



Ecumenical
Advocacy
Network on the
Philippines



ECUMENCIAL LETTER TO THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION ON THE STATE VISIT OF PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT FERDINAND MARCOS JR

To President Biden & Secretary of State Blinken:

As President Biden welcomes Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to the White House on May 1, we, the undersigned members of faith communities, express our deep concern over the persistent and worsening human rights crisis in the Philippines.

President Marcos assumed office ten months ago, and reports from human rights groups have shown ongoing impunity for human rights abuses similar to those seen under the Duterte presidency. Human Rights Watch reports there has been “no let up” in the war on drugs under Marcos Jr., which took as many as 30,000 lives under the Duterte Administration. Karapatan Human Rights Alliance reports that from July to December 2022, there have been 17 extrajudicial killings, 165 illegal arrests, and a total of 825 political prisoners, 73 of whom are elderly. Karapatan recorded 200 cases of red-tagging, and further recorded that the Marcos Administration continues to use the Anti-Terrorism Act and the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict “to create an unsafe environment for activists, rendering them more vulnerable to attacks against their persons.”

In February, Sonshine Media International Network, a Philippine news outlet owned by FBI most wanted Apollo Quiboloy, red-tagged Catholic Bishop Gerardo Alminaza, a witness to extrajudicial killings in Negros and a staunch supporter of resumption of peace talks between the National Democratic Front and the Government of the Philippines. We share with the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform “sadness and alarm” over the brutal killings of Rogelio Posadas and Benito and Wilma Tiamzon – peace consultants of the National Democratic Front who were protected under agreements with the Government of the Philippines.

Following the tradition of witnessing and accompaniment, an Interfaith delegation to the Philippines, hosted by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) and the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP) traveled to the Philippines in February.

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They met with dozens of community members and organizers who confirmed that the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police are guilty of widespread human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law, and that government entities like the NTF-ELCAC, stood up under Duterte and maintained by the Marcos regime, have further institutionalized repression.

We are aghast that despite the human rights situation, **our government continues to channel various forms of resources to the Philippines** (i.e. military training, weapons). In addition, the most recent military deal to build 4 more US military bases in the country is an affront to the peace of the region. As people of faith, we strongly oppose and condemn the use of a large portion of our country's budget to support regimes that oppress their populations.

As we anticipate Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s visit to Washington DC from April 30 to May 4, we strongly urge you to abstain from new military agreements that will further contribute to human rights violations. It is critical for you to **heed the voices of the oppressed** and marginalized in the Philippines, and **demonstrate your belief in social justice by supporting the Philippine Human Rights Act** which calls for the suspension of security assistance to the Philippines until the Government of the Philippines has made certain reforms to the military and police forces.

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