

Luxembourg, 20 June 2022

Protect Human Rights Defenders!

ASTM is working with KARAPATAN on a program that aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society to realize human rights, particularly the right to defend those rights. However, one of the main threats facing civil society today is judicial and administrative harassment. Unfortunately, this is a trend and a reality in most countries of the world. Being a human rights defender has become a dangerous job and for our organization this is intolerable. Therefore, ASTM, through this statement, calls on the Philippine government to:

- a. condemn the series of vilification and smear campaigns against KARAPATAN, Rural Missionaries of the Philippines and Gabriela Organization, through red-tagging and terrorist labeling against human rights defenders, their organizations and communities;
- b. dismiss the perjury charges against Cristina Palabay and other members of KARAPATAN as well as concerned members of Gabriela and Rural Missionaries of the Philippines;
- c. recall Executive Order No. 70, creating a national task force (NFT) to end local communist armed conflict and institutionalizing the so-called whole of nation approach and stop all activities emanating from this order, including the smear campaign against human rights activists;
- d. withdraw its counterinsurgency program Oplan Kapayapaan, which victimizes innocent and unarmed civilians and criminalizes the work of human rights defenders;
- e. prioritize the enactment and full implementation of a Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill that will give legal recognition and safeguard rights defenders in the conduct of their work, in accordance with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and all major human rights instruments that it is a party and signatory.

For ASTM:

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