



To:

Hon. Rodrigo Roa Duterte, President of the Republic

CC:

Mr. Diosdado M. Peralta, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines

Mr. Menardo Guevarra, Secretary of the Department of Justice

Board

Maha Abdullah
*Cairo Institute for Human
Rights Studies,
Palestine*

Mr. Jose Luis Martin Gascon, Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights

Ms. Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Binota Moy Dhamai
*Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact,
Thailand*

Dr. Agnès Callamard, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Irene Escorihuela Blasco
*Observatori DESC,
Spain*

Ms. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Priyanthi Fernando
*International Women's Rights
Action Watch Asia Pacific,
Malaysia*

24 August 2020

Fernanda Hopenhaym
*Project on Organizing,
Development, Education, and
Research,
Mexico*

Your Excellency:

ESCR-Net - International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is the largest global network of organizations and advocates devoted to achieving economic, social, cultural and environmental justice through human rights, consisting of over 280 organizational and individual members in 75 countries.

Ryan Schlieff
*International Accountability
Project,
USA*

S'bu Zikode
*Abahlali baseMjondolo,
South Africa*

We are writing to you to express our profound concern for the recent killings of prominent human rights defenders, Randall “Ka Randy” Echanis and Zara Alvarez in the Philippines.

Chris Grove
Executive Director

Randall “Ka Randy” Echanis was co-founder of ESCR-Net member organization Karapatan and a human rights activist for social and economic justice in the Philippines, particularly working on land reform to benefit the rural poor in the country. We are informed that Randall “Ka Randy” Echanis was brutally murdered around 1.30 am on 10 August 2020, when five suspects entered his apartment in Novaliches, Quezon City. Mr. Echanis was allegedly stabbed to death and his neighbor Louie Tagapia was also killed in the incident.

Zara Alvarez was a longtime human rights defender. She was the chair of Anakbayan-Negros, and previously served as deputy general secretary of BAYAN-Negros as well as campaign and education director of Karapatan Negros. On the night of Monday 17 August 2020, she was shot and killed by unknown perpetrators in Barangay Mandalagan of Bacolod City.

Zara Alvarez had previously denounced receiving death threats through anonymous phone calls.

Both Randall “Ka Randy” Echanis and Zara Alvarez had been labelled as terrorists by the authorities in 2018, a list that also included former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, who is the founder and Executive Director of the Tebtebba Foundation, another ESCR-Net member. Their names were later removed from the ‘terror list’. Likewise, they had both previously been imprisoned for their legitimate human rights work.

In May 2019, Karapatan filed before the Philippine Supreme Court a petition for the writs of amparo and habeas data to seek legal protection from threats, harassment, and other human rights violations. Zara Alvarez and another Karapatan human rights worker Ryan Hubilla were supposed to be among those who were about to provide testimonies in relation to the said petition. Unfortunately, the Court of Appeals quickly dismissed the petition, and it is currently under review by the Supreme Court. Soon after the petition’s dismissal, Karapatan’s national officers, including Secretary General Cristina Palabay, faced malicious and baseless charges which they continue to answer in court to this day. Lamentably, Zara and Ryan were killed, before the petition can be given due course.

These attacks appear to be part of a wider pattern of attacks on human rights defenders in the Philippines. The Philippines has repeatedly been highlighted as one of the most dangerous countries in the world for human rights defenders.

A report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights released in June 2020 highlighted a series of grave human rights violations including the systematic and widespread killings with impunity of human rights defenders in the Philippines.¹ In April 2020, nine UN Special Rapporteurs expressed their concern regarding the killings, threats, detentions and criminalization of human rights defenders in the Philippines.² Both the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/PH/Philippines-HRC44-AEV.pdf>

² <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=25149>

the UN Special Rapporteurs recommended establishing an international, independent investigation of human rights violations in the Philippines. Similarly, recent reports by Global Witness³ and ESCR-Net member Front Line Defenders⁴ illustrate that in 2019, only Colombia topped the Philippines in terms of killings of human rights defenders globally.

