July , 2019

**Police General Oscar Albayalde**

Chief, Philippine National Police

National Headquarters Building

Camp BGen Rafael Crame, Quezon City

1111 PHILIPPINES

Emails: ocpnp@pnp.gov.ph/srocpnp@yahoo.com/pnpdo.adm1n@gmail.com

Dear General Albayalde,

As a supporter of ACAT Belgium, I want to express my concern over the increasingly harsh repression of human rights defenders in the Philippines, and the death threats against them. The most recent example is Cristina Palabay, who has been targeted for murder later this year. This threat is all the more alarming as it came just hours after another human rights advocate, Bernardino Patigas, was shot in Escalante City, Negros Occidental province. This violence forms part of a virulent clampdown against defenders and political activists, who are often detained arbitrarily or become victims of trumped-up charges, solely in order to stifle criticism.

I also note with grave concern that Mr Patigas is the second murdered human rights defender who was named on a hit list circulated in Negros Occidental in 2018. The list gave a phone number for reporting the whereabouts of activists, putting their lives at great risk. Human rights lawyer Benjamin Ramos, killed in November 2018, was also on the list. Dozens of other human rights activists or journalists, including environmental defenders and trade unionists, have also been murdered since June 2016, which shows the gravity of the threats they face.

ACAT supporters therefore urge the Philippines authorities to act swiftly to protect human rights defenders and press freedom in the country from this ongoing menace which aims at hindering their legitimate activities. Specifically, I call on you to:

 Open an impartial investigation into the death threats against Cristina Palabay and other human rights defenders in the country, and ensure those responsible are brought to justice in fair trials;

 Put in place effective mechanisms to protect human rights defenders, trade unionists and journalists at risk and ensure they can carry out their work without fear of reprisals, thus abiding by the core principles of international law, including press freedom and freedom of expression;

 Launch effective investigations into the killing of human rights defenders and journalists, or other collateral victims, of President Duterte’s war on drugs, and ensure all those responsible are brought to justice. In this context I particularly want to mention the children who are too often innocent collateral victims of the President’s “ruthless war on drugs.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this letter, and I look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours truly,

Signature

Name/ Address