

Mr. Rodrigo Duterte
President
The Republic of the Philippines

April 5, 2021

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the National Council of Churches in Korea, we bring you greetings in the name of Jesus the risen Lord.

As an Ecumenical body of Korean Church, for a long time we have devoted ourselves to the Korean democracy movement in solidarity with World Council of Churches and Christian Council of Asia. We have also been working together with the United Church of the Philippines (UCCP) to spread the Good News of salvation. But, on March 28, 2021, we heard the shocking news from them that your government froze their bank accounts and the properties of the Haran Center in Davao City. For a long time, as far as we know, the UCCP Haran (Home and Altar for Renewal, Action, and Nurture) has been a safe haven for Lumads fleeing from rampant militarization in their communities.

According to the UCCP statement, the government's freezing of the bank account and property stems from the malicious and unfounded allegation that the UCCP Haran's assets have been "used to finance terrorism," harboring the Lumads in the compound and indoctrinating them with "communist ideals". We are also overwhelmed with anger and horrifying misery to hear that earlier in September last year, the UCCP Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza (currently, the NCCP's General Secretary) and the Haran manager were accused of human trafficking and child abuse. Later on, it was revealed this accusation had been fabricated by the government.

Above all, we define the Philippine government's attack as a grave human rights violation that jeopardizes the lives of the Lumads. Protecting the rights of the uprooted people is the nation's most important task, but the Philippine government is driving them toward death by calling them terrorists.

We also define this attack as a violation of the Constitution in that it suppresses religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution. The most important teaching of Christianity is "love of neighbor" (Mathew 12:27-29), therefore it is a serious blasphemy to disturb the missionary work of practicing love for neighbors.

Strongly condemning these malicious acts of the Philippine government, we urge President Duterte to:

1. Ensure the right to life and human rights of the Lumads
2. Lift immediately the freeze on UCCP accounts and property

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3. Reveal the truth on the fabricated accusations against UCCP officials including Bishop Marigza, and come up with measures to prevent recurrence.

We have heard that the human rights situation in the Philippines is worsening as the extra judicial killings are being committed against many innocent people including pastors. Therefore, we sincerely ask you to listen to the cries of the innocent people and bring justice to them.

We believe that God will listen to the cries of the people, wipe away their tears and relieve their injustice. In addition, we will pray and act in solidarity with churches in the world so that God's justice and peace will soon be realized in the Philippine society.

"I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have overcome the world!" (John 16:33).

Sincerely Yours,



Rev. Lee Hong Jung
General Secretary

강 용 규

Rev. Kang Yong-kyu
Chair-person – International Affair Committee
National Council of Churches in Korea

