



philippinenbüro e.V. im Asienhaus
Hohenzollernring 52
D-50672 Köln

Tel.: (++49) 0221 71 61 21 21
Fax : (++49) 0221 71 61 21 10

philippinenbuero@asienhaus.de
www.philippinenbuero.de

Cologne, August 25, 2020

Press release

Her voice carries on. On the murder of Zara Alvarez

Philippine human rights activist Zara Alvarez is dead - murdered on August 17, 2020 in Bacolod City (Philippines). Organizations from Europe condemn the act and give their voice to her cause.

We are sad, stunned and above all angry. On the evening of August 17, the human rights defender Zara Alvarez (39 years old) was shot dead in Bacolod City, only a few hours after Randall Echanis' funeral, a land rights and peace activist, who was tortured and murdered on August 10.

We, the signatories of this press release, stand united in solidarity with Philippine civil society, and demand justice and an end to the repression of voices critical of the government in the Philippines.

Since her youth, Zara Alvarez actively campaigned for a fair society and fought for the protection of human rights in Negros. Most recently she worked for the health organization NIHP-CD (Negros Integrated Health Program for Community Development). The issues she advocated and the criticism she voiced triggered a series of intimidation attempts. She received death threats, was imprisoned between 2012 and 2014 on a trumped-up charge, and, upon her release, was denounced as a terrorist by the government. For her protection, Zara Alvarez was closely monitored by international teams of human rights observers on the ground since 2014, including trial monitoring. But on August 17, she was gunned down while walking to her boarding house. According to the latest findings, the hooded murderer shot her in an ambush and fled on a motorcycle driven by an accomplice.



Zara Alvarez. Photo: philippinenbüro e.V.

The perpetrator may be unknown, but the recurring threats against activists by President Rodrigo Duterte and laws such as the Anti-Terror Law point to an increasingly authoritarian and repressive climate in the Philippines. For years, we have been pointing out that the Philippine Government, under the guise of counterterrorism, is brutally cracking down on human rights defenders and other civil society players. Thereby, the Government seeks to hamper and delegitimize the commitment of the civil society to human rights, a clean environment, a just distribution of land and the rights of Indigenous People. The work of human rights activists, journalists, environmentalists, lawyers, etc. is complicated by public insults and vilification, red-tagging, fabricated charges, politically motivated legal proceedings, and outright physical harassment. Zara Alvarez is one of the latest victims.

Zara Alvarez is not the only victim of this climate of violence. As we mourn Zara Alvarez, we also mourn Randall Echanis, Ben Ramos, Jory Porquia, Bernardino Patigas, and all those murdered for their struggle for a more just society.

In order to remember them, we want to show our solidarity with Philippine civil society and honor Zara's advocacies and the values she stood for.

We demand justice for Zara Alvarez! Justice for all politically persecuted and victims of the Duterte regime! #StopTheKillings! #JusticeForZaraAlvarez

Signatory Organizations:

Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen

Amnesty International (Germany)

Amt für Mission, Ökumene und Weltverantwortung der Ev. Kirche von Westfalen

Arbeitskreis der Ökumenischen Philippinenkonferenz

Philippine Women's Forum e.V./Babaylan Germany

barkadas e.V.

Brot für die Welt

UK Campaign for Human Rights in the Philippines (CHRP)

Carpus e.V.

Deutsch Philippinische Freunde e.V.

Dreikönigsaktion, Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar

International Coalition for Papua (ICP)

International Peace Observers Network (IPON)

Kirchenkreis Koblenz der Evangelischen Kirche im Rheinland

Korea-Verband e.V.

Misereor

Missio München

philippinenbüro e.V.

Philnetz e.V.

PowerShift e.V.

Sri Lanka Advocacy

Stiftung Asienhaus

United Evangelical Mission (UEM/VEM)

Westpapua-Netzwerk (WPN)

Private Persons:

Michelle Anders

Bishop Antonio Ablon (IFI)

Philipp Bück

Prof. Christoph Antweiler (Universität Bonn)

Dr. Rosa Cordillera Castillo (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

PfarrerIn Joy dela Cruz (Ev. Kirche von Westfalen)

Dr. Bernhard Hoeper (Bonn)

Pfarrer Dr. Christian Hohmann (Ev. Kirche von Westfalen)

Risa Jopson

Ren Mangaban

Stella Matutina

Dr. Oliver Pye (Universität Bonn)

Michael Reckordt

Hadje C. Sadje (Foundation Academy of Amsterdam)

Jasmine Grace Wenzel

Dr. Rainer Werning (Publizist, Köln)

Fr. June Mark Yañez (IFI)