

Press Statement  
February 8, 2017  
Rome, Italy

## **Defending the Path to a Just and Lasting Peace**

After the third round of peace negotiations, which took place in Rome from 19 to 25 January 2017 between representatives of the GRP (Government of the Republic of the Philippines) and delegates and negotiating peace panels of the NDFP (National Democratic Front of the Philippines), from the Philippines comes bad news.

On February 6, Ariel Arbitrario was arrested, an NDFP peace consultant who had attended the peace talks in Rome.

Ariel Arbitrario was arrested in 2016 on false charges, like so many other political prisoners. Then, at the request of the NDFP, he was released to participate in the peace negotiation. Other thirteen members of the NDFP delegation, which had been arrested for political reasons, have been threatened.

In the month of January 2017, four peasants have been killed by state security forces. On February 3, Anglao Renato, 42, Secretary General of TINDOGA (Tribal Group Association), was killed by three men on board a motorcycle. TINDOGA, organization of Pulangion-Manobo tribe, has consistently opposed the entry of the agro-business plantations in the ancestral land of the Lumad. The TINDOGA members were subsequently accused of supporting the NPA (New People's Army), led by the Communist Party of the Philippines. Political killings, enforced disappearances, illegal arrests and detentions, threats and harassment of residents of the villages have been perpetrated relentlessly by the Armed Forces of the Philippines during the period of the so-called unilateral ceasefire of the GRP.

The 'continued counterinsurgency program Oplan Bayanihan, with the dictate of the US military, with so-called group of "peace and development" of the military, continue to camp in schools and villages. This is why, the residents, victims and their families have repeatedly called on the government to withdraw troops from their communities and stop Oplan Bayanihan. Finally President Rodrigo Duterte verbally announced to end the peace negotiations and through an official notice, the Philippine government cancelled the JASIG agreement, which guarantees the freedom and safety of NDFP consultants in peace negotiations. The President. Duterte's recent decisions on peace talks were influenced by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, controlled by warmongers and saboteurs of peace.

However, we believe that there is still a hope that negotiations can be resumed. We believe that it is necessary to organize initiatives in Italy, in Rome, with fellow Filipinos. We believe that it is necessary to lobby all the way to the Philippine government. Together with fellow Filipinos we ask:

- 1. An immediate investigation of the incident conducted by an independent body,**
- 2. Put an end to the harassment of the NDFP consultants (National Democratic Front Of The Philippines) and attacks against activists and leaders of progressive organizations,**
- 3. The immediate release of Ariel Arbitrario and the withdrawal of the arrests order from the Philippine National Police (PNP) against thirteen other NDFP peace consultants,**
- 4. That the Government of the Philippines continues the formal peace talks with the NDFP to reach global agreements on social and economic reforms, political and constitutional,**
- 5. That the Philippine government honors its commitments under the Global Agreement on the respect for human rights and international humanitarian law (CARHRIHL) and the Joint Agreement on the Common Security and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG) that they were reaffirmed in the first round of formal peace talks in Oslo in August 2016,**
- 6. That the Government of the Philippines to adhere and respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all major international agreements to support them.**

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