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## PFL HOLDS CONSULTATION ON ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE, WCC ADOPTS ECOLOGICAL DEBT STATEMENT



National Consultation on Ecological Justice and Ecological Debt: Perspective from the Philippines  
August 13, 2009 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. • Bishop La Verne D. Mercado Ecumenical Center  
National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 879 EDSA, West Triangle, 1104 Quezon City

We need to nurture an "ecospirituality" that redeems human belongingness to nature while challenging traditional beliefs that place humans above and apart from creation. This was the prevailing perspective among church people, people's organisations and environmental groups that met to exchange views on the concept of ecological justice and ecological debt in the context of Philippine environmental problems.

The national consultation, held on August 13 in Quezon City, was jointly organised by the international faith-based Peace for Life (Pfl) and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). It was specifically convened as a Philippine contribution to the study process initiated by the World Council of Churches (WCC) project on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology on a proposed WCC statement on ecological justice and ecological debt.

The participants expressed agreement with the principles set out in the proposed WCC statement and, in its own

closing statement declared:

"We reject the notion of nature as 'resource'- inferior to and separates from human, an inert object to be subdued, exploited, abused. We renounce the ideology of neoliberal globalization that transforms everything and everyone into a commodity for sale at a price."

The statement "on eco-justice and ecological debt" was adopted by the WCC Central Committee during its September meeting in Geneva. It argues that Christians have a deep moral obligation to promote ecological justice by addressing our debts to peoples most affected by ecological destruction and to the earth itself. It points out that ecological debt is owed primarily by industrialized countries in the North to countries of the South on account of historical and current resource-plundering, environmental degradation and the dumping of greenhouse gases and toxic wastes.

In its call for action the statement urges WCC member

churches "to intervene with their governments to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Additionally the statement calls upon the international community to ensure the transfer of financial resources to countries of the south to refrain from oil drilling in fragile environments. Further on, the statement demands the cancellation of the illegitimate financial debts of the southern countries, especially for the poorest nations as part of social and ecological compensation.

The participants to the Philippine consultation agreed to continue and build on the NCCP's environmental ministry, renewing it with awareness-building efforts on the concept of ecological justice and the cultivation of an ecospirituality. The group identified several courses of action to this end, including a broad national gathering that would map out a unified action plan on ecological debt.

*Source: Pfl and WCC*

## WARC CALLS ON CHRISTIANS: RESIST EMPIRE

Strong emphasis was laid on action by Christians to fight the injustices of the global economy and to seize the opportunity presented by the near-collapse of its financial system to change world institutions, in a message of an international conference convened by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) on September 3-7 in Johannesburg, South Africa..

"We are faced with a crisis that is far more than an economic or financial crisis. It is a spiritual crisis of a civilizational model that is economically unjust; ecologically unsustainable, structurally violent and socially degrading of human dignity," said the message from the Global Dialogue on the Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth.

"We recognized that the present global economic crisis has exposed the inadequacy of the system to meet the needs of the people across the globe. The crisis has unmasked the failure of the global economic system to

nurture sustainable Earth communities," said the message.

It highlights one of the strongest themes throughout the conference, that of empire, "an all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while imperiously excluding even sacrificing humanity and exploiting creation". The message also underlined, "The call on the churches in the present context is therefore to resist the life-defeating and death-dealing blows of the economics of empire and to present alternative economies that have their basis in the promise of life in its fullness for all."

In her presentation on the Peace for Life's perspectives and work on empire, Carmencita Karagdag said the Accra Confession's empire discourse was ground-breaking, as it was based on a mandate from people and victims of globalization. Using the empire lens

she stressed "is the only way to make sense of the current world disorder." Still, she warned, empires have thrived due to religious sanctification and the complicity of the church.

Peace for Life (PfL) hosted WARC's theological consultation on empire in Manila in 2006, which came out with one of the sharpest theological critiques of empire.

The Global Dialogue in Johannesburg brought together nearly 60 high-profile theologians and church officials, mainly from the WARC, which represents 214 Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed and United churches in 107 countries, and 75 million congregants. For four days they unpacked the implications of WARC's adoption of the Accra Confession at its 24th General Council in 2004 in Accra, Ghana. The Johannesburg message is expected to be transmitted to the next General Council to be held in 2010 in Grand Rapids, USA.

*Source: Ecumenical News International and WARC*

## NEGOTIATION FOR US-COLOMBIA MILITARY BASES ASSAILED

In a joint petition to US President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, several solidarity organizations spearheaded by Mingas-FTA condemned a proposed US agreement with Colombia for US military access to seven military bases in Colombia.

