



Ecumenical Voice on Peace and Human Rights in the Philippines

December 8, 2009

Margaret Biggs
President
Canadian International Development Agency

Dear Ms. Margaret Biggs,

We are partners in the Philippines of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. We are collectively known as the Ecumenical Voice for Peace and Human Rights in the Philippines (Ecumenical Voice for brevity) formerly known as the Ecumenical Consortium for Just Peace – who had worked closely with Kairos for the past six (6) years regarding advocacy on human rights and peace. We, from church based organizations, have gathered as a consortium to form a stronger voice against human rights abuses and pursue a staunch advocacy to promote peace and uphold human dignity and human rights in the Philippines.

The mass slaughter of 57 persons (among them 30 journalists, 2 lawyers and relatives and supporters of the challenger to the current governor of Maguindanao in Mindanao, Southern Philippines) in the worst election related crime this country had ever seen, known as the Maguindanao Massacre - is the latest of a long list of human rights abuses under the current administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Add to this the more than a thousand extrajudicial killings of unarmed civilians (human right defenders, church people, leaders of people's organizations, etc), the almost 2000 illegal detention cases and hundreds of victims of enforced disappearances. Not to mention the on-going militarization of rural and urban communities and the dislocation of tens of thousands of rural folks because of the armed conflicts. All these have contributed to a human rights crisis that has called the attention of parliamentarians from Canada and other countries, the US Senate, UN special rapporteurs and recently the UN secretary general.

It has been four days since martial law was proclaimed in the province of Maguindanao, Mindanao the first in the post Marcos dictatorship era. Such is the context of unpeace and human rights atrocities in the Philippines.

Since its partnership with Kairos Canada, the Ecumenical Voice had done much to create national and international public opinion calling on the Arroyo government to address the human rights situation, pushing for justice for the victims of human rights violations; and promoting peace by pushing peace talks between the government and insurgent groups. It has also done much in peace building through youth and women organizations and empowering people's organizations through direct support to their programs, services, organizing and education and training.

The diminished, if not loss, of support by Kairos Canada to the Ecumenical Voice because of the termination of the CIDA funding for Kairos Canada's Program for 2009-2013 will impact

greatly in the momentum and sustainability of the Ecumenical Voice's peace and human rights advocacy at the national and international levels:

- a. diminished Philippine participation in the international and national human rights and related conferences in the offing in 2010
- b. as the Philippine national elections draws near (May 2010), an escalation in the number and magnitude of lives lost and livelihood disrupted can be expected as exemplified in the Maguindanao massacre; opportunity for monitoring and action on election fraud and election related violence may be compromised
- c. direct support to urban and rural communities shall be greatly affected : lessened services and programs for youth and women in the communities we work with, less resources for campaigns of the affected sectors (on issues like trade union repression, demolitions in urban poor communities, genuine land reform, relief operations, etc).

Needless to say, many of the work that had been started may not see its full fruition. And so we appeal to leaders in the Canadian government to consider the meaningful work being done by Kairos Canada with its partners in the various regions in the world. If their work is any measure of the goodwill and values upheld by your country being promoted among peoples around the globe, then it speaks well of the Canadian people and the government that leads it.



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