

## UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST INT THE PHILIPPINES

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### The Council of Bishops Statement on Charter Change

***“Woe to those who scheme iniquity,  
Who work out evil on their beds!  
When morning comes, they do it,  
For it is in the power of their hands.” Micah 2:1***

The political rift within Marcos and Duterte’s ruling party has recently grown wider due to power wranglings and mudslinging that take place right within the hallowed walls of Congress. Politicians and those who support them argue on social media platforms over whether or not the Philippine Constitution of 1987 should be amended. The lower house’s proponents of charter change support the use of the People’s Initiative signature drive to rewrite the Constitution, which includes holding a Constitutional Convention and establishing a Constituent Assembly composed of the two houses of Congress. On the other hand, the Senate is now against any efforts to amend the Philippine Constitution.

The UCCP Council of Bishops maintains that the fundamental articles of the Philippine Constitution of 1987 sufficiently address the range of issues and problems that are present in the nation’s current political, economic, and cultural environment... Several current laws and statutes can promote economic growth, but because economic progress is oriented toward neo-liberalism, economic inequality persists.

The fundamental causes of inequality have not changed and hold onto political power while safeguarding the financial interests of the ruling class, the oligarchs, and multinational businesses, the goal of the Charter Change is to preserve the economic interests of the oligarchy, ruling class, and multinational corporations while consolidating political authority and hegemony. A great majority of the Filipino people who are already struggling to make ends meet will be further alienated and discriminated against by the Charter Change, and their suffering will worsen as political, economic, and cultural restrictions are relaxed.

Proponents of Charter Change have the blessing of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. and they have already made inroads in legitimizing the move that as early as March of 2023, the House of Representatives voted 301-6-1 in favor of calling for a Constitutional Convention to amend certain political and economic provisions in the 1987 Constitution. Other segments of Congress have surreptitiously gathered signatures to propel the process of legitimizing Charter Change through the People’s Initiative. Controversies appeared when money and material benefits were promised and given in exchange for an individual’s signature.

There were similar attempts made by past administrations and the recurring theme in the political realm is the term extension of elected officials, especially the presidency. As drafted in two resolutions of both houses the amendment seeks to shorten the terms of president and vice president from six years to five, but they will be allowed to run for two terms. In addition, they argue that the president and vice president should be voted for as a tandem “to encourage a strong party system” and claim that a long-term solution to political issues is wanting.” This has been invalidated by historical facts that the top two national officials

whether coming from the same party or not only strengthen their wield of power instead of realizing a just and peaceful society.

Since a move toward a charter change would ultimately benefit politicians, members of Congress, and other national leaders, the UCCP Council of Bishops strongly opposes such a move. Rather than focusing their efforts on the Charter Change, there are a plethora of pressing issues that require attention. The cost of living has significantly grown, which has been made worse by a high rate of inflation, food cartel monopolies, and the global economic crisis. As a result, the quality of life for Filipinos has been declining. The nation's limited financial resources ought to be put toward achieving sufficient social services for the populace as well as pursuing justice and peace in the nation.

We call on our people especially those in the religious sector to join hands with us in exposing the evil intent of such initiatives as charter change. Thus says the Lord God in Ezekiel 38:10, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan..." "Will they not go astray who devise evil? But kindness and truth will be to those who devise good." Proverbs 14:22.

We pray that God's justice, love, and peace guide our local and national leaders at this pivotal juncture in our nation's history.

**THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**  
**02 February 2024**



**Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog**  
General Secretary



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



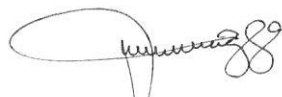
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