"Coming on the heels of the coup d'état in Honduras, carried out by military officers with close links to the Pentagon, and of the reactivation of the US Fourth Fleet in the Caribbean, the agreement for use of military bases is no minor matter: it would signify

a dangerous expansion of U.S. military activity in Latin America, and has already escalated tensions in the region", says the letter. The agreement would deploy 1,400 US service men in Colombia, which according to the letter, can only intensify US military intervention in the Colombian conflict and threaten peace and security in the whole region.

Peace for Life (PfL) Coordinator Carmencita Karagdag, who is among the signatories to the petition, said that this is a major concern for PFL which only in March this

year convened its Second People's Forum in Colombia on the theme "Without Fear of Empire: Global People's Resistance." Its Forum Declaration asserted, "The U.S. is now making a desperate and brutal assault on the people of Colombia, in order to secure empire's traditional hold over all the Americas and, by extension, over the globe. Empire is hungry for the resources of Colombia."

Mingas-FTA is a group of individuals from across the United States, Canada and Colombia who are concerned with promoting sovereignty, strength-



Fellowship of Reconciliation Colombia Program (FOR)

ening democracy and improving labor conditions in Colombia.

On the same score, a delegation from the Colombians for Peace, including PFL partner Lilia Solano of the Proyecto Justicia y Vida, met with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on August 7 expressing concerns about the impact of US plans for increased mili-

tary intervention in the region. In the dialogue Chavez vowed, "The absence of war is one of the great aspirations of my life. We must avoid that our children and the following generations inherit a war."

In another Open Letter addressed to Secretary Clinton, over a hundred leaders of faith-based groups, community organizations and aca-

demics led by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), slammed the US plan to establish the new military facility in Colombia. According to the Open Letter, "This base would feed a failed drug policy, support an abusive army, and reinforce a tragic history of US military intervention in the region." Colombia is the fifth country in the score of the biggest countries with those the USA has military cooperation, behind only Israel, Iraq, Egypt and Afghanistan.

Also campaigning against the bases in Colombia is the No Bases! Network, an alliance which PFL has recently joined. Among its leaders and founding members is Helga Serrano of YMCA Ecuador, who is a member of the PFL Continuation Committee.

*Source: No Bases! Network and Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR)*

## CHURCH DELEGATION DEMANDS RETURN TO DEMOCRACY IN HONDURAS

An international ecumenical team that visited Honduras on behalf of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) on August 1-6, 2009 has encouraged the churches in Honduras to "accompany the people in their search for peace with justice and the re-establishment of democracy". The United Church of Canada (UCC), together with CLAI and other ecumenical partners, has joined calls for the reinstatement of Zelaya as the legitimate president of Honduras.

Honduras President Manuel Zelaya was forced out of the country at gunpoint following a coup on June 28 by military and civilian sectors. He sneaked back into Honduras on September 21 and remains holed up in the Brazilian embassy. The de facto leaders in Honduras then threatened to close Brazil's embassy, a threat that was later with-



AP - Honduras' ousted President Manuel Zelaya waves to supporters from inside Brazil's embassy in Tegucigalpa

drawn following protests from the international community.

Riot police ringed supporters of Zelaya who gathered for a large-scale protest called by the ousted president on September 28 to mark the three-month anniversary of the coup. On the eve of the mass action, the government imposed severe restrictions, sparking a standoff and escalating the political crisis. Al-

ready state repression since the coup has claimed several lives and hundreds of people have been thrown into prison and tortured. A recent attack on the Brazilian Embassy resulted in the death of a 24-year old woman.

Meanwhile, the Committee of Fast for Honduras has called on the League of People's Struggle and its members around the globe to intensify

international protests and public fasts against state terror in Honduras on October 5, the 100<sup>th</sup> day of resistance against the coup. The worldwide fast for Honduras, which began on September 15, was described by its proponents as a symbolic way to recognize and support the Hondurans in the sacrifices they make in struggling for the return of the constitutional order, and of peace and jus-

tice. Public fasts have been organized by groups in several countries, including USA, Canada, El Salvador, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Chile, Guatemala, Cuba Nicaragua, Colombia, France, Spain and Sweden.

Human rights defender Andrés Pavón, president of the Human Rights Committee in Honduras, reported that "the Honduran armed forces and police are committing

collective genocide."

