



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada

By e-mail: embassy@philippineembassy.ca

April 22, 2008

Madam Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
President of the Philippines
Manila, Philippines

Madam President:

On behalf of over 160,000 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), we strongly condemn the harassment by armed men of Rep. Satur Ocampo on his return from a Human Rights Mission to Canada and the threat of his imminent arrest. We are seriously concerned for his safety and that of the other members of the Mission, Rep. Crispin Beltran and Rep. Luz Ilagan.

We view the timing of these events as punishment by the Philippine government for Rep. Ocampo's courageous and principled stand against the ongoing human rights abuses in the Philippines – particularly the extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances – that he and the two other elected legislators aired before the Canadian Parliament and the Canadian media.

Rep. Ocampo, President of the Bayan Muna Party (People First) and the Deputy Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, along with Rep. Beltran of Anakpawis and Rep. Ilagan from the Gabriela Women's Party, were in Canada at the invitation of the Stop the Killings Network and the United Church of Canada for a national tour from April 4-18, 2008.

The three members of the Philippine Congress informed the Canadian public, media and members of Parliament at the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights that more than 900 extrajudicial killings and 180 enforced disappearances have occurred under your government. They revealed that they themselves have been subjected to harassment, arrests and intimidation; 132 members of Rep. Ocampo's party have been assassinated since 2001, along with 49 members of Anakpawis and 8 members of Gabriela.

They pointed to the findings of UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston revealing the involvement of the Philippine armed forces in the killings and an ongoing climate of impunity.

It seems the Philippine government is once again dredging up murder charges against Mr. Ocampo along with fellow Bayan Muna Rep. Teodor Casino, Gabriela Women's Party Rep. Liza Maza and former Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano, this time for the alleged killing of three rebel returnees between 2001 and 2004. It's to be noted that Casino also just returned from a trip overseas where he made front page news exposing the human rights abuses in the Philippines during that country's appearance before the Universal Periodic Review on human rights April 11, 2008 in Geneva.

This is not the first time the government has tried to arrest and silence Mr. Ocampo and the other progressive Party list legislators. Each time the charges have been thrown out of court.

On February 2007 Mr. Ocampo was arrested and detained for 18 days – during the ongoing election campaign - on charges of murders he allegedly committed in 1984, at a time when he was

in prison during the Marcos' dictatorship. The case was dismissed by the Supreme Court.

Rebellion charges were also dismissed against Mr. Ocampo, Mr. Casino, Mr. Beltran and Mr. Mariano, along with Rep. Liza Maza of Gabriela - the same Party list as Rep. Ilagan - in 2006. They had spent two months under the protective custody of the Philippine Congress to prevent their arrest. However, Rep. Crispin Beltran, 75, was nabbed and spent 15 months in prison where he suffered heart problems before the trumped-up charges were dropped.

Satur Ocampo is no stranger to mistreatment at the hands of the Philippine government. He was the longest-held political prisoner and was severely tortured under Dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Mr. Beltran recently endured one and a half years in detention and Rep. Ilagan, who is facing charges of sedition, survived a bomb blast at the Philippine Congress last November in which her driver and five others were killed.

We ask that the Philippine government immediately stop the harassment of Satur Ocampo, Rep. Beltran and Rep. Ilagan, Rep. Casino and the other elected representatives of these Party list organizations.

Sincerely,

John Gordon
National President
Public Service Alliance of Canada

c.c. Alliance Executive Committee
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