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Press Statement

### Stop the killings, stop silencing dissent

*This is the statement of a seven-member delegation of the Progressive Alliance (PA) and the Party of European Socialists (PES) that have visited Manila this week to assess the situation and to demonstrate solidarity in support for democracy in the Philippines. The delegation was hosted by Akbayan Party, a member of Progressive Alliance.*

*The delegation includes: **Konstantin Woinoff** (Coordinator, Progressive Alliance), **Giacomo Filibeck** (Deputy Secretary General, Party of European Socialists), **Emilia Töyrä** (Member of Parliament, Sweden), **Thomas O. Melia** (Deputy assistant secretary of state for democracy and human rights in the Barack Obama administration), **Arne Lietz** (Member of European Parliament, S&D Group), **Conny Reuter** (Secretary General, SOLIDAR), and **Ben Maxfield** (Australian Labour Party). The delegation met with political leaders from several parties, leaders of civic organizations and visited communities in Caloocan and Navotas.*

We, the 7-member human rights mission of Progressive Alliance (PA) and the Party of European Socialists (PES), are extremely alarmed at the mounting number of killings under President Rodrigo Duterte's campaign against illegal drugs.

The killings of persons accused, without evidence or trial, of involvement in the drug trade continue unabated even in recent days. Yet the Philippines government continues to deny it to the international community.



The government's campaign is marred with gross human rights violations that we fear are encouraged by the President himself in his public speeches. The killings have preyed on the most vulnerable: the youth and the poor.

We are equally alarmed at the aggressive efforts being undertaken by government to silence dissent of those who stand bravely against the lawless killings. We vehemently condemn the mounting cases of political persecution of the critics of President Duterte's notorious campaign.

The absurd cases against Akbayan Senator Risa Hontiveros, a vocal critic of Duterte's deadly anti-drugs operations, is just the latest example of the government's systematic silencing of dissent in this country.

Such trumped up charges follow similar misogynistic attacks to women critics of the government: from the unjust imprisonment of Senator Leila De Lima, highly regarded legal expert and former justice secretary, on preposterous charges, to the various threats being thrown at the women leaders of both the Supreme Court and the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Catholic Church also becomes a subject of persecution, as it stands by the people, especially the poor who are heavily victimized by the rampant killings.

If the Philippine government is to remain committed to democracy, it should cease all politically-motivated harassment against the peaceful political opposition.

The responsibility falls squarely on President Duterte. If Duterte continues on his bloody campaign against drugs and its aggressive political persecution, he will be responsible in straining trading relationships with the international community, especially in light of the upcoming review of Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP+), a special trading instrument that allows around 6,200 Philippine products to enter the EU duty free. If the human rights standards are



not upheld, then there may be consequences in the Philippines' inclusion in this special trading instrument of the EU.

We therefore reiterate our calls for this government to work for the immediate end of the killings, and to let the UN investigate without compromising conditions. The government must hold accountable police officers guilty of using excessive force in so-called "one-time big-time" operations and address the drug problem with a human rights lens and health-based approach.

We also call on the government to cease its hostile attempts at silencing anyone who dares stand up against the government's drug war. The voice of the people must never be silenced!

We, in the Progressive Alliance and the Party of European Socialists, are committed to closely monitor the situation. For democracy and human rights, the international progressive community unites!