



Quezon City, 18th November 2016

Criminalization of Human Rights Defenders in the Philippines continues!

The International Peace Observers Network (IPON) expresses its deep concern about the precarious security situation and the continuing criminalization of human rights defenders (HRD) in the Philippines. Against this background, IPON welcomes the decision of the German Member of Parliament Martin Patzelt, rapporteur for Southeast Asia for the parliamentary committee for human rights and humanitarian aid, to follow the invitation of IPON to visit the Philippines and to engage in dialogue with state and non-state actors on the current human rights situation.

„Martin Patzelt’s visit to the Philippines is a sign of solidarity. It strengthens HRD at threat and sends the message that the international community won’t stand idly by, if a state violates civil and political liberties and takes violent actions against its own citizens.”

Dominik Hammann, IPON country coordinator

IPON monitors that HRD continue to face arbitrary detention and fabricated charges. The slow and easily influenced justice system is being misused to repress peaceful, social commitment and to silence political activists. It is especially marginalized groups, i.e. indigenous people, land right activists and trade unionists that fall prey to the repressive strategy of the state.

This has not changed since the new president Rodrigo Roa Duterte assumed office in June this year. Cases of arbitrary charges against HRD are pending at the court level for years, witnesses’ testimonies are being fabricated and hearings are systematically postponed. The recent killings of land rights activists and trade unionists even point to a deterioration of the situation for HRD.

Furthermore, IPON expresses its concern over the number of summary executions and the simultaneously arising culture of impunity.

“Human life has noticeably lost its value within the government and the public. The accompanying culture of vigilantism and impunity of perpetrators bears the immense risk that the spate of killings will further expand to other sectors.”

Bettina Adamczyk, IPON human rights observer

Additionally, IPON appeals to the German government to take a clear stance on human rights towards the Philippine state and to demand its compliance with international human rights treaties.

„It is unfortunate that the federal government has not commented on that matter, yet.”

Anna Hollendung, IPON coordination Germany

In the context of reviewing the Philippines through the so-called *Universal Periodic Review (UPR)* of the UN Human Rights Council in the beginning of 2017, the German government shall therefore call on the Philippine state to comment on the precarious situation of HRD, the scope of summary executions and the culture of impunity.

IPON welcomes the position of the European Union (EU) towards the grave human rights violations committed by the Philippine state and calls on the EU to suit their actions to the word. Massive violations of the ICCPR have to trigger the suspension of the so-called *Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP+)* and the negotiations on the free trade agreement between the Philippines and the EU.

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