland

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God of Life and History, we praise and thank for Your everlasting presence that gathered us together into this place and time, to proclaim Your Truth, Justice and Peace, amidst the challenging realities of social injustices and un-peace in the Philippines resulting into grave spate of the sanctity of human life, known in the rampant human rights violations in the past recent years now, exhibited in part, through these photos before us.

We praise and thank You as well, for the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism that gives space, as a system, to Civil Societies Organizations (CSOs), like the Philippine UPR Watch, concerned and responsible to bring the real human rights situation in the Philippines to the international community for their appropriate intervention to let the UN member-states like the Philippines under review, sincerely and intentionally comply with various recommendations in order that the fundamental values of Equality and Non-Discrimination will truly reign in our benighted country, the Philippines.

We praise and thank You, Oh Lord, for the significant role that the World Council of Churches (WCC) plays, in this pilgrimage of proclaiming the Truth, Justice and Peace for the Philippines, in the spirit of solidarity and ecumenism.

This is our prayer in Christ's name, the Prince of Peace. AMEN.

By: Rev. Jerome C. Baris

National Program Coordinator

Justice, Peace and Human Rights

United Church of Christ in the Philippines

REPORT OF THE SUBMISSION OF THE PHILIPPINE UPR WATCH RELATED TO THE PHILIPPINES FOR THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW 2017

*The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) is an ecumenical protestant denomination that is committed and dedicated in manifesting prophetic witness of the Church as a collective response to the need to bring wholeness of life all of God's creation. "The UCCP believes, that persons are created in the image of God and destined to live in community with God, with other persons and with all creation. That being entrusted with God's creation, they are called to participate in the establishment of a just and compassionate social order, a foretaste of God's Kingdom. The UCCP believes further, that the Kingdom of God is present where faith in Jesus Christ is shared, where healing is given to the sick, where food is given to the hungry, where light is given to the blind, and where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed." **(1)** (UCCP Statement of Faith).*

Continuous Harassment among Church People

This report focuses on the recent persecution and harassment being experienced by the church (UCCP) and some of its constituents as a consequence of its commitment and dedication in manifesting prophetic ministry as faith imperative, through its justice, peace and human rights program.

The human rights violations perpetrated by the state agents against some UCCP Pastors and laypersons shifted from series of Extra-Judicial Killings, (latest was the murder of Datu Jimmy Liguyon in March 5, 2012) **(2)** into intense surveillance, intimidation, vilification and several trumped-up charges filed in courts in different parts of the country since January 2013 up to the present. We have proven legally that those cases were all fabricated by virtue of the fact that all have been dismissed due to lack of legal evidence.

On August 20, 2013, surveillance operations on Pastor June Ver Mangao were shamelessly conducted by intelligence agents of 1st Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army, under the command of Col. Jose Augusto Villareal based in Sta. Maria, Laguna. Two unidentified persons visited three UCCP Mabitac Church Council officers in separate incidents within that one day. Using different fictitious cover stories: namely, being CAFGU looking for a born-again Church in Paagahan where the UCCP Mabitac Chairperson resides; asking the name and whereabouts of the Pastor just three houses away from the UCCP Chapel while pretending to need to ask about have a child baptized asking how much is the baptismal fee; and, inquiring for any house for rent from a UCCP member who rents a bed space near the Municipal Hall. All of these UCCP members were asked the same questions probing for the identity of Pastor June Ver as well as his whereabouts. They even attempted to secure Pastor June Ver's picture.

Under the cloak of Oplan Bayanihan, schemes are designed and implemented to attempt to link human rights defenders and advocates to the underground left and in the process harass, threaten and intimidate them. No less than the Chief of Police of Mabitac and his police intelligence officer confirmed that the surveillance was done by elements of Philippine Army in order to attempt to verify Pastor June Ver's links to the leftist movement. Ironically, but not surprisingly, the desperate way the military operates in the guise of protecting the people ends up violating their legitimate rights.

Pastor June Ver Mangao graduated from Union Theological Seminary in March of 2013. He started his ministry as the Local Church Pastor of the UCCP Mabitac in June of 2011 and was momentarily away from January to June of 2012, when he was chosen as one of the exchange students in a partnership between the Union Theological Seminary-Philippines and Stockholm School of Theology-Sweden. Pastor Jun Ver resumed his work in Mabitac, when he returned in June of 2012. As a young pastor, Pastor June Ver has shown exemplary passion for Church mission. Within a short time as pastor of UCCP Mabitac, he successfully organized a mission outreach in Brgy. Kabulusan, Pakil, Laguna which is about 15 kilometers away. ***Through his leadership, UCCP Mabitac has also been able to put up a community center for children and parents development, serving the poorest among the poor in the community.***

With clear evidence of his capabilities and potential, Pastor June Ver Mangao was entrusted with enormous responsibility when he was designated by the Northeast Southern Tagalog Conference as Chairperson of Community Ministries Committee. This rare opportunity for a young pastor was a natural response to people witnessing his passion for mission, especially with the poor and downtrodden.

One focus of the conference-wide community ministries is the Prison Ministry in Laguna Provincial Jail. Based on the Conference Annual Session's commitment in Luisiana, Laguna in 2011 for the so-called Lumban 3, ***Pastor June Ver regularly visits these political prisoners in the jail and he also effectively organized the church people's presence in court hearings. Both Pastor June Ver and the Conference have no other inkling as to the reason why Pastor June Ver has been threatened, harassed and intimidated other than his commitment with the UCCP to defend the poor and the oppressed.***

We view Pastor June Ver's surveillance intended to harass, threaten and intimidate him as an attack on the United Church of Christ in the Philippines as a whole. The UCCP Northeast Southern Tagalog Conference has reported persistent surveillance. Brother Noli Capulong was extra-judicially killed on May 27, 2006. Pastor Berlin Guerrero was abducted and tortured on May 27, 2007 and on the following day detained under trumped-up charges. Pastor Rodel Canja was abducted on May 6, 2008 in an attempt to foment information and coerce him to testify against Pastor Berlin. In August 2013, Pastor June Ver Mangao has been targeted for harassment by the military intelligence that led him, per advice and support of the church, to file a case on harassment before the Commission on Human Rights. After the case was dismissed, Pastor June Ver never experience harassment anymore. **(3)**

On the other account, the case of Pastor Francisco Bunoan Jr., involving 3 counts of murder and 2 counts of frustrated murder has been dismissed in August 26, 2015 for no legal merit. He was implicated to the violent incident that happened on November 10, 2014, 8:00PM when members of the New People's Army attacked members of the 81st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (IBPA) illegally holding detachment at the basketball court of Bugbuga, Sta Cruz, Ilocos Sur. Pastor Bunoan is 62 years old, resident of Aringay, La Union, a retired pastor of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines who has been serving as volunteer researcher staff for Community Ministry Program of UCCP-North Luzon Jurisdictional Area (UCCP-NLJA). **(4)**

The same trumped-up charges had been filed against Bro. Benjie Gomez, Local Lay Preacher of UCCP La Libertad, Zamboanga del Norte, involving 1 Count of Murder and 2 Counts of Frustrated Murder before the RTC Branch 11 of Sindangan, Zamboanga Del Norte, by plaintiff 1Lt. Arlene Quijano Palafox of PA 10th IB "Alpha Coy based in Leon B. Postigo. He was illegally arrested on July 27, 2014 at 9 o'clock in the morning while riding his motorcycle from UCCP church going home when he was about to fetch his wife and son to go to Church for Sunday worship at Poblacion La Libertad, Zamboanga del Norte. He was implicated on the killing of CPL Marwin D. Ybanez during the encounter between the Philippine Army and the New People's Army that happened on December 3, 2012, 2:00PM at Sitio Napolan, Bgy. Tinuyop, Leon B. Postigo, Zamboanga del Norte. The case had been quashed for lack of evidence last May 2015. **(5)**

