



Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines

By e-mail only: embassy@philemb.co.uk

FAO: the Ambassador to the UK

Dear Sir

Massacre at Kipadawan City

The Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers was founded in 1930. We are an organisation that provides a forum for the discussion and analysis of law and the legal system both nationally and internationally, from a socialist perspective. We are independent of any political party. Our membership consists of individuals who are lawyers, academics or students and legal workers, and we also have trade union and labour affiliates.

We write in order to register our protest following a massacre which we understand took place at Kipadawan City on 1 April 2016. As you will be aware police and military opened fire on a demonstration of around 5,000 farmers. We understand that at least three protestors were killed, and more than 100 people were injured. We further understand that there were multiple arrests and numerous protestors were put in prison.

We understand that the protest was organised by small scale farmers whose lands have been severely hit by two years of drought caused by the effects of El Nino.

Climatologists are saying that the 2015-2016 El Nino event is currently the worst on record. It is predicted that around 85% of the country will have been affected by drought by the end of April 2016, creating a desperate situation for around 12 million Filipinos whose livelihoods are drawn from agriculture and fisheries.

You will be aware that a recent memorandum by the Philippine Department of Agriculture has stated that 237,000 hectares of agricultural land is suffering drought with an estimated 358,000

metric tonnes of production lost. The Department of Trade and Industry has declared a state of emergency in several drought-stricken provinces and cities in Mindanao.

The current drought is severely affecting provinces all across the Philippines. It is causing economic devastation for thousands of Filipinos. There is growing hunger and poverty in the worst hit areas such as Kidapawan, there is growing hunger and desperation. The major threat currently is food security in the Philippines.

It is vital that the Philippines government take immediate measures both to ensure that no communities in the Philippines are facing starvation, and to introduce long-term measures, such as large scale investment in irrigation systems, against future droughts to protect national food security. We also believe that the state should intervene to stop the export of food and to nationalise under workers' control the monopolised multi-national food companies in the country.

There are – as we are sure you are aware - many other towns and provinces apart from Kidapawan are now facing a desperate situation and other farmers are organising in other provinces to protest their desperate situation. The brutal and bloody response of the authorities to the Kidapawan farmers' protest, should not be the response to the food crisis.

The Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers together with other Filipino organisations both in the UK and the Philippines call for the following:

- We call for immediate and adequate support and relief to the farmers;
- We call for an inquiry into why the government funds provided for such relief last January had not been used for that purpose;
- We call for an explanation of why the state authorities continue to refuse to distribute relief goods to these farmers and their communities, and frustrate the efforts of those seeking to provide such support from their own resources;
- We call for a truly open and independent enquiry into the policing of this event and, most especially, into the use of live ammunition against a crowd composed of both families and young children and into the allegations of torture; and

- We demand that those responsible for the outrageous state actions against protesting farmers be brought to justice and pay for their actions both in crowd dispersal and what happened subsequently.

We are registering our protest in solidarity with farmers and workers in the Philippines. We also support the call by the IADL who have demanded that the authorities adhere to the 1990 United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. As you are aware that expects law enforcement officials to only use arms under stringent conditions and only when strictly necessary. Under the 1985 Philippine Public Assembly Act, the carrying, use and discharge of firearms by members of any law enforcement agency in a public assembly is prohibited. The attack against unarmed civilians also violates the 1998 Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Law (CARHRIHL), to which the Philippine government is a party

On that basis we expect that an independent judicial inquiry into these events will be carried out and those who have acted, as a matter of law, illegally to be brought to justice.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Russell Fraser".

Russell Fraser

Chair, Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers