



International Network for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
Red Internacional para los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales
Réseau international pour les droits économiques, sociaux et culturels
الشبكة العالمية للحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية و الثقافية

For immediate release

The Philippines: Systematic Criminalization of Human Rights Defenders

International organizations call on the Government of the Philippines to protect rights activists from harassment and intimidation

New York, February 11, 2016. The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) sent today a letter to the President of the Philippines to express serious concern regarding the criminalization of several human rights defenders, as part of a systematic pattern of harassment and intimidation targeting human rights activists in the country.

“We are deeply troubled by reports that the government of the Philippines is using criminal proceedings to repress trade union leaders and other human rights defenders in connection with their legitimate work to ensure labor rights and other human rights,” said Chris Grove, ESCR-Net director.

The letter, endorsed by more than 220 organizations and 50 individuals in 70 countries, denounces the alleged criminalization of defenders Mr. Renante Gamara, Ms. Amelita Bravante-Gamara and Mr. Roy Velez in connection with their activities to promote the right to work, adequate working conditions, adequate housing and environmental rights.

As reported by credible sources, concern is expressed regarding the use, by the government of the Philippines, of criminal proceedings as a pretext to silence and repress human rights defenders, including via baseless charges. ESCR-Net cautions that these measures are adding to the ranks of political prisoners currently in custody in the Philippines.

“The Government of the Philippines has moral responsibilities and legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfill human rights, including to peaceful assembly and of association, liberty and security of person, and equality before the courts,” stated Grove.

ESCR-Net calls on the Government of the Philippines to undertake prompt, independent and impartial investigations into the circumstances leading the charges against the three activists and any person in the country involved in human rights work. The Network also urges the Philippines to take all necessary steps to protect against further acts of surveillance, harassment, intimidation, and violence against individuals and organizations associated with Mr Gamara, Ms Bravante-Gamara, Mr Velez and all other human rights defenders in the country.

The complete letter is available [here](#).

About ESCR-Net

The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) connects more than 270 NGOs, social movements and activists from 70 countries around the world, offering a strategic exchange and collective advocacy to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all. For more information please visit www.escr-net.org

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