"We came to lodge a writ before the court so that after the coup in Honduras, they cannot say that they were unaware of the practice of collective genocide that the armed forces and the police are carrying out," the lawyer affirmed.

*Source: WCC and ILPS*

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## WCC CALLS TO FREEZE AND DISMANTLE ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS, UCC CALLS FOR END TO ISRAELI ILLEGAL OCCUPATION

The World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee called on the Israeli government to freeze and begin to dismantle settlements in occupied Palestinian territories. It also encouraged a commitment to non-violence and peace negotiations, and reiterated the need for an international boycott of prod-

mended that United Church Conferences, presbyteries, congregations, and community ministries immediately enter into consultation, dialogue, study, and prayer, and then undertake appropriate action toward ending the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory. It also asked these bodies to enter into conversa-

first step towards the dismantlement of all settlements". The committee considered some 200 settlements with more than 450,000 settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories to be "illegal, unjust, incompatible with peace and antithetical to the legitimate interests of the state of Israel".



*A bulldozer uprooting olive trees from land near the western border of the West Bank, apparently to make room for an Israeli settlement. Photo: E.A.P.P.I*

ucts and services from settlements.

On the same note, the United Church of Canada (UCC), meeting in Kelowna, British Columbia for its 40<sup>th</sup> General Council adopted on August 13 a multi-faceted resolution on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. A partner of Peace for Life, UCC has regularly invited PFL among its global partners to its general council meetings.

With a sense of urgency, the General Council recom-

mended that United Church Conferences, presbyteries, congregations, and community ministries immediately enter into consultation, dialogue, study, and prayer, and then undertake appropriate action toward ending the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory. It also asked these bodies to enter into conversa-

tion as to how to move the two peoples toward reconciliation, including, but not limited to, economic boycott. In its "Statement on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" passed in Geneva, Switzerland, at the end of its August 26 to September 2 meeting, the WCC Central Committee called "upon the government of Israel to urgently implement an open-ended freeze in good-faith on all settlement construction and expansion as a

Even as "Israel's own right to exist in security evokes sympathy and solidarity around the world", the committee states, "its policies of expansion and annexation generate dismay or hostility". For the committee there is a clear distinction to be made "between the legitimate interests of the state of Israel and its illegal settlements".

The statement "reiterates the need for an international boycott of settlement products and services". WCC member churches "must not be complicit in illegal activities on occupied territory" and therefore should "practice morally responsible investment in order to influence businesses linked to the Israeli occupation and its illegal settlements", the statement says.

*Source WCC and UCC*

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## NEPALESE CHURCH LEADER DECRIES LACK OF PROGRESS IN PEACE PROCESS



*K.B. Rokaya*

In an interview conducted by the Union of Catholic Asian News (UCAN) in August, Dr. K. B. Rokaya, general secretary of the National Council of Churches (NCC) in Nepal and vice president of the Interreligious Council Nepal (ICN), decried the lack of progress in the peace process in Nepal.

According to Dr Rokaya, "The peace process hasn't been moving ahead as it should. The implementation of all the peace accords and agreements signed between the Maoists and the government has been weak. All parties have not abided by the pacts (and so) the peace process is in peril".

"Recent political developments, the Maoists' threat to go back to war, the rise of several small armed outfits in

the country and the inability of the Constituent Assembly to meet are undermining the process", said the church leader.

In 2007, he was appointed by the Constitutional Council of Nepal as a member of the National Human Rights Commission in 2007, the highest national office a Christian has held in Hindu-majority Nepal. When the Nepali government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) were in conflict, Rokaya helped in conflict resolution and peace building. This work led to his nomination as a member of the Government-Maoist Ceasefire Code of Conduct National Monitoring Committee in 2006.

In May 2008 Christians joined majority Hindus and others in celebrating the emergence of Nepal as a republic after the Constituent Assembly voted overwhelmingly to abolish the Himalayan country's 239-year old Hindu monarchy. The Maoists, who until 2006 fought a decade-long war and who led mass protests that eventually brought down the monarchy, form the single largest party in the assembly.

After 10 years of armed insurgency, the Maoists signed an accord with the government

in 2006 and joined mainstream politics. That same year the government declared Nepal, until then the world's only officially Hindu nation, secular.

It was in these times of turmoil and rapid political changes that Peace for Life (PFL) initiated in May 2006 an International Solidarity Mission for Peace in Nepal, with the NCC in Nepal and the ICN as local hosts. The international delegation to Nepal included PFL leaders from different parts of the world as well as representatives from the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism and the National Council of Churches in India.