In Southern Mindanao, two UCCP ordained ministers, Rev. Roger Rafalez and Rev. Allen Bill Veloso, were among those 20 activists and human rights defenders for indigenous peoples (IPs) who were filed with trumped-up charges on June 17, 2015 involving attempted murder, Violation of RA 7610 and Violation of 9851 otherwise known as the "Philippine Act on Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide, and other Crimes Against Humanity." Charges were filed by PO2 Jegz Bryan L. Salutan of Philippine National Police Alabel and PFC Charlito B. Tunggak of 73rd Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army. The attempted murder case was implicated to them on the encounter between New People's Army (NPA) and 73rd Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army in Brgy. Upper Suyan, while the Violation of RA 7610 and RA 8951? is related to the evacuation of B'laan Lumads whom they facilitated for refuge at the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) Compound, Brgy. San Isidro, General Santos City and provided foods and medicines since May 23 to June 13, 2015. **(6)**

While trumped-up charges on Kidnapping, Serious Illegal Detention, and, Human Trafficking were filled against Rev. Irma M. Balaba of UCCP Faith Bible Church, Quezon City, and serving as Program Assistant of the Commission on Union and Ecumenical Relations at the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), implicated with her participation in the Interfaith Mercy Mission which was held on August 29-31, 2014 in Barangay Gupitan, Kapalong, Davao del Norte over the harassment, killings and displacements of LUMAD **(7)**; and Rev. Jorie Jayme, Christian Witness & Service Worker of Southern Mindanao District Conference, Pastor of UCCP Dolo and Member of the Board of Trustees of the UCCP Brokenshire College, Davao City with the same case being implicated with his active participation in the humanitarian response of the UCCP in cooperation with ecumenical and multi-sectoral mission partners providing sanctuary

among hundreds of LUMAD at UCCP Haran Peace Center in Davao City. After a few months of court litigation, their case had been dismissed for no legal merit. **(8)**

The UCCP response to these issues and concerns is anchored on its declaration of principles enshrined in the amended Constitution (1986) which states that, *“In accordance with the biblical understanding that all persons are created in the image of God, the Church affirms and upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as reflected in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements on human rights, the international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights, the 1984 Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and those that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights.”* (Article 2, Section 11) **(9)**

On UCCP Haran Incidents: Desecration of Church Mission and Ministry of Upholding Human and People’s Rights

The above-mentioned principles continues to be desecrated and challenged by the desperate acts of the state agents when during the early morning of June 23, 2015, PNP elements in full riot gear, along with a paramilitary group named ALAMARA and with fire trucks and military vehicles began massing outside the UCCP Haran Mission House Compound. They were led by a certain Col. Marvin Pepino. Without presenting any warrant or court order even when asked point blank about it, they forcibly entered the Church premises by destroying the gate. This happened as Church officials were facilitating a dialogue between the *datus* and the representatives from the DSWD and the NCIP. The DSWD Assistant Director Perlita Demaquiling stated that they were ordered by the Office of the President through the DSWD Secretary to get the women and children in the Haran Mission Compound. The *datus* refused the offer. The National Program Coordinator of the Justice, Peace and Human Rights, suggested that the concerned agencies extend their services in the evacuation area, instead of forcing them to go back to their tribal communities without definite security assurance. The dialogue had just ended when for unknown reason, a command was given to the Philippine National Police (PNP) present to force their way in. Apparently there was no coordination with the local government unit, as the PNP immediately withdrew when Davao Vice-Mayor Paolo Duterte arrived in the scene.

The UCCP strongly condemn the illegal and violent conduct of the Police forces along with ALAMARA, a paramilitary group, by using excessive force to break through the premises of HARAN Mission House. We are outraged at this show of excessive force, more so, because the PNP did not have any warrant to enter and search the Church facility, a private property.

HARAN Mission Center, owned by UCCP, has long been a Peace Sanctuary for the lost, the last and the least of our people. It is a place purposely created to accommodate individuals or communities that have been deprived, neglected, exploited, and suppressed with their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Our fellow Ata-Manobos sought help and refuge in our Church since 1994, the first of a series of internal displacement due to militarization that happened in the countryside. To reiterate, providing them sanctuary in our peace haven is a ministry we embrace arising from our own UCCP Declaration of Principles, to wit:

“In accordance with the biblical understanding that all persons are created in the image of God, the Church affirms and upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights . . . and those that specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights.” (Art II Sec 11, UCCP Constitution). *“The United Church of Christ in the Philippines affirms its historic faith and its pastoral and prophetic witness in the life and culture of the Filipino people. The Church supports the people’s aspiration for abundant life and holistic redemption from all forms of bondage, in accordance with the vision of the reign of God* (Art II Sec 8, UCCP Constitution). **(10)**

Intentional desecration to the UCCP properties and ministry continue to persist when in the early morning of February 24, 2016 at around 2:30 AM, the dormers and the Lumad IPs were frightened upon finding that the two (2) students’ cottages were caught on fire as well as an attempt to burn the evacuation camp along UCCP HARAN Compound located at 341 Fr. Selga Street, Davao City. Two unidentified men who forced to break through the premises of HARAN Mission House were seen in motorcycle departing from the area. **(11)**

Until recently, the excesses of the past regime are still festering in our system. The most recent indication was the issu-

ance of an arrest warrant by Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 10, Davao City against 14 identified leaders of militant groups including a nun, a pastor and a son of a pastor of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), allegedly for kidnapping and illegal detention related to the scuffle between Lumad evacuees and the police at the UCCP Haran in Davao City, July 23 last year, as instigated by North Cotabato Representative Nancy Catamco. The UCCP wonders why this case was re-filed by the Department of Justice when it was already dismissed last September 2015 by the Davao City Prosecutor's office for insufficiency of evidence. This appears as mere harassment and intimidation against the church and the human rights defenders, contrary to the actions of the Davao City government as ordered by former Mayor Rodrigo Duterte to assist and help the Lumad evacuees. The UN Special Rapporteur Dr. Chaloka Beyani who personally visited the LUMAD at UCCP Haran Mission Center in September 2015 attested in his statement, ***"Let me be absolutely clear, the indigenous persons in Davao are not victims of human trafficking."*** ***(12)***

Even worse is the obvious effort to despoil and smear the integrity of our church people and human rights defenders and put their lives in danger by posting unsigned banners and "wanted" posters in public places around Davao City.

The UCCP deplores in the strongest possible terms all these acts of harassment committed against our church people and against peace advocates and human rights defenders. We continue to clang the cymbal of protest that all these abhorrent acts of persecution ***must stop now!*** ***(13)***

Endnotes:

This is part of the Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines;

Datu Jimmy Liguyon, Chairman of the Church Council of UCCP Dao, San Fernando, Bukidnon was the latest UCCP victim of extra-judicial killing in March 4, 2012;

This account is based on the Press Statement released in public by the South Luzon Jurisdiction (SLJ) on September 4, 2013;

*This was based on the Press Statement entitled: **"Stop Persecution of All Church Workers and Lay Leaders"** released by the Karapatan – Ilocos Human Rights Alliance last August 21, 2015 over the recent harassment among UCCP Pastors and Lay Persons actively involved in the justice, peace and human right advocacy;*

This account was taken from the Fact-Sheet of the case written by Rev. Isaías B. Morales on October 18, 2014. Rev. Morales is a Church Worker Assigned at UCCP Dipolog City as Youth Pastor and OIC Principal of Dipolog UCCP Preschool, Inc.

