



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

877 EDSA, West Triangle, Quezon City

GOD IS FOR US

Pastoral Statement on the Continuing Persecution and Harassment of Church' Servants

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:35-37)

The recent untoward happenings in the life and witness of our servant-leaders who are committed advocates and workers for peace, justice and human rights have brought the Church into petition prayers and action.

- In March 2021, the Anti- Money Laundering Council's (AMLAC) order in March 2021 to freeze the "bank deposits and assets" of UCCP Haran allegedly used to finance or support terrorism.
- In another statement, UCCP has made it clear UCCP-Haran has only one bank account with Philippine National Bank-Ateneo de Davao branch and with only a very insignificant amount of P72,275.91. This means way below the threshold set forth in the Anti-Money Laundering Law, therefore, UCCP-Haran cannot and will not finance terrorism.
- On April 27, around 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, 5 PNP personnel along 4 individuals in plain clothes, believed to be intelligence agents from San Pedro Station of Davao City Police Office, arrived at Brokenshire College compound with a Warrant of Arrest issued by the RTC Branch 12 of the 11th Judicial Region. They were acknowledged by the HR officer of Brokenshire College and proceeded at the Southern Mindanao District Conference office, and was met by the Conferences staff. The Police personnel then asked for the whereabouts of Bishop Hamuel Tequis and Jhong Monson and took photos of the Conference Office and afterwards left the school premises without serving the warrant.
- On May 2, 2021, around 3:30 A.M., UCCP Pastor Dan Balucio, 62 years old, was arrested by a raiding team of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) from Camp Simeon Ola, Legazpi City and taken into custody using a suspicious search warrant issued by Judge Edgar Armes, Presiding Judge of Branch 4, Regional Trial Court, 5th Judicial Region, Legazpi City. The warrant was served at his home in San Isidro, Santo Domingo, Albay.

Pastor Dan Balucion is coordinator of Andurog Mayon, an Ecumenical Disaster Response and Management Committee of the Bicol Region Ecumenical Committee (BREC) in Albay Province. As in many other arrests done to human rights activists and defenders, planting of evidences was a common evil exercise. He was busy coordinating the ongoing NCCP-ACT Alliance humanitarian response in

communities affected by Typhoons Rolly and Ulysses when the incident happened. Pastor Dan is presently detained at the Santo Domingo Municipal Police Station in Santo Domingo, Albay.

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines reverberates the mission imperative that the Church sides and journeys with the poor and the downtrodden, the way Lord Jesus Christ lived his lifetime and ministry. It condemns those in authorities who cause people's misery especially when their God-endowed rights are violated in the guise of "peace and order". It echoes anew its call to genuine peace through the resumption of the peace talks being sidetracked by a government whose well-loved strategy is terrorism and wanton human rights violations.

God is for us. Such affirmation moves the Church to be steadfast in its faithfulness to the calling to be the voice for the voiceless, whatever circumstances it may be, whether amid intensifying harassments and persecutions. We shall be God's hands in reaching out to our fellow human beings needing love and care in this time of worsening socio-political and economic crises and of mismanaged pandemic.

We continue to appeal to our brothers and sisters to exert all efforts at sincerely praying and extending support for the immediate release of those who are trump-up charged. Let us hear through our hearts what God has to say through Prophet Amos, "*Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an endless river of righteous living*" (Amos 5:24, NLT). Let us translate said God's word into our living and let us hope for the dropping of all fabricated cases against these God's servants as soon as possible. +

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

02 MAY 2021



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General Secretary



Bishop Joseph G. Agpaoa
North Luzon Jurisdictional Area



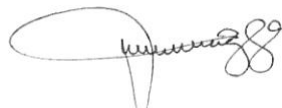
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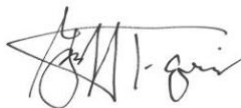
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