In its communiqué, the PFL-led mission concluded that while the people of Nepal have won the first round of their struggle to attain lasting peace, "building genuine peace with justice and freedom demands sustained vigilance by the people's movement and continuous witness by the faith community and the international solidarity movement to ensure that the peace process is not hijacked by interests other than those of the Nepali people."

*Source: UCAN and PFL*

## MIDEAST CHURCHES SLAM CHRISTIAN ZIONISM

Christian leaders in the Middle East and the Al-Quds (occupied East Jerusalem) denounced so-called Christian Zionism as a heretic movement whose ideas and ideals are incompatible with authentic Christian teachings.

Munib Younan, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, said Christian Zionism "has nothing to do with true Christian teachings and ideals. It is

actually a heresy." Younan co-signed the landmark Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism along with leaders of seven other major churches in the Middles East.

Younan was part of a consortium of Palestinian church leaders and local organizations which hosted Peace for Life's Peace Pilgrimage and Solidarity Mission to Palestine-Israel in June 2007.

"[It's a] false teaching that corrupts the biblical message of love, justice and reconciliation," says the Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism. Signatories include Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Archbishop Swerios Malki Mourad of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate and Bishop Riah Abu el Assal head of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East.

Bishop Younan says their declaration is to communicate certain messages to all those concerned with what happens in the occupied lands, including Christian Zionists themselves. "To the Americans and the world at large, we would like to say that the Christians of Palestine stand firmly with their people for freedom and justice and deliverance from the Israeli occupation." In the declaration, the eight church leaders reiterate opposition to alliance between Christian Zionists and the right-wing Israeli government.

They warned that the alliance would inevitably lead to unending cycles of violence all over the Middle East. Organized Christian Zionism has long been rooted and mobilized in the US. American Evangelicals, who are usually linked to the Christian Zionism movement, believe they have a biblical and moral obligation to support and protect Israel because it is "God's foreign policy".

Christian Zionism, also referred to as Evangelical Zionism, teaches that the creation of Israel on the rubbles of

Palestine in 1948 was a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. Its doctrine claims that Israel is an important catalyst in the second coming of Jesus Christ and that the Israeli-Arab conflict is a battle between good and evil that will play a pivotal role in this. It claims that Jesus can't return until certain events occur, including building their alleged temple. According to Christian Zionism, the final battle of Armageddon will then precipitate the second coming of Christ.

*Source: Khalid Amayreh, IOL Correspondent*

## EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLING OF FILIPINO PRIEST DENOUNCED



*Photo from Arkibong Bayan*

Philippine religious and human rights groups have denounced the brutal murder on September 6 of Fr. Cecilio Lucero, the first Catholic priest to have fallen victim to political slayings since Martial Law in the 70s and 80s. His assassination raised to 26 the number of clergy and church people, mostly from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, who have been victims of extra-judicial killings since Arroyo came to power in 2002.

Lucero, who was the chairman of the Committee on Human Rights and also of the Task Force Peace and Order of the Diocese of Catarman in

Samar Island, was ambushed and killed by some 30 armed men. Police recovered 35 pieces of empty shells and one live ammunition for an armalite rifle from the crime scene. A day before Lucero's murder, peasant leader Romulo Mendoba was shot dead by motorcycle-riding men also in Samar.

In a widely circulated statement, the Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF) honored Lucero, "Like many Church martyrs before him, Father Lucero was unflinching in his prophetic role as a man of the cloth. He actively announced and denounced the evils in his midst particularly the human

rights violations in Samar. His family, friends and colleagues believe that this unwavering advocacy for human rights was the main reason why he was ambushed."

A partner of Peace for Life (PFL), EBF is a fellowship of bishops from the Roman Catholic Church, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, United Methodist Church and Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

Various groups view the murder of Lucero as part of a pattern of extra-judicial killings in Eastern Visayas, one of the most impoverished and

Various groups view the murder of Lucero as part of a pattern of extra-judicial killings in Eastern Visayas, one of the most impoverished and conflict-ridden areas in central Philippines. "The death that Fr. Lucero was meted out with is the example of how much evil has incarnated in our midst," said Fr. Jose Dizon, convenor of the National Clergy Discernment Group.

In a statement, the group stressed that the manner of killing of Lucero shows "the vicious nature and the loathsome impunity our present dispensation regard people with cause-oriented commit-

ments and defenders of human rights."