This version is based on the Fact Sheet of the case submitted by the South-East Mindanao Jurisdiction (SEMJ) prepared by Zadrach Sabella on June 26, 2015.

This story line of information was based on Rev. Irma M. Balaba's personal testimony written for the production of the UCCP Human Rights Week Celebration 2015

(Ibid), The account on the case of Rev. Jorie Jayme is included in the Fact Sheet submitted by the SEMJ, June 26, 2015;

Excerpt from the UCCP Declaration of Principles enshrined in Article 2, Section 11 of the amended Constitution (1986);

The Incumbent Bishop of the UCCP issued a Pastoral Statement on the forcible entry of state agents/authorities to the premises of UCCP Haran Peace Center on July 23, 2015;

The facts of this account were based on the Letter Request by SEMJ Area Bishop, Bishop Hamuel O. Tequis addressed to SFO4 ORENCIO B. GRADO, OIC, IIS-DSFD, Bureau of Fire Protection, Alvarez Cor. Monteverde Sts., Davao City last February 24, 2016;

This testifying statement by the UN Special Rapporteur Dr. Chaloka Beyani on Human Trafficking was his means of clarifying the public about the coercive misinterpretation by a high-ranking military officer on his observation on the plight of more than 700 LUMAD taking refuge at the UCCP Haran Peace Center, Davao City he visited last year (need specific date);

This account was excerpt from the Pastoral Statement of the UCCP Incumbent Bishops relative to the recent harassment by the state agents/authorities against 14 human rights defenders (including Rev. Jorie Jayme and a son of a UCCP Pastor) issued last July 11, 2016;

Recommendations:

To the Philippine Government:

Stop instilling of threat, surveillance, intimidation, vilification and other form of harassment to Church people exercising their religious and political beliefs

Stop the Desecration of Place of Church Mission and Worship or Offending Religious Rites/Practices and Ministries.

Discontinue the practice of criminalizing political offenses and actions for acts in pursuit of one's political beliefs at the arrest, investigation, prosecution and trial stages and uphold the political offense doctrine by charging the proper political charges instead of trumped-up common crimes. (*UPR 2012 – KARAPATAN*).

To undertake every effort towards the punishment of human rights violation perpetrators in order to bring justice to victims. This may involve making changes in country's criminal justice procedures. Punishment of the perpetrators is a huge first step in the ending of impunity (*UPR 2012 – IFI RPRD*).

Rebuke and discontinue the arbitrary, unfounded and malicious labelling of Church people manifesting their prophetic witness by involving in national liberation movements, with progressive nationalist organizations and patriots as “terrorists” both at the national and international forums (partly modified-UPR 2012 – KARAPATAN).

Support the UPR 2012 recommendation on human trafficking vis-à-vis UN Rapporteur Dr. Chaloka Beyani's statement on LUMAD taking refuge at UCCP Haran.

Immediate stop on the military coercive act of recruitment among Indigenous Peoples for Counter-Insurgency program of the state causing rampant HRVs among IPs people and communities; Immediately implement the recommendation in UPR 2012 from some member state for the “*disbandment of the para-military groups*” by repealing **E.O. 546** creating and use para-military groups in Oplan Bayanihan.

End to the state's terror against the IPs rights to Ancestral Domain and Self Determination

Stop Counter-Insurgency Program Oplan Bayanihan, instead, PURSUE THE RESUMPTION OF FORMAL PEACE TALKS between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and other patriotic armed group in Southern Philippines, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and MNLF as a means to achieve just and lasting peace.

For the Duterte administration to implement and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and various human rights treaties and instruments that the Philippine government is a party or signatory of.

For the International Community

Conduct international investigative missions to look into the gross violations of the basic human and peoples in the Philippines

Come up with objective recommendations and regular follow-up to ensure for the state concerned to faithfully implement.

Prepared by:

Rev. Jerome C. Baris

UCCP National Coordinator

Justice, Peace and Human Rights Program

Justice, Peace and Human Rights Program Updates

June 2016 – October 2017



This report contains information on various activities of the Justice, Peace and Human Rights (JPHR) Program implemented covering the period from June 2016 until October 2017. The main goal of this program is to strengthen and intensify by institutionalizing the Prophetic Witness of the UCCP among Church's Judicatories, Organizations and Institutions (JOIs) within the remaining years of the current quadrennium (June 2014-May 2018). These programs and activities are concrete expression of responses to the objective

reality of continuing social injustices accumulated from the past government administrations of the Philippines which are still prevailing until this "change" promising government under President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. These are manifestations and articulations as well of the UCCP's three-point goals: 1) *To strengthen the Faith Community*; 2) *To Enrich the Life of the Community where Local Churches are located*; and, 3) *To Deepen the Impact of our Collective Response to the Societal Issues and Concerns* under its mission of creating and uniting faith communities for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus essential to the realization of its vision for a transformed church and society towards an abundant life for all!

The Four Major Focus:

Capability Building – refers to educational mechanisms that enable the church constituents (Judicatories, Organizations and Institutions-JOIs) knowledgeable on what Prophetic Ministry of the UCCP is all about through the Justice, Peace and Human Rights Program and therefore engage accordingly in their respective area of mission and ministry.

a.1. Gave Input on the Prophetic Ministry of the UCCP to: 1) I've been a resource-person on a variety of topics related to the JPHR program during assemblies, consultation, orientation-seminar workshop, conferences and among church's JOIs held in different dates and venues.

a.2. Revival of The Wednesday Forum – Revived The Wednesday Forum as venue for regular discussion on issues regarding JPHR, in cooperation with other church entities of the UCCP and ecumenical partners in the Metro Manila.

a.3. Launching of the Salonga Memorial Lectureship Center for Justice and Good Governance – The JPHR



Program Office is part of the convener's group that launched the Salonga Memorial Lectureship Center for Justice and Good Governance that is temporarily based at the UCCP Cosmopolitan Church. The center holds forum once a year on issues related to social justice and good governance inspired by the Christian principles and integrity of the late Jovito Reyes Salonga, former President of the Philippine Senate.

- a.4.** The Program also extended financial support to different church judicatories and organizations implementing JPHR related activities like the ***Migrant Ministry Consultation & Orientation*** by the West Visayas Jurisdictional Area held February 6-7, 2017 at UCCP Tebiao, Antique and the ***UCCP Human Rights Lawyers and Advocates Consultation*** by the North-West Mindanao Jurisdiction (NWMJ) held February 28 to March 1, 2017.