These killings occur in a context of extreme hostility towards human rights defenders expressed through defamation campaigns and harmful rhetoric from the highest levels of government, including the so-called “red tagging” or being labelled as communists or terrorists. Several human rights defenders being ‘red tagged’ have subsequently been killed or received death threats or threats of sexual violence. Likewise, many human rights defenders face criminalization for their legitimate human rights work. The newly enacted Anti-Terror Act raises serious concerns relating to human rights safeguards and grants the government excessive and unchecked powers to crack down on perceived threats based on a vague and nebulous definition of terrorism.

We wish to recall that the Government of the Philippines has an obligation to promote, respect, protect and fulfill human rights in accordance with international standards and national laws.

Specifically, as a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Philippines is obligated to uphold the following human rights, among others: the right to life; the right to liberty and security of person, including freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention; and the rights to due process and equality before the courts, including the entitlement to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law.

We also recall the UN Declaration on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders, which establishes the obligations, among others, to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her actions to defend and promote human rights. This includes prohibiting criminalization of human rights defenders, a well-known abuse of criminal justice systems aimed at suppressing dissent. Such criminalization has been condemned by international human rights bodies.⁵

Given the gravity of the situation, we call on the government of the Philippines to:

³ <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/global-witness-records-the-highest-number-of-land-and-environmental-activists-murdered-in-one-year-with-the-link-to-accelerating-climate-change-of-increasing-concern/>

⁴ <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-2019>

⁵ See, for instance, *Criminalization of Human Rights Defenders*, Report, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2015, available at: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/criminalization2016.pdf>.

- 1) Stop the killings of human rights defenders.
- 2) Conduct prompt, independent and impartial investigations into the killings of Randall “Ka Randy” Echanis and Zara Alvarez. Those responsible must be held accountable.
- 3) Grant the amparo and habeas data court petition for legal protection by Karapatan currently before the Supreme Court.
- 4) Ensure the physical, mental, and moral integrity of human rights defenders in the Philippines.
- 5) End the hostile rhetoric and defamation campaigns against human rights defenders by the authorities including putting an end to “red tagging” of human rights defenders.
- 6) Put an end to criminalization of human rights defenders for their legitimate human rights activism.
- 7) Rescind the Anti-Terror Act.
- 8) Support an international, independent investigation of human rights violations in the Philippines as recommended by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and several UN Special Procedures mandate holders.

Finally, please keep us informed on any steps taken to address these issues.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Grove', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chris Grove,
Executive Director

A11 Initiative
Abahali baseMjondolo
Above Ground
Accountability Council
Action Contre l'Impunité pour les Droits Humains (ACIDH)
ActionAid International
Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel
Advocates for International Development (A4ID)
African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
African Resources Watch (AfreWatch)
Al - Haq
Al-Marsad Golan
Al Mezan Center for human rights

Aliança para Promoção do Desenvolvimento da Comunidade de Hoji Ya Henda (APDCH)
All-Ukrainian Public Organization “Foundation of Medical Law and Bioethics”
Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN Burma)
Amnesty International
Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)
Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia (ACIJ)
Asociación para el Desarrollo Integral de las Víctimas de la Violencia en las Veraces, Maya Achi (ADIVIMA)
Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos
Asociación Q’ukumatz
Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women
Association for Law and Advocacy for Pastoralists (ALAPA)
Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
Association Nigerienne de Défense des Droits de l’Homme, Niger (ANDDH)
Association of Environmental Lawyers of Liberia (Green Advocates)
Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (AFTD)
Avocats Sans Frontières
Awaj Foundation
Bangladesh Legal Aid & Services Trust (BLAST)
BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights
Bretton Woods Project
Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation
Canada without poverty
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)
Center for Human Rights and Development in Rwanda (CHRD-Rwanda)
Center for Human Rights and Environment (CHRE)
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR)
Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) | Rutgers University
Centre de Recherche sur l’Environnement, la Démocratie et les Droits de l’Homme (CREDDHO)
Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS)
Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM)
Centre for Economic Social Cultural Rights In Africa (CESCRA)
Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA)
Centre for Human Rights and Development - Mongolia (CHRD-Mongolia)
Centre for the Sustainable use of Natural and Social Resources (CSNR)
Centro de Archivos y Acceso a la Información Pública (CAinfo)

