



Christian Conference of Asia

● Payap University, Muang, Chiang Mai 50000 Thailand
Tel: +66-(0)53-243906, 243907 Fax: +66-(0)53-247303

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CCA General Secretary's Statement denouncing extrajudicial killings and arrests in Southern Tagalog, in The Philippines

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) strongly condemns the killings of nine social workers and human rights activists on 7 March 2021 by the Philippines National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of Philippines in a series of raids against suspected communist insurgents in Calabarzon province in the Southern Tagalog region. The continuous spate of extrajudicial killings and arrests carried out by the PNP and the military as part of the counterinsurgency measures are perpetrated against unarmed human rights activists, further violating the fundamental human rights of all Filipino people.

It is unfortunate that the extrajudicial killings were carried out after President Rodrigo Duterte asked the military and police in a recent statement, to "Kill all communists and don't mind human rights." The murdered activists were community organisers, union leaders, and human rights activists who belonged to legal organisations. Several of them were killed when they were in their own homes. The search operations conducted by the police forces include tactics of evidence planting and suppression, because they were covered by search warrants to justify their actions as legitimate operations.

The CCA denounces all human rights violations, decries injustice, and calls upon the Philippine government to protect and safeguard human lives. The right to life is a fundamental right because, without it, the enjoyment of other rights is not possible. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person" (Article 3). As a minimum standard, the right to life imposes upon states the duty to abstain from the arbitrary killing of individuals under their jurisdiction. These standards have proved invaluable to organisations and individuals defending human rights. The extra-judicial executions, understood as killings "committed, condoned, or acquiesced in by governments," certainly constitute violations of the right to life.

It is the CCA's firm conviction that the states which terrorise people through extrajudicial killings are guilty of arbitrary deprivation of their citizens' right to life. States should take measures not only to prevent and punish deprivation of life, but also to prevent arbitrary killing by their own security forces. The deprivation of life by the authorities of the state is a matter of the utmost gravity. Therefore, the state must take adequate action to enforce laws that strictly control and limit the circumstances in which a person may be deprived of his or her life by the state and its security forces.

The killing of nine social and human rights activists and the arrest of six other community workers in the Southern Tagalog region is most brutal and an assault on human rights. While expressing grief and solidarity with the families and communities of the victims, the CCA reiterates its commitment to accompany the Filipino people in their struggle. The CCA calls upon the Philippine government to stop the killings, safeguard the right to life of all its citizens, and uphold the fundamental human rights of all its citizens.

Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA