

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Statement on the 5th State of the Nation Address (SONA)

We live in uncertain and challenging times even made prickly by an unseen enemy in Covid-19 pandemic. We are whisked from all sides by all sorts of challenges: poverty, health dangers, natural and human-made calamities and a host of other life's perils.

Amidst the backdrop of bleak economic situation of the nation, uncertainties in curbing the spread and impact of Covid-19 pandemic, ambiguities in government social support system for the severely affected communities, and the flexing of authoritarian political-military power, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte will face the nation to present his 5th State of the Nation Address on July 27, 2020.

Over the past several months, our people have clearly seen and felt the flagging socio-economic situation as a result of this government's ineptitude and militaristic instead of health and medical oriented methods especially in responding to Covid-19 pandemic:

- The impact of quarantine lockdown in the economy has fetched almost 14 million people to unemployment or underemployment making the poverty level even worst and solutions are still farfetched;
- The regime has given more weight on passing the Anti-Terror Law instead of dealing squarely to solve the effect of Covid-19 pandemic; it has attacked press freedom by filing perjury case against Maria Ressa of Rappler and by shutting down ABS-CBN; Hence we say, **No to Anti-Terror Law!**
- The regime has weaponized the law by keeping its distrustful eyes on those who advocate for justice and human rights including the church people. A number of our church workers have either been red-tagged or harassed; in fact, one of our pastors has recently been arrested on trumped up charges and still some religious institutions and organizations labeled as adversaries of the state, so we declare, **Stop terrorizing and vilifying Church workers and religious organizations!**

Come July 27, President Duterte will surely give us an entirely different picture of our situation as a nation to lure the people into believing that the whole country is in good hands under his administration, although this claim is verified at the ground level where we have lived through the reality of the impact of the pandemic. How the government carried

out its kind of responses to the worsening situation of the people or neglected the poor and the marginalized are judged by the people and history itself.

Knowing our constraints without God in the picture, we call upon God to guide us, enlighten us and empower us in facing the tumults of our days:

Hear, O God, our earnest plea on behalf of the Filipino people. Free us from fear and awaken us from our disturbing silence amidst all these woeful realities. Embolden us to defend the powerless victims and be in solidarity with the struggling people. Send us forth to where the voice of justice must be proclaimed and the liberating truth declared. Give us courage to be your voice and be instruments of your peace!


We call on our constituents to join us in prayers and to remain vigilant during these perilous times. Let us all remain steadfast in faith keeping in hearts and minds that **“the Lord’s mercy never comes to an end as they are new every morning. Great is God’s Faithfulness”** indeed!


THE UCCP COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

July 27, 2020

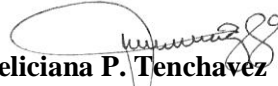

Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog
General Secretary

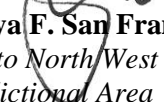

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