Centro de Derechos Economicos y Sociales (CDES)
Centro de Derechos Humanos | Universidad Diego Portales
Centro de Derechos y Desarrollo (CEDAL)
Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)
Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental (CEMDA)
Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional (CEJIL)
Charter Committee on Poverty Issues
Chiadzwa Community Development Trust
Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
Citizen News Service (CNS)
Collectif des Femmes du Mali (COFEM)
Collective for Research & Training on Development - Action (CRTD.A)
Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (CCJ)
Comision Mexicana de Defensa y Promocion de los Derechos Humanos (CMDPDH)
Comité Ambiental en Defensa de la Vida
Conectas Direitos Humanos
Confederación Campesina del Perú (CCP)
Consejo de Pueblos Wuxhtaj
Conservación Investigación y Aprovechamiento de los Recursos Naturales (CIARENA)
Construons Ensemble le Monde (ONG CEM)
Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indigenas
Corporación Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CCAJAR)
Corporate Accountability
Corporate Responsibility Coalition (CORE)
Defend Job Philippines
Dejusticia - Centro de Estudios de Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad
Desarrollo, Educación Y Cultura Autogestionarios Equipo Pueblo A.C.
Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF)
Dullah Omar Institute | University of the Western Cape
EarthRights International (ERI)
Economic and Social Rights Academic Network — UK-Ireland
Economic and Social Rights Centre (Hakijamii)
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Asia (ESCR Asia)
Egyptian Association for Collective Rights
Egyptian Center for Civil and Legislative Reform (ECCLR)
Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR)
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
Ekta Parishad
El Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña “Tlachinollan”
Endorois Welfare Council (EWC)
EnGendeRights

Environmental Defender Law Center (EDLC)
Equis: Justicia para las Mujeres
Equitable Cambodia
Escuela Nacional Sindical (ENS)
Estudio Para La Defensa De Los Derechos De La Mujer (Demus)
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)
European Roma Rights Centre
Federação dos Orgãos de Assistencia Social e Educacional
Federation of women Lawyers - Kenya (FIDA - Kenya
Femmes Côte d'Ivoire Experience (FCIEX)
FIAN International
Foro Ciudadano de Participación por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos (FOCO)
Forum for the Protection of Pubic Interest (Pro Public)
Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux (FTDES)
Foundation for the conservation of the Earth (FOCONE)
Franciscans International (FI)
Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT)
Front Line Defenders (The International Foundation for the Protection of Human R...
Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho (FESPAD)
Fundacion Etnica Internacional (FEI)
Fundación para el Desarrollo de Políticas Sustentables – FUNDEPS
Fundacion Promocion Humana
Fundar- Centro de Análisis e Investigación
Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)
Habitat International Coalition (HIC)
Harvard Law School Project on Disability
Human Dignity
Human Rights Action
Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC)
Human Rights Law Network (HRLN)
Inclusive Development International (IDI)
Initiative for Gender Equality and Development in Africa
Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER)
Institut Prometheus pour la Démocratie et les Droits Humains (IPDDH)
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)
Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA)
Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH)
Instituto de Estudios Legales y Sociales del Uruguay (IELSUR)
Instituto de Estudos, Formação e Assessoria em Políticas Sociais (PÓLIS)
Instituto de Formacion Feminina Integral (IFFI)

Instituto de Liderazgo Simone de Beauvoir
Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales Alternativos (ILSA)
Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense (AIDA)
International Accountability Project (IAP)
International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
International Human Rights Internship Program
International Network of Human Rights (RIDH)
International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW Asia Pacific)
Just Associates (JASS)
Just Fair
Justiça Global
Justice Pour Tous (JPT)
Kairos - The Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice
Karapatan
Kebetkache Women Development & Resource Centre
Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)
Kenya Land Alliance
Kituo Cha Sheria (Center for Legal Empowerment)
Observatoire de la Société Civile Congolaise pour les Minerais de Paix (OSCMP)
Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Center (LHAHRDEV)
Law and Society Trust (LST)
Lawyers for a Democratic Society (MINBYUN)
Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM)
Legal Resource Center
Legal Resources Center - Ghana
Lok Shakti Abhiyan
Maison des Droits de l'Homme du Cameroun (MDHC)
Manushya Foundation
Media Mobilizing Project (MMP)
mines,minerals & PEOPLE (mm&P)
MiningWatch Canada
Minority Rights Group International
Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)
Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens (MAB)
Movimiento Unificado Francisco Sánchez-1932 (MUFRAS-32)
Movimientos Afrocolombiano CIMARRON
Nairobi Peoples Settlements Network (NPSN)
Narasha Community Development Groups
National Center for Advocacy Studies (NCAS)
Partners for Dignity and Rights (Formerly NESRI)