Direct Services – refers to concrete support in terms of finance and other relevant interventions as expression of our continues pilgrimage with the surviving families, groups, and/or communities who have been victims of human and/or people's rights violations, in their search for justice and as they recuperate from pain and loss of loved ones towards a future life with hope and meaning.



b.1. Educational Support to Studying Children of UCCP Church Workers and Lay Leaders who were victims of Human Rights Violations –

Continues educational support to children of UCCP Pastors and Laymen who were victims of human rights violations. At present, we still have twenty-two (22) pupils/students from elementary, high school and college. Unfortunately, there are four (4) students who quitted from schooling starting last school year June 2015 to May 2016. But five students had already graduated from college since this program started in 2007. Assessment, monitoring, and debriefing processes have also been done to ensure the students are in the right condition to finish the courses they take.

b.2. We provided various ***financial assistance*** related to the promotion of the JPHR, to include among others, Sanctuary for Lumad, Mercy Mission thru the distribution of goods for relief & rehabilitation, medical-dental, psycho-social and fact-finding mission services to farmers, fisher folks, and indigenous peoples and communities, legal assistance to UCCP pastors and lay people with trumped-up charges, filling of administrative case on "Grave Misconduct" against state agents and the campaign ***to SAVETHELIFE OF MARY JANE VELOSO and JENNIFER ARESGADO DALQUEZ, OFW on Death Row.***



UCCP Legal Suit versus the former President Gloria M. Arroyo (GMA) – A special project for Justice to HRVs victims and end the Culture of Impunity in the Philippines. A "Damage Suit" filed in court on 2011 making the former President liable for human rights violations against several UCCP Pastors and Lay Leaders allegedly committed by state agents military and police) and operatives who, by law, were then all under the ultimate control and command responsibility of GMA as the country's President and Commander-in-Chief imple-



menting anti-insurgency Oplan Bantay Laya program under the National Security Act of the government.

On September 9, 2016, the Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 226 of Quezon City made a ruling in favour of the Defendant who filed a “demurrer” on the case. After a case consultation, we filled, through our legal counsel, a PETITION IN OPPOSITION to the decision by the Judge of RTC Branch 226, before the Courts of Appeal, Manila, in order to pursue the litigation of the case. A pattern has been noticed that almost all cases filed in court against the former Pres. Gloria M. Arroyo has been dismissed allegedly with “political influence.” The UCCP legal retainer observed that the UCCP Legal Suit versus Pres. GMA is much **stronger in terms of evidence** than the case of “Morong 43” which won in court.

Linkages/Alliances/Networking with Ecumenical and Multi-Sectoral Mission Partners local and abroad on JPHR Advocacy, Campaign and Mobilization – refers to our humble engagement and/or participation in various Justice, Peace and Human Rights advocacy, campaign and mobilization programs and activities addressing various social issues in the country.

d.1. Contribution to the Philippines Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Watch 2017 – The UCCP was given a slot by the Philippine UPR Watch as one of the different sectors contributing **Alternative Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Philippines** for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to the United Nation Human Rights Council (UNHRC) on May 2017. This report of the UCCP focuses on the recent persecution and harassment being experienced by the church itself and its constituents as a consequence of our commitment and engagement in manifesting the prophetic ministry as a *faith imperative*, through the justice, peace and human rights program and advocacy.



On May 2-13, 2017, the JPHR Program Coordinator was a member of the 12 persons from civil societies that composed the Philippine UPR Watch Team 2017 that lobbied to the 35th Regular Sessions on the UPR of the UNHRC, to different NGOs and ecumenical mission partners around Geneva, Switzerland through photo exhibit, forum and short talk on the real human rights situation in the Philippines covering the period from 2013 under the administration of the former President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino III up to present under President Rodrigo R. Duterte. Few months prior to the trip to Geneva, the Phil UPR Watch 2017 have also lobbied to embassies of different countries holding office in the Philippines. One of the main objectives of this mechanism or process is for UN member-states to present appropriate recommendations to the UNHRC for the Philippines, as signatory of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and other related Covenants and Treaties, to observe the universal standard and principles of promoting and protecting human rights in accordance to its two fundamental values of EQUALITY and NON-DISCRIMINATION.

d.2. Participation in the International Peacemaker's Program of the Presbyterian Church-USA -
The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) is one among the fifteen (15) mission partners of the Presbyterian Church, United States of America (PC-USA) in 15 different countries that sent participants to the 2017 International Peacemakers Program of the PC-USA. The main objective and/or impact expected through this program is to strengthen our partnership in mission of peacemaking in local and global arena.

The Office of the General Secretary (OGS) of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), in response to the invitation by the PC-USA Peacemaking Mission Agency, designated the Rev. Jerome C. Baris, National Coordinator for the Justice, Peace and Human Rights (JPHR) Program and Administrative Pastor of the UCCP Tondo Evangelical Church, to attend the month-long program that started on September 19 through October 19, 2017 (inclusive travel).



After the program orientation phase at the PC-USA Center in Louisville, Kentucky on September 20-21, Rev. Baris has been assigned to visit four presbyteries: 1) Presbytery of the Pacific in California (September 22-29); 2) Eastern Virginia **Presbytery**, Virginia (September 29-October 4); 3) Cemarron Presbytery in Oklahoma (October 4-12), and, 4) Cincinnati Presbytery in Ohio (October 12-16), then returned to Louisville for debriefing processes on October 16-17.

His engagement includes the main presentation entitled: ***“UCCP Peacemaking Ministry: A Prophetic Spirituality for the Mission of Transformation”*** before Presbyteries in Session, local churches, church's organizations (men, women and youth), ecumenical partners, campus ministry centers, college student and professors in three universities and some Non-Government Organization (NGO) Centers on Faith and Justice, on Human Rights and Conflict Resolutions, delivered sermon on Sundays in some local churches and during regular meetings of some Presbytery, integration with several families of Pastors and church members and tour visit to famous places and/or museum with historical significance about the USA.

d.3. Pastoral Statements – As concrete expression of manifesting our Prophetic Witness “in season and out of season,” especially consistent with our *Peace-Making Ministry*, the 19th National Council Meeting held August 18-20, 2016 in Lucena City, unanimously approved the two Pastoral Statements released by the Council of Bishops: “NO TO KILLINGS NOW” and “RESUME THE PEACETALKS NOW” between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GPH) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). Subsequently, several statements of the same concern have been released by several Jurisdictional areas within this Ecclesiastical Year (e.g. NLJ-UCWO 2017, SLJ and EVJ). The 20th NC Meetings made an action to adopt the Resolution submitted by the Manila North Conference (MNC) entitled, “NEVER AGAIN TO MARTIAL LAW, NEVER AGAIN TO TYRANNY.”

Glossary

Glossary

Glossary of HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

**Prepared by:
Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights 2011**

Introduction

KARAPATAN – is a national alliance composed of organization, groups and individuals active in the promotion, protection and individuals active in promotion, protection, defense and advance of human rights [HR]. It upholds that human beings have the inalienable right to life. Liberty, security of person and pursuit of happiness; and have such fundamental freedoms as those of thought, expression, belief and assembly, as well as from want and fear. It asserts and addresses the full range of rights of individuals and people: civil and political, economic, social and cultural.

KARAPATAN – asserts that the State, as a party to various international HR instruments, has the primary responsibility to uphold and protect human rights. Guided by the national democratic movement's extensive experience and arduous defense of human rights and consistent with the United Nation [UN] systems and mechanisms, karapatan's mandate in monitoring and documentation work focuses mainly on the compliance of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines [GPH] with UN human rights instruments such as the international Covenant On Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR] and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [ICESCR] among others, and the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines [CARHRIHL].

The Karapatan 2011 Glossary of Human Rights Violations [HRVs] serves as a continuing attempt at setting a working reference of HRV definitions based on standards set by International Human Rights Law [IHRL] as specified in various United Nations covenants and other international treaties and conventions. It includes other rights which have been identified and defined in later years as a result of people's struggle not only for human rights but comprehensively for national sovereignty and democracy all over the world.

KARAPATAN's efforts are in line with its objective of developing an accurate, timely, comprehensive and useful system of HRV monitoring and documentation as bases for:

- Getting justice for the victims of HRV violation and their families
- Coming up with regular periodic reports on human rights situation in the Philippines
- Calling attention to and campaigning against HR violations; and
- Generally reporting to the public on the status of the government's compliance with the international instrument that it signed or acceded to as a state party.

