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April 22, 2024

Atty. Richard Palpal-Iatoc

Chairperson

Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines

SAAC Building, UP Complex, Commonwealth Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City,

1101 Philippines

Email: ocrpp@chr.gov.ph

Release Gerardo dela Peña on humanitarian grounds

Dear Richard,

The International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines was established in July 2013 at a conference in Quezon City. It is composed of non-Filipino organisations based outside the Philippines.

We write to urge you to advocate for the release of the oldest political prisoner in the Philippines, Gerardo dela Peña, who celebrated his 85th birthday this month. He is now serving his 11th year of imprisonment at the New Bilibid Prisons Maximum Security Compound in Muntinlupa City.

In 2013, a month shy of his 74th birthday, he was arrested for a murder that had taken place in 2001, convicted less than a year later and sentenced to reclusion perpetua, or 20 to 40 years imprisonment. He did not commit this crime.

Coming from a family of land tillers, Dela Peña was a peasant organizer in Bicol. In his younger years as an activist, he was detained and tortured by the police and military under your father's dictatorship in 1982. After his release, he became the provincial chairperson of SELDA (Samahan ng Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto) in Camarines Norte. Despite continued threats to his life, he continued his work in various people's organizations in the region.

Gerardo dela Peña is losing his vision due to cataracts and is hard of hearing.

We urge you to support the release of Gerardo so that he can spend his remaining years with his family.

Sincerely,

Peter Murphy
Chairperson