



INTERNATIONAL COALITION
AGAINST ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

H. E. GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President of the Philippines
New Executive Building
Malacanang Palace Compound
J.P. Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila
Philippines

Date: July 21, 2008

Re: Prioritise the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

Members of the Steering Committee:

Amnesty International

Asian Federation Against involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

Civil Initiative We Remember, Belarus

Collectif des familles de disparus en Algérie (CFDA)

Euro-Med Federation Against Enforced Disappearances (FEMED)

Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH)

Fédération Internationale de l'ACAT (FIACAT)

Federación Latinoamericana de Asociaciones de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos (FEDEFAM),

Human Rights Watch

Aim for human rights

International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)

Your Excellency,

The International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED) would like to draw your attention to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (hereinafter the Convention). With this letter we want to stress that the prompt ratification and implementation of this Convention should become a priority matter for the Philippine government.

Family member organizations, human rights NGOs, experts and a number of States labored since 1981 to reach the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Convention on December 20 2006. They have recently united in the ICAED to campaign for the rapid ratification and effective implementation of the Convention. Today, the ICAED already consists of almost 30 organizations from all over the world, including the Philippine FIND and the Asian Federation against Involuntary Disappearances.

The Convention provides for the right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance as well as the right for the relatives of the disappeared to know the truth. This Convention will not only become an effective tool for the international community in its struggle against enforced disappearances, but it also represents a political message that this practice will no longer be tolerated.

The Convention will enter into force after 20 ratifications. First of July 2008, 73 countries signed the Convention and 4 countries ratified (Argentina, Honduras, Albania and Mexico). By taking action without hesitation, the Philippines would be distinguished among the first countries to ratify the Convention and would therefore be instrumental to its entry into force.

To protect all persons from enforced disappearances we sincerely request the Philippine government to:

- Condemn the crime of enforced disappearances

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- Sign and ratify the Convention without delay and as a priority matter;
- Refrain from all reservations that may result incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention;
- Enact without delay the domestic legislation which is necessary to fully implement the Convention.

In relation to the last item we want to underline the importance of the proposed anti-disappearance bill that is pending before the Congress in the Philippines. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives are already preparing their respective reports on the bill. Acknowledging the measures that already have been taken, we strongly recommend Your Excellency to certify the anti disappearance bill as an urgent matter so that its immediate passage will be prioritized by the Congress.

Yours Sincerely,

Dave Hardy
Coordinator of the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances

CC:
DR. ALBERTO G. ROMULO
Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs

ATTY. HOMERO MATTHEW P. RUSIANA
Executive Director
Presidential Human Rights Committee

SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO
Chairperson
Committee on Foreign Relations
Philippine Senate

ATTY. LEILA DE LIMA
Chairperson
Philippine Commission on Human Rights

The ICAED unites families of the disappeared and human rights organisations from all over the world in the struggle against disappearances. Members of ICAED:

Amnesty International, Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), Civil Initiative We Remember Foundation - Belarus, Collectif des Familles de Disparus en Algérie (CFDA), Euro-Med Federation Against Enforced Disappearances (FEMED), Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH), Fédération Internationale de l'ACAT (FIACAT), Federación Latinoamericana de Asociaciones de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos (FEDEFAM), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Aim for human rights, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), Russian Justice Initiative - Russia, Liga Guatemateca de Higiene Mental - Guatemala, Breaking the Walls of Silence - Namibia, AFAPREDESA – Western Sahara, Lawyers for Human Rights – South Africa, TRIAL - Switzerland, Disarmament and Non-Violence – Georgia, Asociación Derechos Humanos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales en Guatemala (DESCGUA) - Guatemala, National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) - Namibia, Organisation Marocaine Des Droits HUMAINS - Morocco, Asociación de Detenidos-Desaparecidos, ejecuciones Extrajudiciales y Torturados de Huancayo-Junin - Peru, FIND - Philippines