The Glossary is a companion document to KARAPATAN's Gabay sa Pagsasanay sa awaing Dokumntasyon [Training Guide on Documentation Work].

Definition of Terms

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW [IHRL] Also commonly referred to as HUMAN RIGHTS [HR]

A set of international rules and norms established by treaty, convention or customs, on the basis of which individuals and groups can assert and/ or claim certain rights, behavior or benefits from governments. Human rights are inherent entitlements which belong to every person as a consequence of being human. IHRL lays down rules binding governments in their relations with individual, communities and peoples.

Person in Authority

- a. Any person directly vested with jurisdiction, whether as an individual or as a member of some court or government-owned or controlled corporation, board or commission;
- b. Include a barrio captain and barangay chairman; any person who, by direct provision of the law, by election or by appointment; by competent authority, is charged with the maintenance of public order and the protection and security of life and property, such as a barrio councilman, barrio policemen and barangay leader;
- c. Regular state security forces [military and police].

Agents of persons in Authority

- a. Any person who “comes to the aid of persons in authority are agents of person in authority” [Article 152, RPC];
- b. Paramilitary groups, vigilante groups, security services, hired killers, etc

Civilians

Are Warmed individuals, with or without political affiliation. However, those individuals who are armed with firearms or bladed weapons for economic/cultural purposes other than political and are not engaged in armed struggle are deemed civilians under this lexicon (e.g. Tribal communities, hunters, or private individuals who own or process guns for leisure or self-protection).

Combatants

Armed persons organized in a more or less rigid manner with a definite political goal and engaged in armed struggle/conflict to pursue the same. For this purpose, regulars of the New People’s Army, Bangsamoro Army and the Armed Forces of the Philippines are considered combatants. These also include those armed and engaged in counter-insurgency operations and controlled, directly or indirectly, by the State, including but not limited to paramilitary units like Civilian Home Defense Force [CHDF], Civilian armed Forces Geographical Units [CAFGU], Barrio Self defense Unit [BSDU], Civilian active Auxilliary [CAA], civilian volunteer organization [CVOs] and other paramilitary units that state security forces will form in the future, included also are private armies and vigilante groups.

Hors de Combat

A situation where a combatant is no more in a position or has no more capacity to take part in hostilities or commit any hostile act (Literal translation: out of combat who is wounded injured, sick or surrendered or in no position or capacity anymore to do any hostile act.

Children

Every human being below the age of eighteen years [18] unless under the law applicable to the child majority is attained earlier (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). (Mentally-ill persons- persons who are mentally retarded or whose mental capacity does not exceed that of a child, as can be verified by scientific means.)

Family

Basic unit of society which is entitled to protection by the State and society. For statistical purposes, six will be used as the average number of members of a Filipino family.

Property

Any physical or intangible entity that is owned by a person or jointly by a group of persons. Important widely recognized types of property include real property [land, structure, personal property [physical possessions belonging to a person], private property [property owned by legal persons or business entities.

Writ of Habeas Corpus [English translation: “produce the body”]

A judicial mandate to a prison official ordering that an inmate be brought to the court so it can be determined whether or not that person is imprisoned lawfully and whether or not he should be released from custody. The writ is “the fundamental instrument for safeguarding individual freedom against arbitrary and lawless state action. “Harris v. Nelson, 394 U.S. 286, 290-91 (1969)

Extrajudicial

Physical punishment without the permission of a court or legal authority or outside the legal or judicial process.

Miranda Rights

The rights to remain silent and to have counsel when placed under custodial investigation or detained and interrogated/ investigated in connection with a crime and the right to be informed of such rights at the time when he/she is placed under such custody or detention.

International Humanitarian Law [IHL]

A set of international rules and norms, established by treaty, convention or custom which are specifically intended to humanize and govern armed conflicts and solve humanitarian problems arising from such international or non-international armed conflicts. It protects in the main civilian persons and property that are, or maybe, affected by an armed conflict and limits the behavior or acts of the parties to a conflict to use methods and means of warfare of their choice.

International armed conflicts

Wars involving two or more states and wars of liberation, regardless of whether a declaration of war has been made or whether the parties involved recognize that there is a state of war.

Non-international armed conflicts

Those in which government forces are fighting against armed insurgent, or rebel groups are fighting among themselves.

VIOLATION OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Extrajudicial, summary or Arbitrary Killing

Though different from one another all three types taken together are commonly referred to as extrajudicial killing or EJK adopting the practice of the office of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution.

a. Extrajudicial Killing

The act of unlawful and deliberate killing carried out without due process of law and outside of the judicial process by state agents or with their complicity, inducement, tolerance or acquiescence.

- b. Assassination**, as an example of extrajudicial killing, is characterized by well planned, swift, clandestine or otherwise sudden attack resulting in the instant or subsequent death of the target or victim who is usually a well-known, politically important personage.

c. Summary Execution

This is a form more commonly known as salvaging which can be characterized through the following:

- Against those who have been neutralized or placed under custody and control of state agents; or
- Are in no position to make any hostile act against the perpetrator/s

d. Arbitrary Killing

Indiscriminate execution carried out by state agents with no specific individual target. Examples are deaths due to strafing and random or indiscriminate firing.

e. Massacre

The wholesale killing of three or more individuals as a specific target usually at a common time and place. It can be due to strafing and random or indiscriminate firing.

As mentioned before, they are all classified as extrajudicial killing or EJK.

Frustrated Extrajudicial Killing

- a. When the perpetrator commences the commission of acts constituting extrajudicial killing with intent to kill but does not complete its full execution due to causes independent of his will. Example, the victims escapes;
- b. When the perpetrator/s completes the act of killing but the victim survives.

Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance

The abduction, arrest and detention or any form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or group acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the state, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the victim with the intention of removing him/her from the protection of the law.

The missing person is considered disappeared if his/her whereabouts remain unknown for more than seventy-two [72] hours. For purposes of its HRV statistics, Karapatan report as victims of EID only those who remain missing. Those who are eventually surfaced, which the UN still counts as disappeared, are reported under extra-judicial killing or illegal detention as the case maybe.

Enforced Suicide

A person is driven to commit suicide after having been illegally detained tortured and threatened with death and / or further torture to be committed against his/her person and/ or a member of the immediate family, including rape of wife and daughter/s

Abduction or arbitrary/ Illegal Arrest

Abduction is the act of taking into custody or any form or manner of restraint of a person's liberty such as taking away of a person by state security forces who do not identify themselves as such, and subsequent release within 72 hours.

Arbitrary or illegal arrest is the act of taking custody or any form or manner of restraint of a person's liberty through a defective or without a warrant or arrest even when not in the act of committing a crime nor about to commit or having just committed a crime. It can take the form of "picking up", taking into custody or "inviting" for questioning. It includes the use of a blanket warrant using generic names of John Does to justify or legalize an otherwise questionable arrest. Or the arbitrary arrest is "cured" by subsequent issuance of a warrant

Arbitrary Arrest also includes the seemingly harmless practice of the police and military of inviting individuals and asking the latter questions in connection with supposed crime or wrongdoing or inquiring about their membership in organization and political affiliation.

The person who is arbitrarily arrested can be subsequently released within 72 hours after undergoing interrogation, being held incommunicado and / or subjected to torture.

The illegal arrest of five or more persons can be termed as illegal arrest.

Torture

- The intentional and systematic act of inflicting severe physical;
- Psychological/mental and/ or sexual humiliation, degradation, fear, pain, suffering, injuries, torment or terror against an individual;
- Including the employment of drugs, chemical agents; hypnosis, sleep or food deprivation or other similar methods;
- With the intent to extract information or extrajudicial involuntary confession or as a punishment for an act that such individual is suspected to have committed or for other similar motivations.

