



ISSUE FOCUS: ENDING VIGILANTE KILLINGS (2)



Executive Secretary Eduardo S. Ermita, head of the Philippine delegation to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on the Philippines conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, Switzerland, April 11, 2008 with HRC President Doru Costea.

The obligation and commitment of our government goes well beyond economic, security and global challenges. A civilized, democratic nation must also be vigilant in strengthening democracy and advancing human and civil rights.

President Arroyo
Remarks before the
Diplomatic Corps
Vin d'Honneur
January 2009

ARROYO ORDERS POLICE TO SOLVE DAVAO DEATH SQUAD KILLINGS

14 May 09, Manila – President Arroyo has directed the Department of Interior and Local Government and the Philippine National Police to undertake all measures to get to address the issue of vigilante killings in Davao, According to Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

"The Philippine government does not - nor will it ever - condone, tolerate, abet, encourage, much less sponsor such kinds of actions for any reason or at any time. Criminality is a social malaise that can never be remedied by such executions, which are illegal as they are immoral," Secretary Ermita said, adding that the Philippine Government does not sanction assassination or executions to address criminality.

The long arm of the law should not and must not spare anyone.

*Eduardo Ermita
Executive Secretary*

"The long arm of the law should not and must not spare anyone," he emphasized.

The President likewise called upon the citizenry who may know of the existence of these death squads and who can testify on alleged cases to come forward and be heard.

In this light, the Department of Justice was also instructed to fully capacitate its Witness Protection Program to enable it to address the needs and requirements of people who will respond to our President's call.

It is along this tack that the Philippine government desires that this issue be re-

solved once and for all even as It has previously welcomed the inquiries and public hearings on the matter that were spearheaded by the Commission on Human Rights. It will be recalled that the President herself directing both the AFP and the PNP to extend full cooperation to these inquiries.

According to Secretary Ermita, the Philippine government, which adheres to human rights and the rule of law, will always address criminality through the criminal justice system. "The government will not turn itself into the proverbial ogre more loathsome and more fearsome than the one it is duty-bound to subdue," he added.

In its crusade against crime, the government welcomes support from various sectors, and is very much willing to forge strategic partnerships with them.

It is along this line that Secretary Ermita also welcomed moves by the PNP, through the Department of the Interior and Local Government, for the hiring and training of more police personnel to increase its police-to-people ratio, and enhancing its capability in investigations and forensics.

The government owes this much to our people which it is duty-bound to provide peace and security, Secretary Ermita said.



The Police and the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. February 2009, Manila - Police Director General Jesus A Verzosa, the Chief of the Philippine National Police, Chairperson Leila M De Lima of the Commission on Human Rights and Mr Paul G Shafer Resident Representative of the Hanns Seidel Foundation join hands during the photo opportunity after signing the Memorandum of Understanding between the PNP and HSF in cooperation with CHR. In the memorandum, both parties agreed to the conduct of various trainings, regular multi-sectoral consultation and dialogues to increase the level of awareness on human rights promotion and protection.(PNP-PIO Photo)

POLICE NO LONGER UNDER MAYOR ALLEGED TO BE SUPPORTING VIGILANTE KILLINGS

1 May 09, Davao City - The mayor of Davao City who is alleged to have been supporting vigilante killings no longer has supervision over the Davao police force, following allegations that lawmen were condoning these killings and were lax in pursuing the killers.

Mayor Rodrigo Duterte of Davao City announced he already tendered his irrevocable resignation in a letter he submitted to Secretary Ronaldo Puno of the Department of Interior and Local Government, who is also the chairman of the National Police Commission (Napolcom).

Under the Local Government Code, Duterte as well as other city and municipal mayors act as deputized representatives of the Napolcom and



March 09 - Top Davao police officials actively participate in the hearings on unexplained killings in Davao conducted by the Philippine Commission on Human Rights.

control and overall supervision over the police. Duterte likewise wrote General Alexander Yano, the chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), to inform him that he is already yielding control over the military's Task Force Davao which is in charge of Davao City's security.

Duterte made the surprise announcement as the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) started its hearings on the series of unexplained killings, in Davao City.

With this development, it is hoped many that the investigations being conducted by the Philippine Commission on Human Rights and by the Philippine National Police in Davao will proceed with the full cooperation of all sectors.

I deplore the killings, be they from left or right . . . We aim to break this sad historical cycle. We are focused on bringing perpetrators to justice, working with Congress to pass new laws to protect victims and jail criminals, and exhort the nation to leave behind its terrible legacy of political violence and clan vendettas.

President Arroyo
August 2008



Ambassador Willy C. Gaa
FROM THE CORNER OF
BATAAN AND MASSACHUSETTS

rule of law in areas where private armies and vigilante justice were present made this task even more challenging.

Again, among the top priorities of President Arroyo when she became President was to strengthen the rule of law in the Philippines.

President Arroyo increased the number of police, investigators and prosecutors in areas where there was a serious need to strengthen the rule of law.

She strongly supported increases in the salary and benefits of judges to insulate them from undue influence.

She made the construction of Halls of Justice, particularly in Mindanao, a key part of her national infrastructure program. The President engaged international partners to strengthen the administration of justice.

An important example is the Judicial Reform Support Project with the World Bank which started in 2003 and will end in December this year.

By actually dismantling private armies and by invigorating the rule of law, coupled with programs and reforms aimed at alleviating poverty, President Arroyo has succeeded in making private armies a thing of the past.

Some challenges remain. The situation in Davao is unacceptable and President Arroyo has ordered the police to aggressively investigate these vigilante killings and to bring those responsible to justice.

She has thrown her full support behind the efforts of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights as it conducts its own independent hearings on this issue. President Arroyo and the Philippine Government remain firm in their commitment and dedication to promoting and protecting human rights.

Every effort is being taken to end vigilante killings in Davao and to bring the full force of law and justice to bear on those responsible.

The situation in Davao is unacceptable and President Arroyo has ordered the police to aggressively investigate these vigilante killings and to bring those responsible to justice.

In one of the darkest periods of Philippine history, local political warlords, eager to win the support and votes of their constituents, would unleash their private armies to disperse vigilante justice.

This tragic story began as early as the 1920's when elections were already institutionalized. This is also when political warlords and their dynasties started taking root.

One of the first things PGMA did when she assumed Presidency in 2001 was to aggressively dismantle all the private armies. In this task she has been more successful than any other President before her.

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