

Ms Sigrid A.M Kaag  
Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands  
P.O. Box 20061  
2500 EB The Hague  
The Netherlands

Cc: Ms Marion Derckx, Ambassador of the Netherlands in the Philippines and  
Mr Michiel Servaes, Acting Director of the Social Development Department  
(DSO), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

<u>Date:</u>	14 March 2018
<u>Re:</u>	Letter of concern regarding increased harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders in the Philippines
<u>Contact:</u>	Danielle Hirsch, <a href="mailto:d.hirsch@bothends.org">d.hirsch@bothends.org</a> , telephone: 0031 (0)20 5306600

Dear Minister Kaag,

I kindly request your attention to the following: The organisations signing on to this letter are extremely concerned about the safety of human rights defenders in the Philippines, including several representatives of local partner organisations, following the recent events that have taken place in the Philippines<sup>1</sup>.

As you may know, the Philippine government, through the Department of Justice, has accused more than 600 people of being members of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA). The names of these 600 people have been published in a petition to declare the CPP and the NPA as 'terrorist' organisations.

Among these 600 people, there are a UN Human Rights expert, dozens of civil society organisations' representatives, indigenous leaders and ex-priests. By labelling them as 'terrorists', the Philippine government puts these 600 people at great risk. Last Friday, Human Rights Watch identified the list as a 'virtual hit list'<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For more information:

- Karapatan, Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights  
<http://www.karapatan.org/Duterte+regime%E2%80%99s+proscription+petition+targets+citics%2C+rights+defenders+-+Karapatan>
- Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/08/philippines-terrorist-petition-virtual-hit-list>
- Reuters International: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-rebels/philippines-seeks-terrorist-tag-for-600-alleged-communist-querrillas-idUSKCN1GK0DO>
- IUCN: <https://www.iucn.org/news/secretariat/201803/iucn-dismayed-philippines-seeks-declare-un-special-rapporteur-%E2%80%98terrorist%E2%80%99>
- Office of the High Commission, United Nations Human Rights:  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22783&LangID=E#sthash.pZShIM1f.uxfs>

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Philippines Terrorist Petition Virtual Hit List*,  
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/08/philippines-terrorist-petition-virtual-hit-list>, March 8, 2018.

There has been a long history in the Philippines of state security forces and (pro-government) militias assassinating people labelled as NPA members or supporters. The past has shown that such lists provoke violence, even murder. We are seriously concerned about the safety of our partners and all others in the Philippines, who are on this list. It is feared that this list can also be a premise for additional red-tagging against more human rights defenders especially given the President's declaration<sup>3</sup> that the government will go after organisations that it accuses to be supporters of the CPP/NPA.

Among the 600 people listed are Mrs Victoria Tauli-Corpuz and Ms Joan Carling. Mrs Victoria Tauli-Corpuz is the former Chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples and is currently the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Issues. For many years she has been a strategic partner of Both ENDS and other signatories of this letter in the field of human rights, environmental justice and land rights issues. Ms Joan Carling is a member of the Advisory Board of the strategic partnership Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) as well as a member of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) Advisory Council, which is a strategic partner in the Shared Resources, Joint Solutions (SRJS) Alliance of IUCN NL, within the Dialogue and Dissent programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both are women human rights defenders who are highly respected and internationally known defenders of the rights of indigenous peoples, especially indigenous women. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), to which the government of the Netherlands is a State Member, has expressed its deep concern regarding the safety and welfare of Mrs Victoria Tauli-Corpuz as well as other environmental and land rights activists similarly tagged as "terrorists"<sup>4</sup>.

Also Mr Ellecer Carlos, spokesperson of the Philippine NGO In Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement (iDEFEND) and partner of Transnational Institute (TNI) is on the list. iDEFEND is the largest human rights formation in the Philippines. It is made up of over 70 organisations and over 40 recognized community leaders in the Philippines working with the most affected communities. iDEFEND is a strategic partner of the TNI in striving towards a humane drugs policy.

We fear for the safety of people on the list who work and live in remote areas in the Philippines, including 8 renowned indigenous leaders and human rights defenders from the Cordillera Region and 10 Lumad leaders, indigenous peoples' leaders and human rights advocates from Mindanao. For years their communities have been impacted by military operations and widespread extrajudicial executions and ongoing attacks against voices who are critical of the current government. Being on this list makes them even more vulnerable.

For example on 2 March 2018, indigenous activist Ricardo Mayumi was extrajudicially killed in his own home in Kiangan, Ifugao province in the North of the Philippines. Mayumi was a leader of the Ifugao Peasant Movement (IPM). The IPM is at the forefront of the opposition against the Quadraver dam projects in Tinoc that endanger the livelihood and undermine the control of the Ifugao people over their ancestral land and

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/964165/duterte-says-left-wing-groups-are-next-targets>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/blog/new-data-reveals-197-land-and-environmental-defenders-murdered-2017/> <https://www.iucn.nl/en/solutions/environmental-defenders> <https://www.iucn.org/news/secretariat/201803/iucn-dismayed-philippines-seeks-declare-un-special-rapporteur-%E2%80%99terrorist%E2%80%99>

resources. Mayumi and 9 other IPM leaders have previously received death threats from State security forces and their agents<sup>5</sup>.

The Dialogue and Dissent programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs stands for the protection of and support for vulnerable groups in the global South, for strengthening the watchdog role of CSOs and for the protection of human rights. These rights are now widely violated in the Philippines by threatening and endangering indigenous groups, civil society organisations and political activists.

We request you to express concern vis-a-vis the Philippines government and to urge for the retraction of the petition and the immediate nullification of the list that seeks to have over 600 people, among them indigenous people's leaders and human rights defenders, declared terrorists and outlaws. We also request you to explore with the European Commission and the EU Delegation in Manila how a concerted signal can be given to the Philippine government<sup>6</sup>.

Yours sincerely,  
on behalf of all co-signatories to this letter,



Danielle Hirsch  
Director Both ENDS

Co-signatories:

Ruud van den Hurk  
ActionAid Netherlands

Ineke Zeldenrust  
Clean Clothes Campaign

Carla López Cabrera  
Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres

Coenraad Krijger  
IUCN NL

Zohra Moosa  
Mama Cash

Fiona Dove  
Transnational Institute

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/cpaphils/>