Nardy Sabino, secretary general of the Promotion of Church People's Response (PCPR), also condemned the murder, "The killing of Father Lucero is an attack on the Christian faith and humanity that aspire for freedom, genuine peace and justice. Most martyrs of the Church who actively denounced the abuses of government officials and military forces received series of death threats and were tagged as communists or NPA supporters by the military." Lucero was a member of PCPR.

On October 9 PFL will hold commemorative rites in honor Bishop Alberto Ramento, the highest-ranking man of the cloth to fall in the hands of political assassins and a PFL founder. Also to be remembered are other church martyrs including Lucero.

Source: PFL



Holding a picket rally and lighting candles: Justice for murdered priest, Fr. Cecilio Lucero Quezon City, September 10, 2009

## ECOT AND PARTNERS HIT WORLD TOURISM DAY

On the occasion of this year's World Tourism Day on September 27, the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT), together with endorsing organizations including Peace for Life (PFL), released a joint statement questioning the theme chosen by the UN World Tourism Organization this year, namely, 'Tourism celebrating diversity'.

According to ECOT Director Caesar d' Mello, the theme "raises many questions despite its superficial truth. Obviously, to thrive tourism needs diversity but the short- and long-term costs arising from its commercial exploitation have to be faced seriously and honestly".

Tourism and the adverse effects of economic globalization were highlighted in the joint statement which said, "Therefore tourism, as one of the manifestations of globalisation, offers an interesting paradox. While globalised tourism can be seen as contributing to the homogenisation of cultures, it offers tourists experiences of 'authenticity' witnessed in tourism destinations. Some indigenous traditions now

forgotten are sometimes revived and performed for the sake of tourists in the quest for a good photograph".

The statement assailed ecotourism's encroachment on the rights of the indigenous peoples. It pointed out, "As more and more people become aware of the need to take care of and protect our planet, the tourism industry has seen the potential of the 'ecotourism' trend to earn more income. But the paradox once again lies in that many 'eco' tourism spots encroach upon indigenous peoples' territories and impinge on their rights".

Tourism is a vehicle that enables visitors to be exposed to the "vast variety in natural settings". However, according to the statement, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary to commemorate World Tourism Day draws attention to the more positive (and utopian?) side of tourism, while choosing to ignore some troubling dimensions of modern tourism. It added, "Economically, the tourism industry has benefited from diversity having marketed it to promote travel and tourism products. Do host communi-

ties in tourism destinations have reason to celebrate as well after 30 years of World Tourism Day?"

The ECOT-initiated statement proposes as alternative to mass tourism "community-based tourism, where local communities manage the projects, keep them on a small scale and share the profits on an equitable basis." It warned however that we should be wary of alternative tourism also being subsumed in the jargon of tourism industry advertising, and called for an ethos that is best suited to developing a tourism respecting and celebrating diversity.

In October last year, the Thailand-based ECOT co-sponsored with PFL a national consultation on "Tourism in the Philippines: a View from the Underside". Its unity statement gave the verdict that "the dire economic and social conditions of the people today are caused by, among other reasons, decades of development aggression, a part of which is so called tourism development".

Source: PFL

## UNITED METHODISTS ACCOMPANY FILIPINA TORTURE VICTIM



Church leaders from the United Methodist California-Nevada Conference participating in the "Pastoral and Solidarity Visit to the Philippines," accompanied torture victim Melissa Roxas, an American citizen, in returning to the Philippines last July 19 to testify against military officials who allegedly abducted and tortured her during her visit to the Philippines.

Ms. Roxas, a Filipino-American artist and writer and member of Bayan-USA from Los Angeles, was abducted and tortured with two others by members of the Philippine Armed Forces in May 2007, according to her affidavit filed in court for her petition for writ of amparo, a legal instrument issued by the Supreme Court to protect people whose rights have been violated by government activities or acts of omission.

A military spokesperson denied that Ms. Roxas was abducted and tortured, despite initial findings by the Commission on Human Rights that her account was credible. Lately, the military through Retired Army General Jovito Palparan, known as "The Butcher" for the trail of extrajudicial killings he left behind in the regions where he was assigned, produced pictures of Roxas purportedly in a camp of the New People's Army which has been engaged in armed struggle for the past 40 years.

Leila de Lima, the chairperson of the CHR was unfazed. She said at a hearing on the case that "freedom from torture is a nonderogable right"- that even if Ms. Roxas were a communist guerilla, she should not have been tortured. "Even prisoners of war should not be tortured," Ms.

De Lima said.

The Philippines is a signatory to the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. This emphasis on freedom from torture as a non-derogable right is particularly significant because of the state's justification of the use of torture in the case of Roxas.