Rape

- Rape by sexual assault by any person which can be done either by inserting his penis into another person's mouth or anal orifice, or by inserting any instrument or object into the genital or anal orifice of another person, including the fingers, act of lasciviousness, and all form of sexual abuse.
- Committed by public officers, persons in authority or their agents; regular state security forces (military and police). Paramilitary forces (CAFGU and CVO) and their agents (vigilantes, private security guards, hired goons or killers, etc.);
- Against an individual or individuals;
- While the latter is in custody, control, supervision or authority; or
- For the purpose of either extracting information or an involuntary confession, humiliating or degrading such individual who is within their power, dominating or overpowering said individual and for other reason related to the exercise of state power.

Sexual Molestation

Short of rape, a woman's body is forcibly subjected by military and State agents to mashing, kissing and/ or biting as a form of torture, harassment or intimidation. Another example is the detainee being kept handcuffed and blindfolded while being assisted in her toilet needs with her private parts being washed by unknown persons. Men can also be subjected to sexual molestation although cases are much less than those of women.

Physical Assault and/ or Injuries

- The act of employing unlawful and/ or unnecessary force and harm
- By mauling, beating, manhandling an individual;
- By public officers, person in authority or their agents; regular state security forces [military and police], paramilitary forces [CAFGU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes, hired goons or killers, etc];
- For the purpose to extract information or an extrajudicial involuntary confession or as a punishment for an act that such individual is suspected to have committed;
- Or simply for the purpose of exercising state power;
- Resulting to the wounding or injuring an individual;
- Physical assault and injuries can be committed during breaking up of a picket, demonstration or similar protest action, demolition, strafing, indiscriminate firing and bombing/shelling/aerial bombardment.

Threat, Harassment or Intimidation

These are done to instill fear or anxiety on a suspect or target individual by threatening his/her person, security officer, privacy, honor, liberty and property or that of his family. Any group organization or community can be targeted. Specific forms include verbal abuse; name-calling; verbal threat of bodily harm or through e-mail, SMS and other IT methods or devices; intimidating words or gestures; taking of one's photo without consent; surveillance; random interrogation, "ethnic or racial profiling" of national minorities.

Recent cases especially targeting human rights defenders include threat or filing of harassment suits and other malicious, nuisance and persecutory legal cases and issuance of spurious arrest warrants; placing an individual's name in a military roster of "enemies of the state" like an Order of Battle or OB; and demonizing through the media, public forum, assemblies and similar venues thus instigating violence against individuals, groups and organizations.

Surveillance and other Violations of the Right to Privacy of Communication

Not anymore limited to intercepting, pilfering and opening of mail matters but also information gathering by tapping telephone, hacking cell phones and the internet and planting electronic listening devices. It also includes stationing overt and covert stalkers.

Violation of the Rights of Arrested or Detained Persons

- Of Miranda Rights**—failure of the arresting unit to read the arrested person his/her Miranda Rights to remain silent and be informed of the fact that anything he / she says can be used against him/ her; the right to have counsel of one's choice; and the right to be informed of such rights in the presence of counsel at the time when placed under custodial investigation or detained and interrogated or investigated in connection with a crime

- b. **Of right to freely communicate** – depriving, delaying, denying, limiting or restraining an individual under arrest and/or detention from talking by landline, mobile telephone, etc, to any of the following; counsel, family, relative, religious leader, doctors counselor and representative/s of human rights organizations for any purpose including but not limited to communicating whereabouts, circumstances of arrest and/or detention, update on his/her condition.
- c. **Of right to counsel** – depriving, delaying, denying, limiting or restraining an individual under arrest and/or detention from exercising his/her immediate right to counsel of his/her choice.

d. Right to Visit by Family

The act by public officers, persons in authority or their agents [warden, sheriff]; regular state security forces [military and police], paramilitary forces [CAFGU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes, hired goons, etc.] of depriving, delaying, denying, limiting or restraining an individual under arrest and/ or detention of immediate rights to counsel of his choice.

e. Incommunicado

The act of depriving or denying an individual of access or use of any form of communication with individuals other than his custodians, whether or not during arrest, custodial investigation/“tactical interrogation” or detention and regardless whether it is a result of solitary confinement or not.

f. Solitary Confinement

The act of physically isolating a detained person, either for a definite or indefinite period of time, from other detainees or inmates, whether the isolation is in form of further punishment or not. This is also known as “bartolina”

g. Right to Presumption of Innocence or Against Public Condemnation/Trial by Publicity

The act by public officers, persons in authority or agents [warden, sheriff]; regular state security forces [military and police] and paramilitary forces [CAFGU and CVO] of presenting an arrested person or a person deprived of liberty before the tri-media [print, radio, and television] without his consent and of counsel of his own choice and declaring, portraying or insinuating that such person is guilty of certain crimes and alleged possession of certain materials.

h. Inhumane, Cruel and/ or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The act by public officers, persons in authority or their agents; regular state security forces [military and police], paramilitary forces [CAFGU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes, hired goons or killers, etc] which tends to or has the effect of mocking, ridiculing, scoffing, degrading, taunting or dehumanizing an individual or such other similar intention or effect either by way of treatment or punishment.

i. Criminalization of Political Offenses or Acts

The act, policy and practice by persons in authority, the state through its police, military, investigative, prosecutorial, and judicial arms or agents of arresting, investigating, charging, prosecuting, trying and convincing individuals with common crimes instead of the proper or corresponding political charges with respect to political offenses or acts and/ or agrarian/labor cases.

This is otherwise known as the violation of the People vs. Hernandez doctrine [99 Phil 515].

- j. **Unreasonably delayed court proceedings** – a violation of an individual’s right to speedy trial which includes delaying tactics by the prosecutor or a judge whose probity is in question, intervention by the military and state agencies

k. Forced labor or involuntary servitude

l. Other forms of coercion

The act by public officers, persons in authority or their agents, regular state security forces [military and police]; paramilitary forces [CAFGU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes; hired goons or killers, etc] who, by means of violence, harm or intimidation, prevent an individual from doing something not prohibited by law or compel him to do something against his will or out of fear.

Specific forms of coercion include the following:

- a. Use of Civilians in Police and/or Military Operation as Guide and/ or as shield

The forcible act to compel an individual to participate in any police and/or military activity [patrolling, actual armed engagement, intelligence and “civic” operations and using as a hostage] either as a guide or for the purpose of using such individual as a shield or buffer against any attack directed at state security forces. If as an incident or consequences of hamletting, forcible reconcentration, or forcible displacement, state security forces are shielded or buffered from attack then the violation must be categorized as hamletting, forcible reconcentration or forcible displacement , as the case may be.

- b. Forced Recruitment/Conscription

The act of forcing an individual to become an intelligence agent, asset, spy or directly recruiting him into the state security forces [including paramilitary groups], whether there is any offer or award of financial or other consideration or none.

- c. Forced Labor/involuntary Servitude

The act of forcing individual to perform any kind of work against his will

d. **Force/Fake Surrender**

The act of compelling, misrepresenting or forcing individual into surrendering to the authorities or to feign or pretend to be a surrenderee or “rebel returnee”

VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS TO FREEDOM FROM ASSOCIATION

Unjustified and unlawful restriction, denial or prohibition to form or be a member of an organization and arbitrarily declaring an organization illegal or terrorist one. This also includes union busting, restriction, denial or prohibition to form or be a member of a union; monitoring, restriction or prohibition on student organization, councils, publication or any collective activity. The restriction, denial or prohibition are tolerated, condoned supported or sanctioned by the government and are keeping with or are consequences of a national policy program

VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO LIBERTY MOVEMENT

An individual is arbitrarily included in the Bureau of Immigration’s hold order list and is therefore not allowed to leave the country, or is included in the watch list and is either not allowed to leave or is stopped at the airport immigration desk or office for questioning or harassment. Or an individual is not allowed to return to his / her country of origin.

