



## **END THE KILLINGS. UPHOLD HUMAN RIGHTS. DEFEND DEMOCRACY**

Today is the International Day of Peace.

Development and peace go together, and this is why the United Nations sees as central to the achievement of sustainable development the drastic reduction of all forms of violence, the promotion of the rule of law, and equal access to justice for all.

This day is especially significant for our country since for the last three months, the country has been wracked by seeming government-sponsored violence and lawlessness, by a war the administration has declared, ostensibly against drugs but which has become a war against poor and marginalized Filipinos. Since the election of President Rodrigo Duterte, over 3000 people, practically all of them alleged drug users from the poor sector of Philippine society, have been subjected to extra-judicial execution either by the police or by vigilante groups. While President Duterte's subordinates invent ever more complex arguments to exonerate him, he has made little attempt to conceal his preference for the extra-judicial execution of suspected drug dealers and users and his impatience with due process. He has also enthusiastically given the green light to vigilantes to shoot pushers and users. And he has made it very clear that he does not believe in rehabilitation, which is the principal policy of all other governments towards users.

Not surprisingly, the president's approach to the drug problem has earned him widespread notoriety internationally, to which he has responded by cursing his critics, including world leaders, and threatening to take the Philippines out of the United Nations.

While the police and vigilante groups go on a killing spree, his rabid followers intimidate those who stand for human rights and due process, branding them as protectors of drug lords.

Adding to the spreading sense of threat to basic rights among the citizenry is the president's determination to bury the remains of dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the Libingan ng mga Bayani. By enshrining the dead dictator as a hero, this move would legitimize his 14-year reign of terror, from



1972 to 1986, with its countless violations of human rights, political rights, and economic and social rights. It would constitute an airbrushing of history.

Democracy is under threat today.

In Sept. 4, the President has put the whole country under a State of Emergency due to lawless violence, indefinitely. Recently, we witnessed the most vivid manifestation of the failure of democracy being the Malacanang-directed ouster of Senator de Lima as head of the Justice Committee. This is the latest move of the Executive to gain total control of Congress. As for the president's stance toward the Supreme Court, the whole country witnessed how he angrily threatened to declare martial law when the Court asserted its authority in the investigation of judges that Malacanang had linked to drugs.

Forty four years ago today, Marcos declared martial law. Today, we face a similar if not a greater threat to our lives, liberties, and democratic rights. These rights, for which so many of our people fought and died for, are enshrined in our constitution. We cannot allow anyone to take those rights away from us.

Thus, on this International Day of Peace, we demand that the Duterte administration put an end to extra-judicial killings. We demand that this administration:

- respect human rights and due process,
- refrain from subverting the separation of powers,
- uphold democratic processes instead of curtailing them.

But above all, we call on our fellow citizens to join us in defense of our rights, our liberties, our democracy. For as the old saying goes, "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is that good women and men should stand by and do nothing."

(Statement of iDefend Coalition, Sept. 21, 2016)

*In Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement (iDEFEND) is a growing broad coalition of non-government organizations (NGOs), people's organizations (POs), individual HRDs, human rights lawyers, religious sector and members of the academe which came together to defend and assert human rights for all.*