

People's Health Movement

Global Secretariat

Health for ALL NOW!!



14 November 2019

The People's Health Movement global condemns the repression and attacks on health workers, human rights defenders, and their families

The People's Health Movement (PHM) global supports the statement of PHM Philippines, and strongly condemns the worsening repression and attacks on human right defenders, health workers and other activists in the Philippines.

We are particularly concerned and condemn the death threats against Dr. Gene Nisperos, his wife, Dr. Julie Caguiat and their children, as well as other unionists and student-leaders in the University of the Philippines (UP). Dr. Nisperos, faculty of the UP College of Medicine and President of the All UP Academic Employees Union-Manila Chapter, has been actively campaigning against the big P456 million slash in the budget of the Philippine General Hospital. And Dr. Caguiat (co-convenor of the Coalition for the People's Right to Health) has raised serious concerns about the health crisis in the country in a press conference. Both are active members of PHM-Philippines and have participated in global PHM activities. Both are health activists who staunchly defend the right of the people for a free, comprehensive, and quality health care.

The two doctors chose to work with and serve the marginalized segments of society -- they helped set up community-based health programs and trained community health workers in communities where health services are inaccessible. As such, both are very vocal on issues that affect the health and lives of the Filipinos. They actively join and even lead protest actions against privatization, lack of access to medicines and health services, corruption in government, budget slash and the poor health situation in the country. The issues and the actions taken by Dr. Nisperos and Dr. Caguiat are legitimate and are within their democratic and political rights.

Dr Nisperos and Dr Caguiat, as well as other activists are currently facing intimidation, harassment and death threats, which are part of the on-going smear and vilification campaign against health rights organizations and threats, harassments and intimidation of health activists and human rights defenders in the Philippines. Within the last 10 days, the police and military have raided at least six offices of legal organizations, civil society groups, and people's organizations in Bacolod City (in the Visayas) and in Metro Manila based on search warrants issued by one judge from another city (Quezon City). Although 32 people have been released, around 15 activists and sectoral leaders remain incarcerated and have been charged with fictitious actions such as illegal possession of firearms and human trafficking. Those still incarcerated include Cora Agovida, a nursing mother and head of Gabriela, the women's organization, Michael Tan bartolome, her husband, and Anne Kreuger, a journalist of an alternative media outfit, Altermidya.

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According to reports, labor leader and former political prisoner Reynaldo Malaborbor, 64, was shot by unidentified gunmen in front of his house at Karapatan Subdivision in Cabuyao, Laguna on Monday evening, November 4. He was a leader of labor alliance group Alyansa ng mga Manggagawa sa Probinsya ng Laguna (ALMAPILA). Honey Mae 'Hanimay' Suazo, former Karapatan Southern Mindanao Secretary General, is missing since she left their home last November 2 to visit her departed loved ones in Panabo, Davao del Norte. She was last seen onboard a motorcycle on her way home. KARAPATAN is a nationwide human rights organization.

Many of those under threat have had to take extraordinary steps to safeguard their own lives and those of their families. It is unacceptable that the police and military, which should be protecting the people especially those responsible for the health of the people, are those initiating and carrying out these heinous acts.

The People's Health Movement strongly condemns these actions, and stands in support of Dr. Nisperos and Dr. Caguiat and other targeted health rights organizations, activists, and advocates as they fight for the people's right to health and serve the health needs of the people.

Sulakshana Nandi and Fran Baum (Co-chairs) and Dr T Sundararaman (global coordinator)
On behalf of People's Health Movement Global Steering Council