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UN Human Rights Council 8th Session
Item 6: Consideration of UPR Reports – Philippines
Tuesday, 10 June 2008
To be delivered by Dr. Edita Burgos

Joint Statement on behalf of the Commission of Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches (CCIA WCC) and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)

Mr. President:

We thank the World Council of Churches' Commission of Churches on International Affairs (WCC CCIA) and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) for their support to this statement.

We also take this opportunity to thank the States that raised serious questions and recommendations during the UPR on the Philippines in April. The continuing concern of the international community on extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations in the Philippines is reassuring. Such concern dispelled the glossy picture projected by the Philippine National Report through its reporting of formal recognition of basic rights and lavish citation of laws and commitments.

During the April UPR, it was stated that the preparation of the Report was done through a supposed "consultative and participatory process" to fulfill the Government's pledge of "promoting constructive engagement of the Council with civil society, ensuring opportunities to gainfully contribute to the work of the Council." We maintain that much leaves to be desired in such a process.

In relation to the outcome of the review, we note that the Philippine delegation did not indicate any adoption of the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution especially on the changes in the counter-insurgency program being implemented by the state and which the Special Rapporteur noted as one of the causes of the killings and disappearances. The filing of cases in some and the conviction of four persons among almost a thousand cases do not negate the fact that not a single military person was convicted of such violations largely attributed to the militarist approach of the Government to the issue of counterinsurgency in the Philippines.

The reduction in the number of victims of killings is the result of public outcry and international outrage. Yet, the impunity continues. A recent case is that of Pastor Rodel Canja who was abducted and subjected to mental torture in an attempt to force him to declare his colleague, Pastor Berlin Guerrero, abducted one year earlier and now detained on false charges, as a member of the communist party. More than a year after my son's abduction, in spite of all legal remedies availed of, including the much-vaunted new remedy of the writ of amparo, I am still searching for my disappeared son, Jonas.

Mr. President, in the outcome of the review, the Philippine delegation declared one of its commitments is to "maintain the momentum on addressing killings of activists and media professionals."

May we know what momentum is it saying and what actions it envisions to totally address the issue of killings and disappearances?

We respectfully urge this august body to encourage the Philippines to abide by its pledges and commitments and implement the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

Thank you, Mr. President.