

Minister
of Foreign Affairs



Ministre
des Affaires étrangères

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0G2

Ms. Bern Jagunos
The United Church of Canada
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JAN 23 2008

JAN 25 2008

Dear Ms. Jagunos:

Thank you for your letter of October 30, 2007, written on behalf of the members of the Stop the Killings Network (Canada), concerning extrajudicial killings in the Philippines. I regret the delay in replying to you.

I was pleased to note reference in your letter to the report of UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions, Mr. Philip Alston. Officials from the Embassy of Canada to the Philippines also followed Mr. Alston's work and were present when he shared his preliminary findings. Similarly, our officials in Manila engaged with a Needs Assessment Mission sent by the European Union to identify how technical assistance could be most useful.

The protection and promotion of human rights is a key issue frequently raised within our bilateral relations with the Philippines. Canada's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Leonard J. Edwards, met with Philippines' Foreign Affairs Secretary, His Excellency Alberto Romulo, on the margins of the ASEAN Regional Forum Post Ministerial Conference in July 2007, to urge continued efforts to address extrajudicial killings. I relayed a similar message to Secretary Romulo at the Asia Pacific Economic Conference held in September 2007. This message was reiterated when officials of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada met with counterparts from the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs in November 2007. This exchange provided an opportunity to offer Canada's support for implementing measures that safeguard human rights and to press for progress on individual cases in the Philippines.

The Canadian government is encouraged by the active role taken by the Supreme Court of the Philippines. Embassy officials met with members of the judiciary and the bar to discuss the Writ of Amparo, recently developed by the Supreme Court as legal remedy to address disappearances. Canada is aware of the importance of this Writ and of the need to voice Canadian support at the official level for this Writ.

The Ambassador of Canada to the Philippines, Mr. Robert Desjardins, met with the Chief Justice of the Philippines Supreme Court, Reynato Puno, and relayed his support to the development of the "National Consultative Summit on Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances," organized by the Supreme Court in July 2007. While in Manila,

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in October 2006, Canada's Chief Justice, the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, helped drive home timely and relevant messages about the importance of human rights, democracy, indigenous people's rights, and the rule of law.

Canada encourages all Canadian companies active in the Philippines to adhere to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development guidelines on corporate social responsibility. The Canadian Embassy in Manila is in frequent contact with mining companies active in various regions of the Philippines. The Embassy continues to work with these companies, in concert with Canadian aboriginal communities, to deliver capacity-building programs aimed at providing indigenous populations in these regions with an improved quality of life.

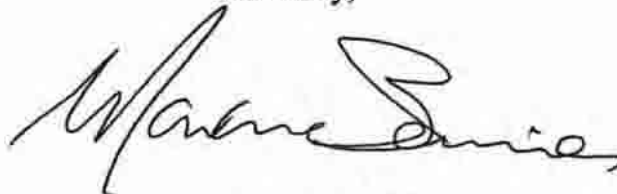
In terms of Canada's international development assistance to the Philippines, one of the objectives of this assistance is to foster efficient, responsive, transparent and accountable governance at all levels. One active Canadian International Development Agency project, which directly responds to the problem of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines, is the Justice Reform Initiatives Support Project. Through this project, Canada is supporting the implementation of the Supreme Court of the Philippines' Action Program for Judicial Reform which aims to make the justice system work more efficiently and, in turn, contributes to improving human rights.

Canada welcomes the Stop the Killings Network's interest in participating in the preparations for the review of the Philippines before the Human Rights Council in April 2008. Civil society may contribute to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by submitting information to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The information received will be taken into consideration by the Council in the review. We would encourage you to submit your input directly to the OHCHR and we would welcome a copy of your submission. For more information on the participation of civil society organizations in the UPR process, please visit the website of the OHCHR at www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/upr/index.htm.

While we are concerned by the apparent culture of impunity, we believe that there is resolve within civil society and government to stop extrajudicial killings in the Philippines. Canada is working to strengthen this political impetus and to provide the tools and skills required to improve the situation in that country.

Thank you again for taking the time to write and share your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maxime Bernier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "B".

Maxime Bernier