National Fisheries Solidarity Organization (NAFSO)
National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE)
Natural Resource Women Platform
Natural Resources Alliance of Kenya (KeNRA)
Nazdeek
Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD)
New Women Foundation (NWF)
Občan, demokracia a zodpovednosť (CDA)
Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH)
Observatoire de la Société Civile Congolaise pour les Mineries de Pais
Observatori DESC - Drets Econòmics Socials i Culturals
Observatorio Ciudadano (OC)
Observatorio de Política Social y Derechos Humanos (OPSDH)
Observatorio de Política Social y Derechos Humanos de INCIDE Social, A.C
Ogiek Peoples' Development Program (OPDP)
Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (OFRANEH)
Otros Mundos AC Chiapas
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum
Participation of the Practice of Rights (PPR)
People's Health Movement
People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE)
Phenix Center
Plataforma Dhesca Brasil
Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS)
Programa Venezolano de Educacion Accion en Derechos Humanos
Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR)
Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER)
Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales (ProDESC)
Rencontre Pour La Paix Et Les Droits De L'Homme (RPDH)
Réseau Marocain de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire (REMESS)
Right To Education Initiative (RTE)
Right to Water Forum in the Arab Region (RWFAR)
Rights and Accountability in Development (RAID)
Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
Samahan Ng Manggagawang Kaagapy Sa Pag-Unlad
Samata
SAPCONE – Turkana People Organization
Section 27
Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF)
Syndicat National Autonome des Personnels de l'Administration Publique (SNAPAP)
Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC)

Social Rights Advocacy Centre (SRAC)
Socio-Economic Rights Foundation (SRF)
Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)
Spaces for Youth Development and Social Change (Spaces For Change) (S4C)
STAR Kampuchea
Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF)
Tamkeen Fields for Aid
Tebtebba Foundation (Indigenous Peoples' Centre for Policy Research and Education)
Terra de Direitos
Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC)
The Democracy & Workers' Rights Center in Palestine (DWRC)
The Democracy Center
The Jus Semper Global Alliance
The Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy (PHRGE) at Northeastern University
School of Law
The Syrian Legal Development Programme (SLDP)
Tierraviva a los Pueblos Indigenas del Chaco
Unión de Trabajadoras Afrodescendientes del Servicio Doméstico - UTRASD
United Sisterhood Alliance
Video Volunteers (VV)
WITNESS
Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Educational Trust (WLSA)
Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)
Women's Economic Agenda Project (WEAP)
Women's Rehabilitation Center (WOREC)
World Forum of Fisher People (WFFP)
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
Zi Teng
Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA)
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association
Alicia Ely Yamin
Anna Cody
Abdoul Aziz Niang
Adams Aswani
Alison Symington
Ayman Bardawil
D.J. Ravindran
Danwood M Chirwa
David Kinley
Deborah Ewing
Dolamohan Singh Babu

Evelyne Schmid
Ganesh Devi
Ge Mingzhen
George Kent
Ingrid Gorre
Jacques Tshibwabwa Kuditshini
Julieta Rossi
K'nyaw Paw
Malcolm Langford
Mario Efraín Melo
Maureen Meyer
Murielle Mignot
Mrs. Patricia Ramírez Parra
Paulina Garzon
Raju Prasad Chapagai
Pemii Benedict
Rodrigo Bustos Bottai
Sarmila Shrestha
Suad Elias
Tara Melish
Tyler Giannini
Vincent Calderhead
Yves Lador
Mary Jane Real
Robert Robertson
Claire Mahon
Maria Herminia Graterol Garrido
Lisa Pusey
Tessa Kahn
Rasha Jarhum
Jackie Dugard
Lillian Chenwi
Alison Gita Aggarwal
Aoife Nolan
Luis Vittor
Charlene May
Areli Sandoval Terán
Melania Chiponda
Ana Lucía Maya Aguirre