



PHILIPPINE ECUMENICAL PEACE PLATFORM

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“Keep the Doors of the GRP-NDFP Peace Talks Open”

The Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) is saddened and alarmed over President Rodrigo Duterte's signing of Proclamation No. 360, formally terminating the peace talks with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). Before the Proclamation, Sec. Jesus Dureza of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) released a statement cancelling all planned meetings with the NDFP and the reason stated for the cancellation was due to "...recent tragic and violent incidents" committed by the rebels. The PEPP believes that the termination of peace negotiations is more tragic.

As church people, we find nothing more tragic than the refusal of warring parties to continue to open the doors for dialogue that can result to further escalation of violence. President Duterte stated that he does not want talk to the NDFP especially after an ambush by the New People's Army (NPA) has resulted in the death of an infant. The NDFP on the other hand have accused the military of attacking communities suspected of supporting the NPA. The war is intensifying, and it can only get worse.

We have always maintained that outstanding and delicate issues should be resolved through principled dialogue over the negotiating table. Both the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the NDFP have made pronouncements that great strides towards peace have been made in the several formal rounds of talks between the two parties under the Duterte Administration and facilitated by the Royal Norwegian Government (RNG). These positive results from the talks should be pursued and not abandoned. The roots of the armed conflict should be addressed and this could be achieved through the negotiations.

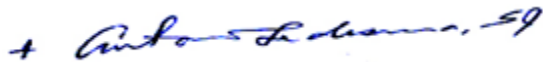
Furthermore, both parties have already signed agreements that will address incidents of violence. The Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) and the supplementary agreement to revive and strengthen the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) are feasible instruments to use in times like

these. Both parties have also shown a sincere willingness to resolve this conflict that has been ongoing for close to 50 years through peace talks. There were already advances in the negotiations for the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms (CASER) and a possible ceasefire agreement.

We call on President Duterte to rescind Proclamation 360 and to both the GRP and the NDFP to stay the course and resume the peace talks, for a better "...future awaits those who seek peace" (Psalms 37:37). It is in this spirit that we also appeal to the government to reconsider its plan to categorize the NPA as a terrorist organization as this will incite more violence and virtually close the door to peace.

We enjoin all peace-loving Filipinos to continually pray and tirelessly work for peace. May the blessing of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, who came into the world as a vulnerable child, remind us that our calling as Christians is to pursue peace both in our individual lives and in the life of the nation.

Issued and signed on this day, 24th November 2017.



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****The PEPP is a platform for 5 church institutions/groups, namely, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP), Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) and the Ecumenical Bishops' Forum (EBF), in working for a just and enduring peace by supporting the peace process between the GRP-NDFP.***

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