



Unity Statement

Only in Defiance and Resistance can We Regain Our Humanity

We come from different places, from the urban centers as well as from the countryside. We belong to different classes, genders, sectors, groups, and tribes. In our lives, we each experience different forms and varying intensities of violations of our human rights. What *is* common to all of us are the perpetrators of these gross violations of our human rights - State security forces and those working under their command.

We have suffered pain, suffocating paralysis; and, for others, desperation and near-insanity. We have witnessed how bullets pierced the bodies and skulls of our loved ones, their cadavers left on the streets, covered with corrugated cartons that label them as drug addicts or drug pushers who should not be imitated. Others still await decent housing years after being ravaged by disasters like Typhoon Yolanda. Some also face demolitions in their communities. There are others who have been abducted just because their faces approximated a standard terrorist profile. Some were not able to bury their dead – who were killed as collateral damage in the Marawi siege – or had only been able to afford them with Islamic final rites. Davao City is enjoying peace, but one that only comes from a cemetery. Dissent is taboo.

Our communities are shattered, our families live in fear, and our children traumatized. Collectively, our only crime is that we are poor.

The killing of our organizations' leaders and members are justified with the lame excuse that they were linked to drugs, either as pushers or drug addicts and drug pushers themselves. This justification of their killings has trivialized and depoliticised our struggle and legitimate issues.



Embedded in these narratives on the systematic assault on our lives are also heroic narratives of how we have managed to survive using our individual skills and collective resources. Through our institutions, networks, programs and services, we were able to bury our dead, and provide psychosocial services to those who experienced individual and collective trauma; we were also able to document human rights violations, file the appropriate charges in courts against the perpetrators, secure witnesses and victims through sanctuaries, and pursue advocacy at the national and international levels. We also joined the growing number of protests against the inhuman treatment accorded to us, our kin and our countrymen and women.

The outpouring of support among our ranks has once again reaffirmed the nurtured value of helping and working together to defend our human rights however perilous the political situation. It is a clear manifestation that regionalist tendencies can be surmounted. Despite the divide and rule tactics of the present regime, the spirit of collectivism and solidarity is alive. It draws strength from our belief in the basic idea that “the worth of life, human and non-human existence, is the fountain-head for all ideals and values that follow” (UN Centre for Human Rights, 1994). It draws its unwavering inspiration from our collective experiences as a people who fought – and are once again fighting the Marcos dictatorship.

But more than the institutionalized and sustained helping processes, it is a growing testament of our collective rejection of President Duterte’s tyrannical rule against the Filipino people. He has mangled the long-cherished practice of separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and the judiciary. He is undermining constitutional bodies such as the Office of the Ombudsman, Commission of Human Rights (CHR), Commission on Audit (COA), and is threatening to abolish them. He continues to intimidate with the declaration of martial law.



We perform different roles in society through our respective professions that demand much of our time. Yet, we *find* time for this conference to collectively address these pressing problems confronting us all. It is our smoldering defiance against a President whose penchant for violence is sickening and whose rule essentially anti-poor. It is a reaffirmation that even in the darkest times, we Filipinos have not lost our humanity and solidarity. It is a reaffirmation that Filipino lives matter.

History has taught us that tyrants are fleeting leaders. They come and go. Let us transform our individual anger into a collective defiance and in the process, a national people's resistance against Pres. Duterte's tyrannical rule. It is only in the performance and actualization of this historic task of defiance and resistance can we regain our humanity.

BREAK THE CULTURE OF FEAR AND SILENCE!

END THE CULTURE OF IMPUNITY!

JUSTICE AND REPARATION TO EJK VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES!

THWART ANY AND ALL ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH A DICTATORSHIP!

RESPECT THE RULE OF LAW!

IMMEDIATELY LIFT MARTIAL LAW IN MINDANAO!

UPHOLD HUMAN RIGHTS AT ALL COST!

Signed by more than 70 participants from Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao during the National Conference on "Creating Innovations through Collaborative Action Research and Community Dialogue" held last September 25-26, 2018 at the University of the Philippines College of Social Work and Community Development.