RESTRICTION ON OR VIOLENT DISPERSAL OF MASS ACTIONS, PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES AND GATHERING

Unreasonably or arbitrarily restricting, limiting or preventing the free holding of mass actions, public assemblies and gatherings; and / or the violent breaking up or forcible dispersal of such activities, regardless of whether such activities are covered by government permit or not. This is also includes assault and breaking up of picket lines and violations of the right to strike.

MEDIA REPRESSION

Various human rights violations are committed against media practitioners and institution in an attempt to silence or punish them. Aside from those already mentioned, below are some examples:

- A mass media practitioner or institution is charged with slander, inciting to sedition, libel or burdened with multiple libel suits when found to be too critical of the government and administration’s close associates.
- A local radio station or newspaper is temporarily or permanently close down when found too critical of the local ruling elite. Programs are temporarily or permanently stopped
- Stations are being burned, equipment being confiscated or destroyed, radio staff being beaten up, interrogated and temporarily detained
- Officers of grassroots program sponsors subjected to violence and harassed.
- Worse, they become victims of EJK and EID, in which case the violation is classified under EJK or EID..

VIOLATION THAT TARGETS COMMUNITIES

a. **Illegal Search and Seizure**

The unlawful search conducted by public, person in authority of their agents; regular state security forces [military and police], paramilitary forces [CAGFU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes, hired goons, etc.], of personal property allegedly used or intended to be used for committing a crime when any of the following is present:

b. **Violation of Domicile**

The act by public officers, persons in authority or their agents; regular state security forces [military and police], paramilitary forces [CAGFU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes, private security guards, hired goons, etc] of illegally entering any private dwelling of an individual without being authorized by judicial order or against the consent the will or consent of the owner and/ or occupant whether the entry is to search the said dwelling or not.

This violation is being considered as violation not only to an individual but applied to all member of the family.

c. **“ZONING” or Saturation Drives**

Surprise deployment of a big number of police or military units and encirclement of an urban or rural community that lead to residents especially men being forced to line up on the street. The systematic encirclement of a specific civilian community usually conducted during nighttime where individuals are forced to get out of their houses and are arbitrarily, frisked, and/ or arrested without any arrest or search warrant.

d. **Illegal Checkpoints**

The arbitrary, random or systematic setting up of fixed or mobile checkpoints in public roads and places and conducting intrusive questioning and physical frisking, actual search and/ or visual searches without any search warrant.

e. **Forcible Re-concentration**

The act of the public officers, persons in authority or their agents; regular state security forces, paramilitary forces and their agents of forcibly reconcentrating or relocating the residence of a group of individuals or a civilian community against their will and in a place chosen or designated by said officers, authorities, agents or forces for the purpose of giving way to an extensive or otherwise military operations.

In general, a Forced Evacuation or Displacement occurs when a group of individuals are forced or compelled to transfer residence either to another locality which may not be the same as those which the others are transferred to.

f. Hamletting

The act of public officers in authority or their agents; regular state security, paramilitary forces or their agents of enclosing an entire civilian community in the same place or locality and placing its resident, their lives, livelihood and movement [including the imposition of curfew hours and the maintenance of a list of residence per household] under direct and strict military control and against their will.

During hamletting there are instances where individuals are not arrested but their movements are restricted including but not limited to the requirement of ID's to resident of the community. There are also instances where the individuals are confined to their houses and their movements are likewise restricted. In both cases, the violation should additionally be categorized as arbitrary detention

Forcible Evacuation and Displacement

- The act by public officers, person in authority or their agents; regular state security forces, paramilitary forces and their agents.
- Of forcing a group or individuals or a civilian community;
- To leave, against their will, either in an organized way or otherwise, their place of residence and/or livelihood for other place;

Food and other Economic Blockades

The act by public officers, persons in authority or their agents; regular security forces, paramilitary and their agents of restricting, limiting, monitoring and controlling the kind and quantity of food supplies and other household items to be brought by an individual into and out of his place of residence or community as well as restrictions on economic production and activity.

DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE MEDICAL PERSONNEL

SOME VIOLATIONS SPECIFIC TO CHILDREN

1. Violation of Children's Rights

Provisions from UN Convention on Children's Rights and the Philippine Republic Act 7610 which may be categorized as Follows

a. *Violation of Children's Right to Survival*

- (1) Children orphaned when their parents became victims of extrajudicial killings;
- (2) Occurs when children were forced to be separated from their parents;
- (3) Resulting from the violations enumerated in Violation of the Right to Life and Violation of Other Civil and Political Rights;
- (4) Children victims of food and/or Economic Blockade.

b. *Violation of Children's Right to Protection or Safety by the State or its Agents*

- (1) Not being given special and due attention in cases of forced evacuation, forced reconcentration etc; also include not being granted the right to rehabilitative care [Art 39, id];
- (2) Children being forced to work [Art 32, id];
- (3) Include violation of rights not to be subjected to torture, cruel treatment, or punishment and deprivation of liberty [Art. 37]; right to be protected against situation of armed conflict with the law to treatment which promotes his dignity and worth [Art 40]

In cases where children are direct victims of torture, cruel treatment or punishment and deprivation of liberty, violations will be recorded as torture, cruel treatment or punishment and any form enumerated under illegal Arrest and/ or Detention and violation against children's rights to protection.

c. *Violation of Children's Right to Development*

- (1) Children who were forced to stop schooling brought about by direct violations to them and/or to their parents and/or community
- (2) Children victims of Use of School for Military Purposes and Endangerment of Civilians, Zoning, Hamletting, Destruction and/ or Divestment of Property, Violation of Domicile.

d. *Violation of Children's Participation Rights*

- (1) Children being persecuted as they exercise their right to express their opinion freely and it to be taken into account in any proceeding affecting him her [Art 12]; Right to freedom of expression, receive and impart information [Art 13]; Right to Freedom of thought, conscience and religion [Art 14]; Right to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly [Art 15];

- (2) Children victims of Destruction and/ or Divestment of Property Violation of Domicile, transfer to violation of Children's right to protection or safety

ON IHL VIOLATIONS

International Human Rights Law applies at all times, whether during peacetime or in situations of armed conflict. On the other hand, International Humanitarian Law intends to "humanize and govern armed conflicts".

Violations of IHL are human rights violations. Some HR violations are categorized as IHL violations when they are committed during military operations or under any other situation of armed conflict:

- Arbitrary and frustrated killing due to shelling from mortar and artillery barrage, detonating of bombs, aerial bombardment, spraying from helicopters, landmines
- Hamletting, forcible evacuation, re-concentration and displacement of communities
- Destruction or divestment of property
- Illegal checkpoints, illegal search and "zoning" or saturation drives in rural communities;
- Food and economic blockade;
- Threat, harassment and intimidation of whole villages;
- Physical assault or injuries inflicted on villagers especially suspected rebels and their sympathizers
- Inhumane, cruel or degrading treatment;
- Forced labor and involuntarily servitude of captured combatants and suspected supporters;
- Attacks on, harassment and intimidation of medical and religious personnel
- Violations specific to children, and many others

VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF HORS de COMBAT

Any act committed either intentionally or through negligence which result in the aggravation or prolongation of physical injuries, sickness or suffering; or resulting in the eventual death; or the deliberate act of injuring, maiming, torturing and killing a combatant who is wounded, sick, injured, or has surrendered [hors de combatant] or violation of any other rights under intentional humanitarian law.

