

Mindanao (Philippines): Cure Poverty! Advance Human Rights for All!

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Statement endorsed and supported by 36 organizations during the second Mindanao Human Rights Conference which was organized by the Alliance of Tri-people for the Advancement of Human Rights (ALTAHR) together with the Tri-people Organization against Disaster (TRIPOD) Foundation, Kaagapay OFW Resource and Service Center (Kaagapay OFW), Lanao Alliance of Tri-people Advocates (LAHRA) and Alyansa ng mga Mamamayan para sa Karapatang Pantao (AMKP).

We, the seventy nine (79) delegates representing different organizations, social movements, tribes and communities from the nine (9) provinces of Mindanao, working for the realization of human rights of every individual, group and sector, joined the Mindanao Human Rights Conference on October 10-11, 2016 in Dapit Alim, Simbuco, Kolambugan, Lanao del Norte. This conference is launched for us to collectively discuss the current situation and challenges to human rights and to chart our united response and call to the government and to all citizenry.

As we work for the promotion of human rights, we are actively organizing our ranks and communities as human rights defenders, enhance our knowledge and awareness in different social issues, document cases of human rights violation, and link different organizations and agencies of the government as duty bearers for the realization of human rights for all.

Despite all these initiatives,

We are deeply disturbed by the worsening problem on illegal drugs that destroys every fiber of our society and causing widespread damage and negative effects to the health and future of our youth and of the whole humanity. As such, it is a fundamental human rights issue that needs a serious and urgent action; however;

We are more concerned with the increasing number of deaths which are attributed to the operations of the authorities and the police, vigilante and unknown groups; and to the occurrence of summary execution within the one hundred (100) days of Duterte Administration. These deaths are not only within the bound of the campaign against illegal drugs but also the incident of killings of indigenous peoples leaders, workers and farmers;

We also fear the increasing numbers of documented warrantless arrest, threats and harassments, and other human rights violations in our communities.

WE believe that,

The severe incidence of poverty and hunger is the root cause of these different societal problems including the illegal drugs. The increasing poverty is due to the lack of decent jobs and social services such as housing, health, education; also including lack of programs for vulnerable sectors like persons with disability, children, women, elderly and persons displaced by conflict in different

communities; lack of the implementation of agrarian reform and Indigenous Peoples Rights Act; destruction of the environment due to mining, logging, and establishment of several coal-fired power plants in Mindanao; abuse in working area and discrimination based on gender, age, and identity; non-recognition of Right to Self-Determination and ancestral domain of Indigenous Peoples and Bangsamoro; continuing conflict in Mindanao; and corruption in the government. These conditions push people to engage in anti-social activity and commit to criminal activities like trading of illegal drugs.

Human rights is everyone's rights regardless of social status, age, gender, sex, nationality, religion and political belief. As such, it has to be protected by the government at all times and in all circumstances;

The problem in illegal drugs is more than just a policy issue, it is also a social and health issue. And the campaign against it should always protect life of everyone especially the youth who will cradle the generations to come. As a social problem, campaign against illegal drugs should put at the center the collective action and participation of different agencies and sectors of our society especially the family, tribe, people and the community. The participation of the people in the development of decisions and programs to respond to the drug problem is vital mechanism to effectively prevent and put an end to it.

That is why we are demanding from the Duterte Administration and to fellow social movements around the world to urgently respond against the increasing poverty incidence and that social justice should prevail as a foundation of war against illegal drugs, criminality and corruption. Along with this is the implementation of humane, pro-people and suitable mechanism in governance where there is meaningful participation of the people and community in the development, designing, decision making and implementation of policies, programs and services. Poverty, hunger, and the lack of opportunity and livelihood is a social disease that needs to have serious attention from the government.

Through our collective action for peace, development and justice that the genuine change for a society with dignity will be realized and it is the government that has the primary task to ensure the participation of communities and people in this process.

Cure poverty! Advance Human Rights for All!

October 11, 2016

Alliance of the Tri-People for the Advancement of Human Rights (ALTAHR)
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