

**A resolution calling for timely, full, and impartial investigations into human rights violations in the Philippines submitted by the Minnesota Conference Philippine Partnership Task Force\***

Intent: to join our voice with our global partner in calling for timely, full, and impartial investigations into the human rights violations in the Philippines.

*Whereas* the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ began a partnership with the Mindanao Jurisdiction of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines in 1987, and has continued that partnership with the South East Mindanao Jurisdiction (SEMJur) since 1998;

And *whereas* our partnership guidelines call us to pray and advocate for peace based on justice (economic, social, political, racial and religious) in our own contexts and on behalf of all persons and the whole of creation;

And *whereas*, we seek to keep the faith of the prophet Isaiah, who calls God's people to share our bread with the hungry, our houses with the homeless, and clothe the naked because those in need are our own (Isaiah 58:7), and to keep the faith of Jesus, who not only echoes Isaiah he announces his ministry as one in which oppression and captivity are undone (Luke 4:18) but who also speaks of blessings for those who mourn, are meek, and hunger and thirst for righteousness, assuring that peacemakers will be called children of God 13 (Matthew 5:4-9);

And *whereas* in faithfulness to that tradition, we are called to give voice to the voiceless, to listen to the voices of all God's people, especially those who have historically been ignored, dismissed or silenced, and to not only listen but to speak with and for them in the pursuit of justice and peace, speaking truth to power where that power has been used to oppress rather than liberate;

And *whereas* we recognize that our brothers and sisters in SEMJur are called to "participate in the establishment of a just and compassionate social order" (from the UCCP *Statement of Faith*),

And *whereas* we respect their vision of ministry as one "where the church becomes a genuine partner of the people in the mission of transforming society toward a truly democratic, truly national and free and sustainable society whose governance is truly pro-people, free all forms of corruption and any form of foreign domination, where the nation will be able to emerge and stand as an equal among nations" (from the UCCP *Vision, Goals and Mission in the Next Jubilee*);

And *whereas* our brothers and sisters in SEMJur have joined with journalists and human rights workers to faithfully engage in ministries and practices that seek to document and expose human rights violations against the many in the Philippines for whom freedoms and opportunities have been denied;

And *whereas* these human rights violations have been documented by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the United Nations, as well as many Philippine human rights organizations;

And *whereas* between April 1986 when Ferdinand Marcos was ousted and the 20 year reign of martial law was suspended and democracy and free press were restored, and

December 2004, over 60 Filipino journalists were killed because of their investigative journalism work on human rights violations, and 25 of these killings have taken place under the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who came to office in January 2001, and none of these cases have resulted in a conviction (according to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines);

And *whereas* in southern Mindanao alone, since 2001, 510 documented cases of human rights violations directly effecting 19,375 people have been perpetrated by elements of the state, the military and paramilitary forces of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (according to Karapatan, an alliance of human rights and social justice advocates in the Philippines);

And *whereas* these violations continue unchecked, and have brought immeasurable loss and heartache to UCCP families, congregations and the communities served by our partners;

***Therefore, be it resolved*** that the 2005 Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ joins the United Church of Christ in the Philippines in calling on the President of the Republic of the Philippines to

a) conduct timely, full, and impartial investigations into the human rights violations that have occurred during her presidency, and those which may yet occur, in particular, the extra-judicial executions and disappearances of human rights workers, so that the perpetrators may be promptly brought to justice;

b) ensure that any member of the security forces suspected of committing human rights violations (in particular extra-judicial executions, disappearances and death threats) are suspended from duty pending a full investigation into their conduct;

c) and establish effective programs for the protection of peaceful human rights activists, victims and witnesses called to give testimony or evidence during the judicial process from violence, threats or other forms of intimidation.

**Be it further resolved** that this Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference requests its Executive Staff to forward this resolution to the President of the Republic of the Philippines and the Chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights. The resolution shall also be forwarded to our global and ecumenical partners through the offices of the Chairperson of the National Council of the UCCP, the General Secretary of the UCCP, and the Bishop of the South East Mindanao Jurisdiction of the UCCP .

**Be it further resolved** that the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ, through its Philippine Partnership Task Force, submit an updated draft of this resolution to this year's General Synod of the United Church of Christ as a "timely resolution."

**Be it further resolved** that this Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference requests the Minnesota Conference Philippine Partnership Task Force to regularly update the Conference and its churches on the human rights situation in the Philippines, especially as they impact the life and work of SEMJur, during the course of the coming year, and beyond if so requested by the Executive Staff and/or the Annual Meeting.

The only financial costs will be for copying and postage.

*The Philippine Partnership Task Force members who helped draft and endorse this resolution were Karen Evenson, Eleazar Fernandez, Jerry Hankins, Barb Herrington-Hal', Glen Herrington- Ha", Donna Lieferman and Peter Monkres. Cromwell Rabaya's assistance and input was invaluable. Contact person: Glen Herrington-Hall (651-633-1327)*