Denial of Medical Attention

- The act of denying or preventing immediate and/or adequate first aid medical care or attention;
- To a sick wounded or dying person or persons
- By public officers, persons in authority or their agents; regular state security forces [military and police], paramilitary forces [CAFGU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes, hired killers, etc];
- Thereby aggravating or prolonging such person's death due to such denial;
- Whether such denial is deliberate or not

HOSTAGING

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

COERCION

The act by public officers, persons in authority or their agents, regular state security forces [military and police]; paramilitary forces [CAFGU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes; hired goons or killers, etc] who, by means of violence, harm or intimidation, prevent an individual from doing something not prohibited by law or compel him to do something against his will or out of fear.

Specific forms of coercion include the following:

e. Use of Civilians in Police and/or Military Operation as Guide and/ or as shield

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The act of forcing an individual to become an intelligence agent, asset, spy or directly recruiting him into the state security forces [including paramilitary groups], whether there is any offer or award of financial or other consideration or none.

g. Forced Labor/involuntary Servitude

The act of forcing individual to perform any kind of work against his will

h. Force/Fake Surrender

The act of compelling, misrepresenting or forcing individual into surrendering to the authorities or to feign or pretend to be a surrenderee or “rebel returnee”

Use of Schools, Medical, Religious and Other Public Places for Military Purposes and Endangerment of Civilians

The improper use of school, medical, religious, civic and other public places for police or military purposes or operations by regular state security forces, paramilitary and their agents or the endangerment of the lives of civilians by reason of establishing military camps, detachments or outpost within civilian communities or at or near residence.

Desecration of Place of Worship or Offending Religious Rites/Practices

The act by public officers, persons in authority or their agents; regular state security forces, paramilitary and their agents of disrespecting, scoffing, insulting, destroying or desecrating a place of worship or offending religious rites, practices, rituals, assemblies, gathering, or days of commemoration and disregard of religious and cultural sensibilities.

WITH REGARDS TO THOSE WHO ARE KILLED IN COMBAT OR WHO DIED IN CAPTIVITY

a. Desecration of Remains

The act by public officers, persons in authority or their agents, regular state security forces [military and police], paramilitary forces [CAFGU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes, private security guards, hired goons, etc] or the act of scoffing, disrespecting corpse either through mutilating the dead body, parading or leaving unattended the said corpse, presenting before the tri-media [print and television] or through other similar acts.

b. Denial of Decent Burial and Refusal to Tender Remains

The act by public officers, persons in authority or their agents; regular state security forces [military and police], paramilitary forces [CAFGU and CVO] and their agents [vigilantes, private security guards, hired goons, etc] of denying or disallowing the decent and/ or timely burial, of refusing tender of the remains to the family or next of kin or their representatives.

References

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR]
- International Convention on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR]
- Comprehensive Agreement on Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law [CARHRIHL]
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UN-CRC]
- Revised Penal Code of the Philippines

ARTICLE III, BILL OF RIGHTS (1987 PHILIPPINE CONSTITUTION)

Section 1. No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the laws.

Section 2. The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures of whatever nature and for any purpose shall be inviolable, and no search warrant or warrant of arrest shall issue except upon probable cause to be determined personally by the judge after examination under oath or affirmation of the complainant and the witnesses he may produce, and particularly describing the place to be searched and the persons or things to be seized.

Section 3. (1) The privacy of communication and correspondence shall be inviolable except upon lawful order of the court, or when public safety or order requires otherwise, as prescribed by law. (2) Any evidence obtained in violation of this or the preceding section shall be inadmissible for any purpose in any proceeding.

Section 4. No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances.

Section 5. No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights.

Section 6. The liberty of abode and of changing the same within the limits prescribed by law shall not be impaired except upon lawful order of the court. Neither shall the right to travel be impaired except in the interest of national security, public safety, or public health, as may be provided by law.

Section 7. The right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized. Access to official records, and to documents and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions, or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen, subject to such limitations as may be provided by law.

Section 8. The right of the people, including those employed in the public and private sectors, to form unions, associations, or societies for purposes not contrary to law shall not be abridged.

Section 9. Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation.

Section 10. No law impairing the obligation of contracts shall be passed.

Section 11. Free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies and adequate legal assistance shall not be denied to any person by reason of poverty.

Section 12. (1) Any person under investigation for the commission of an offense shall have the right to be informed of his right to remain silent and to have competent and independent counsel preferably of his own choice. If the person cannot afford the services of counsel, he must be provided with one. These rights cannot be waived except in writing and in the presence of counsel. (2) No torture, force, violence, threat, intimidation, or any other means which vitiate the free will shall be used against him. Secret detention places, solitary, incommunicado, or other similar forms of detention are prohibited. (3) Any confession or admission obtained in violation of this or Section 17 hereof shall be inadmissible in evidence against him. (4) The law shall provide for penal and civil sanctions for violations of this section as well as compensation to the rehabilitation of victims of torture or similar practices, and their families.

Section 13. All persons, except those charged with offenses punishable by reclusion perpetua when evidence of guilt is strong, shall, before conviction, be bailable by sufficient sureties, or be released on recognizance as may be provided by law. The right to bail shall not be impaired even when the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus is suspended. Excessive bail shall not be required.

Section 14. (1) No person shall be held to answer for a criminal offense without due process of law. (2) In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall be presumed innocent until the contrary is proved, and shall enjoy the right to be heard by himself and counsel, to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation against him, to have a speedy, impartial, and public trial, to meet the witnesses face to face, and to have compulsory process to secure the attendance of witnesses and the production of evidence in his behalf. However, after arraignment, trial may proceed notwithstanding the absence of the accused: Provided, that he has been duly notified and his failure to appear is unjustifiable.

Section 15. The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended except in cases of invasion or rebellion, when the public safety requires it.

Section 16. All persons shall have the right to a speedy disposition of their cases before all judicial, quasi-judicial, or administrative bodies.

Section 17. No person shall be compelled to be a witness against himself.

Section 18. (1) No person shall be detained solely by reason of his political beliefs and aspirations. (2) No involuntary servitude in any form shall exist except as a punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.

Section 19. (1) Excessive fines shall not be imposed, nor cruel, degrading or inhuman punishment inflicted. Neither shall death penalty be imposed, unless, for compelling reasons involving heinous crimes, the Congress hereafter provides for it. Any death penalty already imposed shall be reduced to reclusion perpetua. (2) The employment of physical, psychological, or degrading punishment against any prisoner or detainee or the use of substandard or inadequate penal facilities under subhuman conditions shall be dealt with by law.

Section 20. No person shall be imprisoned for debt or non-payment of a poll tax.

Section 21. No person shall be twice put in jeopardy of punishment for the same offense. If an act is punished by a law and an ordinance, conviction or acquittal under either shall constitute a bar to another prosecution for the same act.

Section 22. No ex post facto law or bill of attainder shall be enacted.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)

Source: United Nation

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8.

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10.

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11.

- (1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.
- (2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13.

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
- (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14.

- (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

- (2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15.

- (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.
- (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16.

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17.

- (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
- (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20.

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21.

- (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
- (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22.

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23.

- (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- (4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24.

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25.

- (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26.

- (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

- (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27.

- (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28.

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29.

- (1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.
- (2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
- (3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30.

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.