

Press release

# **Philippines: Unabated Extrajudicial Killings - A Schizophrenic Policy**

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## **Philippines : press release and joint FIDH/PAHRA briefing note**

Paris, 7 February 2007: Following a mission of contact with civil society in the Philippines, from 20 to 26 January 2007, FIDH wishes to draw the attention of the international community on the serious human rights violations taking place in the country.

2005 and 2006 have been black years indeed for human rights in the Philippines. Politically motivated extrajudicial killings have reached unprecedented levels, and very few - if any - have been prosecuted and condemned for such acts.

The exact number of extrajudicial killings varies according to different sources, but all converge to denounce the high number of killings, the fact that they are politically motivated, and in their immense majority thought to be perpetrated most often by members of the military, by the police, or by groups linked to them. The number of cases is clearly on the rise since 2005. In addition, with the coming election for the Congress in May 2007, local groups expect a further increase of violence.

The main victims of the killings are members and leaders of legal organisations (peasant and fishermen organisations, teachers' associations, women's groups, workers unions, etc), perceived by the authorities as close to the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA) [1].

Bayan, an umbrella mass organisation ideologically close to the CPP, and its members (left political parties, trade unions, etc) are legal organisations in the Philippines; however, they are regularly designated as "fronts of the NPA" in the speeches of high level military and government officials. This situation is paradoxical since those groups, unions, parties and NGOs are legally entitled to operate in the Philippines. That amalgam clearly contributes to the fact that the leaders, members and sympathisers of legal organisations have been victims of numerous targeted extrajudicial killings. "Even if they might share the same ideology, a clear distinction should be drawn between peaceful legal parties and organisations on the one hand, and the armed groups on the other hand", said Sidiki Kaba, President of FIDH. The perpetrators of the extra-judicial killings are rarely identified by the police and never brought to justice. Human rights defenders face

huge risks in order to document the violations and assist the victims.  
The tribute they paid in 2006 is particularly heavy [2].

Following the national and international indignation at the high number of extrajudicial killings over the past year, the government established the Melo Commission in August 2006, a special Commission of Enquiry to address media and activists' killings. Its independence and impartiality have been widely questioned in the Philippines. Since the appointment of the Commission, extrajudicial killings have continued unabated. At the end of January 2007, the Melo Commission had achieved its report but has not yet made it public.

FIDH considers that the Melo Commission report should be made public as a matter of urgency. "Only prosecution of high level officials for human rights violations will send a signal to the authors of extrajudicial killings that such behaviour will not be tolerated anymore", concluded Sidiki Kaba.

See the FIDH/PAHRA mission briefing note on FIDH Website :

<http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/0702note-philippines.pdf>

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\* <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/0702note-philippines.pdf>