

## **Situation in the Philippines**

1. The central committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) meeting in Geneva 15-21 June 2018 lifts up in prayer and solidarity the people and churches of the Philippines amid the worsening human rights situation and increasing violence and impunity in the country.
2. The central committee receives with joy the news of the release on bail of The Rt. Rev. Carlos Morales of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente on 15 March 2018, almost a year since his arrest and detention on charges of possession of explosives. However, we are deeply alarmed by the escalating violence, extrajudicial killings and other human rights abuses in the Philippines in the context of President Rodrigo Duterte's 'war on drugs', the continuing imposition of martial law in Mindanao, and non-tolerance of principled dissent and criticism.
3. We have received a report that on 10 June 2018 Fr Richmond Nilo was gunned down beside his altar in Nueva Ecija Province. He is one of the latest casualties in the list of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines, and the third Roman Catholic priest killed in seven months. From July 2016 to March 2018 Karapatan, a human rights organization in the Philippines, recorded 141 cases of politically related extrajudicial killings. Of these, 127 were farmers and Indigenous People and one lay preacher of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, like the Iglesia Filipina Independiente a member church of the WCC.
4. The 'war on drugs' continues to take its toll mostly on poor people, while suspected 'drug lords' have their day in court. The Philippine National Police have recorded 22,893 killings classified as "deaths under inquiry" since 2016. The human toll of the 'war on drugs' is severe. The killings must be investigated, stopped and all violations prosecuted.
5. We take note of the social and economic effects of the continuing imposition of martial law in Mindanao. The siege of the city of Marawi continues to generate internally displaced people, and we still hear reports of Indigenous People displaced, their leaders harassed, their schools either destroyed or turned into military outposts and their teachers vilified. These concerns and many more are contained in the report of the WCC Ecumenical Indigenous Peoples Network Reference Group (EIPNRG).
6. We have also heard of government efforts to delegitimize the work of human rights defenders. Notable among these is the court petition filed by the Department of Justice naming some 600 individuals as terrorists. The list includes some 30 Indigenous People, among them the current UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People and the Executive Director of the International Indigenous People's Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation, and other activists.
7. The central committee is grateful for ecumenical initiatives in the Philippines that seek to pursue just and lasting peace, to address the immediate effects on the 'war on drugs' such as the trauma of children or kin of those killed, to provide sanctuary to the leaders of Indigenous Peoples, and to witness to the truth of repression, suffering and unjust harassment of the vulnerable.

8. In light of the above, and in the spirit of the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the WCC central committee, at its meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 15-21 June 2018:

- ***Expresses*** its prayerful solidarity with the Filipino people and in particular the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines during these challenging times.
- ***Urges*** the Government of the Philippines to end the culture of impunity, order the investigation of all killings, and drop the Department of Justice's petition to declare activists as terrorists.
- ***Reiterates*** the executive committee's call for the lifting of martial law in Mindanao and for the Indigenous People and others in the region to be allowed to resume their normal daily activities.
- ***Calls again*** for the resumption of the formal peace talks between the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), including socio-economic reforms to address the landlessness, unemployment, corruption, repression, poverty and discrimination that have bred unrest, violence and the protracted conflict in the Philippines.
- ***Invites*** WCC member churches and partners to stronger ecumenical solidarity and support for the churches and peoples of the Philippines in the midst of the escalating crisis of violence, human rights abuse and impunity in the country.
- ***Welcomes*** the initiative for an International People's Tribunal for the Philippines, being planned for 17-20 September 2018 in Brussels, to bring before the bar of international opinion the human rights situation in the Philippines in an attempt to end extrajudicial killings, human rights abuses and the culture of impunity.