

Prayers for the Philippines

Prayers requested for our sisters and brothers in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP)

Sisters and brothers in the Minnesota Conference of the UCC,

I ask your prayers today for our sisters and brothers in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP).

Participants in this year's 49th Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference UCC heard eloquent and disturbing testimony from Bishop Eliezer Pascua, former General Secretary of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, about the situation of our partner church. Early this morning Bishop Pascua sent word of a civil suit filed today (June 16, 2011) against Former President and now Pampanga 2nd District Representative, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo regarding unresolved killings and alleged human rights abuses during her administration. The UCCP declared this a National Day to End Impunity, with a 9 am forum and press conference followed by an 11 am liturgical action and filing.

A press statement from the UCCP follows:



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June 16, 2011

Press Statement

Arroyo Had Command Responsibility of AFP, Impunity Must End!

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) is committed to ending the culture and climate of impunity in the Philippines. To this end, today we file a legal suit against Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. While Arroyo was President and of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, numerous Church Pastors and Church leaders were either been liquidated, harassed, unlawfully, detained or tortured with impunity, by military agents and operatives who, by law, were then all under the ultimate control and command responsibility of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Representing UCCP as General Secretary, Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza joins with six UCCP families as plaintiffs against Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for damages to the Church and Co-Plaintiffs Human Rights Violations



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Victims. Gloria Arroyo and the military agents for whom she was responsible must be held accountable for the injustice they have exacted on the Church and the Filipino people.

The courageous persons that unites in this action represent:

- **Joel Baclao, UCCP Coordinator of Disaster Relief Program "Andurog-Bicol"** at the time he was extra-judicially killed on November 10, 2004
- **Rev. Edison Lapuz, Conference Minister of the Northeastern Leyte Conference** at the time he was extra-judicially killed on May 12, 2005.
- **Pastor Andy Pawican, Licentiate Pastor assigned to UCCP congregation in Pantabangan** at the time he was extra-judicially killed on May 21, 2006
- **Rev. Raul Domingo, Deputy Conference Minister of Palawan Associate Conference** at the time he was extra-judicially killed on August 20, 2005
- **Noel "Noli" Capulong, Chair of UCCP's Christian Witness and Service Program in Calamba** at the time he was extra-judicially killed on May 27, 2006
- and representing himself, **Pastor Berlin Guerrero, Licentiate Pastor of Northeast Southern Tagalog Conference**, who was abducted, illegally detained and tortured on May 27, 2007.

From over one thousand documented Human Rights Violations under the administration of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, more than 18 persons killed extra-judicially, 1 person disappeared and believed killed, 3 persons ambushed and wounded, and at least 4 persons abducted, illegally detained and tortured from the UCCP.

As the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, we take action against the relentless persecution and brutalization of the Church, especially being labeled as "ENEMY OF THE STATE" through various counter-insurgency operation plans of the military establishment. This false and malicious tagging has unjustly permitted for UCCP persons to be "neutralized" in the name of so-called national security.

Not only has then President and Commander-in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Gloria Macapagal Arroyo been prosecuted for the staggering number of extra-judicial killings and human rights violations under her command, but neither have any of the actual military perpetrators been brought to justice. We seek justice for the surviving families of UCCP ordained ministers, pastors, lay leaders and members who had been liquidated through extra-judicial killing as well as those who had been ambushed and wounded, harassed, tortured and illegally detained with impunity.

We covet the prayers and solidarity support of the Filipino people as we take this action to break the culture and climate of impunity in the Philippines and pursue justice for the victims of human rights

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violations.

Bishop Reuel N.O. Marigza, General Secretary

(Contact through Liaison: Rebecca 0919-828-9514)

**Quadrennial Theme: Discerning and Obeying God's
Will in these Critical Times**

Member: National Council of Churches in the Philippines | Christian Conference of Asia | World Council of Churches | World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) | World Methodist Council | Christian Peace Conference | United Evangelical Mission (UEM)

The civil suit was filed before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court by the UCCP through its general secretary and executive director, Bishop Norman Marizga and relatives of the alleged victims. The case claims that she was not only the highest public officer of the land, but also Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The UCCP seeks justice for the surviving families of UCCP ordained ministers, pastors, lay leaders and members who had been liquidated through extra-judicial killing as well as those who had been ambushed and wounded, harassed, tortured and illegally detained with impunity.

The complaint seeks damages worth one million pesos for moral damages of the UCCP as an institution and at least 500,000 pesos in moral damages to each of the surviving spouses of those killed, and at least 300,000 pesos for one who was tortured but survived. Also sought are 500,000 pesos in exemplary damages, 300,000 pesos for attorney's fees and 300,000 pesos for litigation expenses. The total damage claim runs to at least 5.4 million pesos.

In a press conference before the filing, Marizga said Arroyo and the military agents allegedly involved in these cases must be held accountable for these incidents. He added that Arroyo must take responsibility as commander in chief during her term.

Legal Counsel Emilio Capulong Jr. said more of their members have been victimized but only 6 could join them in the filing for now. In their complaint, the plaintiffs also cited 22 other cases of UCCP members who were allegedly either tortured, abducted or killed. The complaint said the ministry and image of the UCCP was affected by the alleged atrocities.

We give thank for our sisters and brothers in the UCCP, who are "discerning and obeying God's will in these critical times." And we seek to but our "Faith in Action" by offering them our prayers and solidarity during this time.

Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers
Conference Minister

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