

Oral Intervention Delivered by Fr. Rex Reyes, Jr., on behalf of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)
14th Session of the Human Rights Council
Item No. 3

June 8, 2010

Thank you, Mr. President,

This is a joint statement of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the American Association of Jurists, the World Council of Churches, Franciscans International, Lawyers Rights Watch of Canada, the American Indian Treaty Council and a Philippine NGO under the Ecumenical Voice for Peace and Human Rights.

We thank Professor Philip Alston for his trailblazing efforts into the issues of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. His report and recommendations on the Philippines in 2008 as well as his report to this 14th Session are outstanding pieces of work that human rights advocates and defenders in the Philippines find very instructive and helpful.

Mr. President, today the human rights watchdog in the Philippines, KARAPATAN has documented 1,192 cases of extrajudicial killings since 2001. The latest victim is Mr. Mike Rivera, who was a former city government official and was a known anti-mining advocate. He was gunned down on May 16, 2010 while on his way to church in a region south of Manila.

KARAPATAN has also documented 205 cases of enforced disappearances and 1,028 cases of torture and hundreds more of other cases of various human rights violations in the different parts of the country, victimizing farmers, workers, indigenous peoples, social activists, religious, lawyers and journalists. The most recent highlighted cases of the Maguindanao Massacre in November last year and the illegal arrest and continued detention of 43 health workers in February of this year have pointed to the involvement of state security forces. Never since the Martial Law years have human rights violations in our country occurred with so much impunity as now.

Mr. President, the Philippines has just gone through a national election. The presumptive President-elect has campaigned on a platform of prosecuting the perpetrators of these human rights violations.

We urge this Council to help us make the presumptive President-elect stand by his campaign promise. We appeal to this Council to urge our government to stop Operation Bantay Laya, or Operation Freedom Watch or OBL as an anti-insurgency policy. OBL makes no distinction between armed combatants and civilians. Its continued implementation has caused massive human rights violations whose victims cut across all sectors in Philippine society. May this

Council be steadfast in urging our government neither to engage in nor adopt any similar policy in the future.

Finally, we urge this Council to continue helping us monitor our government, that it may abide by its pledges and commitments to international instrumentalities and to implement the recommendations that it has accepted and committed to. Thank you, Mr. President.