



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area

341 Fr. Selga Street, Barangay 8-A, Davao City

January 20, 2020

A Statement on UCCP Haran

United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area stands firm on our commitment to serve the indigenous peoples in Davao region. By doing our duty to act as shepherds of the poor and the deprived we manifest our unwavering commitment to defend the rights of those who are deprived of their civil liberties.

The continuing harassment and possible filing of charges against UCCP Haran Mission Center is a threat against the commitment of the church to do Christ's mission of ministering to the oppressed and the marginalized.

UCCP Haran has for many years now been serving as a domicile for Lumads who were forcibly displaced by violence and attacks by paramilitary and military groups. It has served as a home for victims of oppression and injustice. It has become a place of healing among them who have been distressed by intermittent harassment and violence committed against them.

But more than these, UCCP Haran is a sanctuary of peace in keeping with God's own purpose: ***"For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight."*** — Psalm 72:12-14. The highly honored principle of "separation of the church and the state" stands firm and steadfast as an inherent foundation of the UCCP mission. Thus, it is fully understood since time immemorial that the state must not intervene in the constructive and beneficial affairs of the church for those who are oppressed and downtrodden. The church strongly oppose the resolution of the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC).

Like shepherds, there are calls for persecution of shepherding the Lumads. We are being vilified and crucified for doing so. And like Christ, we face these challenges with courage and faith.

UCCP will continue to discern and fulfill Christ's mission in these changing times. As what is said in Proverbs 31:8-9, ***"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."***

Least we pray that truth prevails. We pray for the protection of the dignity and life of the lumads and to respect the sacredness of God given life.

BISHOP HAMUEL G. TEQUIS
UCCP SEMJA Assigned Bishop