On August 26, a decision was rendered by the Court of Appeals (CA) granting petitioner a *writ of amparo*, affirming the truth of Roxas' claim that she was indeed abducted and tortured. The decision repudiated the Arroyo government's claim that the incident was "stage-managed" or "self-inflicted". The CA also granted the writ of habeas data for Roxas, which prohibits the government and its agents from further disseminating videos and other information that aim to implicate Roxas.

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines, a founder of Peace for Life and host of the Methodist delegation, welcomed the decision of the CA as a partial victory for the victims of torture and human rights violations.

*Source: Bulatlat*

## CHURCH OF SCOTLAND WELCOMES DECISION TO RELEASE LOCKERBIE BOMBER

The (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland has said it fully supports a decision taken by the Scottish Government on Aug. 20 to release the convicted Lockerbie bomber, Abdul Baset Ali al-Megrahi, on compassionate grounds.

"This decision has sent a

message to the world about what it is to be Scottish," the Rev. Ian Galloway, convenor of the Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland, said in a statement. "We are defined as a nation by how we treat those who have chosen to hurt us. Do we choose mercy even when they

did not choose mercy?"

Within minutes of the decision by the Scottish government, the United States expressed deep regret and disappointment that its pleas were ignored not to free the dying man, a former Libyan intelligence officer, convicted of the

Lockerbie bombing. Al-Megrahi is in the final stages of prostate cancer.

On Jan. 31, 2001, Megrahi was sentenced to 27 years for the murder of 270 people when Pan Am Flight 103 blew up in the air over the southern Scottish town of Lockerbie on Dec. 21, 1988.

Meanwhile, United Nations international observer at the Lockerbie Trial in the Netherlands, Dr. Hans Koechler, said in an interview that the decision by Scotland's Justice Secretary, was in conformity with Scottish law and did not violate any international obli-

gation of the United Kingdom. As to the abrupt termination, however, of the appeal by Al-Megrahi, he raised some issues.

He also said, "As matters stand in Scotland, there may be no further criminal proceedings or investigations. However, establishing the truth about the midair explosion of an airliner and identifying the perpetrators is in the supreme public interest of any polity that is built on the rule of law".

"The legitimacy of any state is closely connected to a state's willingness and ability to in-

vestigate and prosecute *sine ira et studio* each and every incident such as that which caused the death of 270 innocent people on the PanAm plane and in Lockerbie", Koechler said.

Koechler, who is President of the International Progress Organization, was a resource person at Peace for Life's Second People's Forum in Colombia in March 2009.

*Source: Ecumenical News International and I.P.O. Information Service*

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## PHILIPPINE SOLIDARITY GROUPS COMMEMORATE MONCADA AND PAY TRIBUTE TO CUBAN FIVE



The 56<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of what is now known as the Moncada Attack was celebrated by various Philippine-Cuban solidarity groups, including Peace for Life, by paying tribute to the Cuban Five who have been languishing in US jails for a decade for allegedly committing espionage conspiracy against the United States and other related charges. The activity, which was also attended by members of the diplomatic community, was held on July 29 in Quezon City.

The Moncada Attack is commonly viewed as the "official" start of the Cuban Revolution. This was the date when some 160 armed anti-dictatorship fighters led by brothers Fidel and Raul Castro attacked the Moncada Barracks in Santiago

de Cuba, as well as the barracks in Bayamo, Granma. They were fighting the dictatorship of Gen. Fulgencio Batista, who had staged a coup on March 10, 1952, amid a hotly contested presidential election.

"Throughout these 56 years that we celebrate today, since the attack on the Moncada Garrison on July 26, 1953, and in the 50 years (since the) revolution, Cuba has demonstrated its capacity (for) resistance, solidarity and organization," said Cuban Ambassador to the Philippines Jorge Rey Jimenez in his speech during the activity at On June 15, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review the case of the Cuban Five who say they did not receive a fair trial because of strong anti-

Castro sentiment in Miami. The justices left in place the convictions of the so-called "Cuban Five," despite calls from Nobel Prize winners and international legal groups to review the case.

Meanwhile the Philippine-Cuba Friendship Association (AMISTAD) General Secretary and Head of Free the Cuban Five Committee, Norma Binas, held a protest picket at the US Embassy in the morning of September 12, 2009 in connection with the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the imprisonment of the Cuban 5. A signed petition addressed to President Obama was delivered to the US Ambassador.

*Source: Bulatlat.com*

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