

## Press Release

### Stop the Systematic Criminalization of Human Rights Defenders in the Philippines!



**10th December 2015, Berlin, Germany.** Together with international organizations and German members of parliament, the International Peace Observers Network (IPON) expresses its concern about the soaring criminalization of human rights defenders (HRD) in the Philippines. In a Joint Statement (<http://bit.ly/1NOdyUB>), addressing relevant state institutions such as the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, the Philippine Department of Justice and the Philippine Supreme Court, we demand immediate and effective measures against the criminalization of HRD and remind the Philippine government of duties and responsibilities that stem from international covenants and declarations.

In the presence of our partners from Negros and Sulu, the written statement was handed over to Chairperson Jose Luis Martin “Chito” Gascon of the Commission on Human Rights, Undersecretary Francisco F. Baraan III of the Department of Justice and Deputy Chief of the Public Information Office Atty. Gleo Guerra of the Philippine Supreme Court.

IPON also expresses its concern about the unwillingness to engage and to discuss the matter with the affected HRD as demonstrated by the Philippine National Police and the Committee on Human Rights of the House of Representatives. “Criminalizing HRD violates international law. It is thus unacceptable that state authorities deny addressing the issue”, says Dominik Hammann, country coordinator of IPON.

Under the Aquino-administration IPON observed, what is often described as a shift from violence to jail. While the government prides itself for decreasing numbers of political killings and cases of torture, an increase of cases of arbitrary detention, trumped-up charges and so-called strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) was documented.

With reference to criminalized HRD Temogen “Cocoy” Tulawie, Philippine state actors have proven to be capable of respecting due process and conducting a speedy and fair trial. It is now up to the Philippine government to uphold international law and to stop the systematic criminalization of HRD in the Philippines.

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