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October 28, 2010

President Benigno Aquino III
Malacanang Palace
Manila, Philippines

Dear President Aquino,

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives joins our partner, the Ecumenical Voice for Peace and Human Rights in the Philippines, in expressing our deep sorrow in learning of the murder, on October 16, 2011, of Father Fausto Tentorio, a member of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), and a strong advocate of the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Together with the churches in the Philippines and the Indigenous and peasant communities served by Father Tentorio, we mourn the loss of a faithful and dedicated colleague who offered his life in serving the peoples of Mindanao, particularly the Manobos whom he supported and accompanied in asserting their right to live with dignity. For 33 years, he devoted himself to the people among whom he lived, learning to speak the Visayan language in order to have closer ties with them.

Father Tentorio's ministry with the Manobos was well known in the faith community in the Philippines. He worked with them to create alternatives to respond to economic and social needs in the absence of basic public services. He was fiercely loved by the people for his condemnation of the increased presence of military and paramilitary groups to protect foreign investments, including that of multinational mining companies.

The killing of Father Tentorio took place while the Philippines was celebrating Indigenous Peoples' week. At this time, we also recall that last September, Mr. Rabenio Sungit, a lay leader of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, was killed. Despite public pronouncements of efforts to improve the human rights situation in the country, extrajudicial killings and other forms of human rights violations continue.

We call on you to undertake an impartial investigation of the killings of both Father Tentorio and Rabenio Sungit and to prosecute those found responsible for their deaths. It is imperative that your government demonstrate its serious intent to end impunity by bringing the perpetrators of these extrajudicial killings to justice.

We call on you, also, to stop the implementation of **Operation Plan Bayanihan**, a counter-insurgency program aligned with the previous **Operation Plan Bantay Laya**, which the United Nations Special Rapporteur identified as a root problem in ongoing human rights abuses.

KAIROS will continue to support and accompany our partners in the Philippines in the promotion and defence of human rights in the country, and to monitor the action taken by your government in addressing the issue.

We look forward to receiving your reply to this letter.

Sincerely,



Mary Corckery
Executive Director
KAIROS

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