

# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES COUNCIL OF BISHOPS



## Statement on the Spate of Extrajudicial Killings in Southern Tagalog Region

**STOP THE ATTACKS, STOP THE KILLINGS  
END IMPUNITY!**

The Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL) of the tyrannical Duterte administration is now exacting tolls on human rights defenders, peace advocates, activists and progressive legal organizations. The callous and brutal killing and illegal arrest of unionists, peasant leaders, activists, and human rights defenders across Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon on a “Bloody Sunday” of March 7, 2021 were obviously carried out within the framework of the Anti-Terrorism Law, which is now the subject of legal petitions in the Supreme Court by various groups. Remarkably, these spells of violent outbreaks against members of legal organizations were executed shortly after President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the military and police to “kill and finish off” communist rebels.

The Council of Bishops of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines abhors in the strongest terms all such acts of terror and violence against legitimate dissenters even as we also lament with the families of victims. That Sunday of March 7, 2021 was marred by blood of people who did nothing wrong but bravely stood for truth and justice. To say that the victims resisted arrest or “nanlaban” is absolutely ridiculous and absurd, much less irrational and barbaric. We condemn the killings of at least nine (9) persons and the illegal arrests of six others in corresponding raids in offices and houses of progressive groups on Sunday, March 7, 2021.

To reiterate what we have already declared before, “Our affirmation of faith demands the end of our indifference and silence. It calls for unwavering commitment to the all-transcending task of building peace founded on justice.” (Peacemaking: Our Ministry, UCCP Council of Bishops, 1986). The Psalmist has these words of caution against the culprits of such heinous crimes: “Let death take my enemies by surprise; let them go down alive to the realm of the dead, for evil finds lodging among them.” (Psalm 55:15 NIV)

We call on the UCCP constituencies and the Filipino people to stand with the victims of state-sponsored violence in decrying these vicious attacks against activists, human rights and justice defenders and legitimate political dissenters. Prophetic witness is not a crime and so is activism.

Stop the attacks! Stop the killings!  
End the culture of impunity!  
Uphold human dignity! Defend human rights!

**UCCP COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**

March 11, 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Melzar D. Labuntog".

**Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog**  
*General Secretary*



**Bishop Joseph G. Agpaoa**  
*North Luzon Jurisdictional Area*



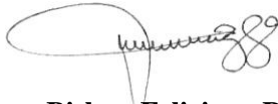
**Bishop Emergencio D. Padillo**  
*Middle Luzon Jurisdictional Area*



**Bishop Joel E. Tendero**  
*South Luzon Jurisdictional Area*



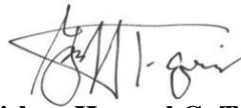
**Bishop Jerome C. Baris**  
*East Visayas Jurisdictional Area*



**Bishop Feliciana P. Tenchavez**  
*West Visayas Jurisdictional Area*



**Bishop Ligaya F. San Francisco**  
*West Mindanao Jurisdictional Area*



**Bishop Hamuel G. Tequis**  
*South East Mindanao Jurisdictional Area*

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