

An Invitation

International Solidarity Mission *In Defense of a People Fighting Repression* Philippines * August 2005

Greetings from the Philippines! We would like to invite you to join us in an International Solidarity Mission: *In Defense of a People Fighting Repression* on 14-19 August 2005.

On an unprecedented scale reminiscent of the dark days of martial rule by the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, 15 human rights defenders have been killed in cold blood since President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo came to power, some of them while investigating HR violations.

The November 16, 2004 massacre of seven striking workers of Hacienda Luisita (HLI) in Tarlac, Central Luzon when government soldiers fired at their picketline, signaled a new spate of killings and disappearances which spread nationwide.

A bloody month of March 2005 is testimony to the terror rampage being perpetrated by the Philippine military and its hired death squads. Gunned down in less than a month were a number of peasant leaders and organizers, a city councilor, a former Bayan secretary general and radio broadcaster, a Philippine Independent Church priest, a director of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and a journalist. A judge *at litem* escaped an attempted assassination while a former vice mayoralty candidate lived through a frustrated murder.

No one is spared, the threat is over the head of anyone voicing dissent.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is likewise pushing for the passage of an Anti-Terrorism Bill and the implementation of a National Identification System to further constrict civil liberties and tighten its rein on the people.

Her government likewise attempts to gag media by a regulation prohibiting, under threat of revocation of license and other sanctions, the interview of "terrorists," whereby the military decides who is a terrorist or not. A number have been added to the unsolved killings of scores of journalists and broadcasters.

A mercy mission has just returned from Sulu, Mindanao to provide assistance and to look into the massive displacement of Moro communities due to militarization by government troops and armed confrontation between them and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) forces after the massacre of a Moro couple.

These characterize the worsening human rights situation in the country. Such is also the face of Macapagal-Arroyo's "strong republic" and the Philippine version of US President George W. Bush's war of terror.

For these reasons and in behalf of organizations working for the defense and promotion of human rights, we invite you to join the International Solidarity Mission (ISM): *In Defense of a People Fighting Repression* to be held in five major provinces in the Philippines affected by massive human rights violations under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. These are Mindoro

in Southern Luzon, Tarlac (specifically the case of Hacienda Luisita) in Central Luzon, Samar in Eastern Visayas, Compostela Valley and Sulu in Mindanao.

The result of the ISM's visit to the areas will be presented in a People's Tribunal, to be followed by a People's March right after.

We believe that your participation in the ISM will help generate pressure on the Philippine government to stop the brutal attacks against people who struggle for freedom, justice and democracy.

We are sending the attached initial concept paper for your information and we look forward to hearing from you soonest.

Please contact the National ISM Secretariat at solidaritymission@yahoo.com cc titapl@gmail.com or via telephone numbers (632) 410 7623 and (632) 925 1786. Elisa Tita Lubi, Over-all ISM Coordinator, and Norma Dollaga, head of the National Secretariat, will attend to your inquiries/communications.

For peace based on justice,

HON. SATUR OCAMPO

Member, House of Representatives
Republic of the Philippines
and President, Bayan Muna Party

DR. CAROL PAGADUAN-ARAULLO

Chairperson, BAYAN
(New Patriotic Alliance)

DANILO RAMOS
Chairperson, ILPS Philippine Chapter
(International League of
Peoples' Struggle)

ATTY EDRE OLALIA
Vice-President, IAPL
(International Association of
People's Lawyers)