



## UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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## COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

**Let freedom, justice and peace blossom in our minds  
and in society, uphold human dignity and protect human rights!**

21 September 2022

We are cognizant of the historical relevance and the recall of the declaration of Martial Law 50 years ago. The UCCP through the General Assembly issued a statement on Martial Law, on May 20, 1974 which underscore, “the military has a big hand in carrying out of government programs...We are deeply concerned by the fact that many of those being detained have not been charged in court. We appeal for a speedy disposition of justice.”<sup>1</sup> This was a courageous stance of the Church for the respect of civil liberties and human rights

Reflecting on the historical precedence and theological assertion of the Church on the protection of human dignity and human rights based on the biblico-theological foundations, the UCCP Statement of Faith and affirmed by the Statement on Public Issues of the World Council of Churches 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly, we say:

“We acknowledge the prophets’ call to God’s covenanted people to work for justice and peace, to care for the poor, the outcast, and the marginalized, and to be a light to the nations (Micah 6:8; Isaiah 49:6). We recognize the calling to a lived faith that embodies Christ’s example, affirming the dignity and worth of all, regardless of race, gender, class, religion or any other characteristic.”<sup>2</sup>

Within the perspective of recent history where popularity of political leaders from dynastic families and rising into the top positions of the country, the majority of youth lack of adequate knowledge and understanding of the dark years of Martial Law from 1972 to 1986, allowed the proliferation of fantasy coated perception of the realities contingent on the Philippine society. The state’s tendencies to revert back to repressive and totalitarian governance, should make the Church vigilant and enable the Church members to hold fast to their faith imperatives along with the principles of international human rights law, affirm and emphasized the necessity of such a universal framework of legal accountability for the violation of human dignity and rights.

Our assertion of the dignity of human life and the establishment of just and peaceful social order that heralds the kingdom of God gives vent to the embodying of Christ’s love and compassion for people in communities and the larger society. This posits that the leaders of the land have not followed the way of Christ as the way of peace, which as a Christian ethic upholds human rights and human dignity. The tacit expression is found in

<sup>1</sup> UCCP Statements and Resolutions (1948-1990), 1990, p. 99-101

<sup>2</sup> WCC 11<sup>th</sup> Assembly Statement on Public Issues No.5, Sept. 8, 2022, Karlsruhe, Germany

Romans 1: 16-3:26, given the prevalence of impiety and injustice as the human condition that manifests humankind's failure to know the way of peace. The way of peace is walking in justice through active upholding of human dignity.<sup>3</sup>

Despite our staunch advocacy for respect and protection of human rights and upholding human dignity both past and present, there still exists violations, such as illegal arrests, red-tagging, and various forms of denigration of the Church, its leaders, church workers and the laity. In the purview of the continuing state policies from Duterte to Marcos Jr. government, the Church decry and laments these prevailing situations:

- Failure to apprehend and prosecute the perpetrators of killings and human rights violations that contributed to the worsening climate of impunity in the country, where extrajudicial killings still happen, where in the immediate past thousands were killed without due process, mostly from urban poor communities. The state has no effective measures to actively protect the rights of human rights defenders who continue to be subject to threat and intimidation, surveillance, trumped up charges, red-tagging, enforced disappearances, and extra-judicial killing.
- There hasn't been an attempt or action from the Marcos, Jr. government to resume peace talks with the NDF. President Duterte's created an anti-insurgency supra-body, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), which has not been disbanded, has escalated violations on human rights and the international humanitarian law under a military-led all-out war dubbed as the "One Nation" approach. This has victimized unarmed activists, critics, dissenters, and the opposition and compounded by the Anti-Terrorism Act with its provisions violative of basic civil and political rights.
- In view of this, we express our support to the call of the United Methodist Church, Philippine Central Conference, Board of Church and Society to drop all charges against Rev. Glofie Baluntong, UMC deaconess for 24 years, and ordained as clergywoman in 2014. She was baselessly and maliciously charged with attempted murder involving an incident that occurred on March 25, 2021 at 3:00 PM. But at that same date and time, witnesses attested that Rev. Baluntong was conducting a necrological service.<sup>4</sup>
- We, as well express our support and solidarity with the 16 members of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines who have been harassed and falsely accused of crimes. Among them are four Catholic nuns, namely: Sr. Emma Cupin, Sr. Susan Diolde, Sr. Ma. Fatima Somogod and Sr. Mary Jane Caspillo. In the face of the worsening economic crises, food insecurity, and inability of the government to respond to the needs of these marginalized communities, the Rural Missionaries have responded to the people in need as acts of Christian compassion. Clearly, their work is not a terrorist act. The Rural Missionaries of the Philippines

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<sup>3</sup> Dennis Solon, Strengthening Christian Perspectives on Human Dignity and Human Rights, Perspectives from an International Perspective, WCC 2002, p. 153-161.

<sup>4</sup> NCCP Solidarity Statement: Hands Off Rev. Glofie Baluntong, 07 September 2022

responded to the challenge of Jesus Christ at the end or the Parable of the Good Samaritan - "Go and do likewise." <sup>5</sup>

We seriously and reflectively take this 50<sup>th</sup> year commemoration of the declaration of Martial Law in the Philippines, for we have been striving to be faithful to God in Christ, guided by the vision of the kingdom of God, and strengthened in hope for the real experience of the full and meaningful life with God and our neighbors. We are praying for justice and peace to reign in our country and never again should we be subjected to Martial Law or authoritarian regime.+++

**THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**

**21 September 2022**



**Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog**  
General Secretary



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



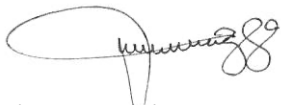
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*Middle Luzon Jurisdictional Area*



**Bishop Victor Paller**  
*South Luzon Jurisdictional Area*



**Bishop Jerby Salor**  
*East Visayas Jurisdictional Area*



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*West Visayas Jurisdictional Area*



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



**Bishop Daniel Palicte**  
*Southeast Mindanao Jurisdictional Area*

**Bishops Emeritus**

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

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

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<sup>5</sup> One Faith, One Nation, One, Embodying the Good Samaritan Statement in Defense of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, 12 Sept. 2022.

**Bishop Arturo R. Asi**  
South Luzon Jurisdiction

**Bishop Jessie Suarez**  
Middle Luzon Jurisdiction

**Bishop Erme R. Camba**  
West Visayas Jurisdiction

**Bishop Ebenezer Camino**  
West Visayas Jurisdiction

**Bishop Marino Inong**  
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**Bishop Dulce Pia-Rose**  
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**Bishop Rizalino Taganas**  
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**Bishop Eliezer Pascua**  
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**Bishop Elorde Sambat**  
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**Bishop Constante Claro**  
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**Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza**  
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**Bishop Jezer Bertoldo**  
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