

Le Bâtonnier

Honorable Chief Justice
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Geneva, 15 November 2018

Concern: Assassination of Mr Benjamin Tarug Ramos

Honorable Chief Justice,
Mrs President of the Supreme Court,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Geneva Bar Association, which represents more than 1,500 lawyers in Geneva. The Geneva Bar Association is member of the Swiss Federation of Lawyers, the International Association of Lawyers and the International Bar Association.

The Geneva Bar Association, which places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law and is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world, has been deeply shocked by the news of Mr Benjamin Tarug Ramos's murder on 6 November 2018.

According to our sources, Mr Ramos was killed in front of a store next to a public square in the region of Negros Occidental by two unidentified gunmen on a motorbike.

Mr Benjamin Tarug Ramos, who was a human right lawyer and founding member of the National Union of People's Lawyers, provided free legal services and was assisting the National Federation of Sugar Workers, whose nine alleged members were murdered in October 2018. Mr Ramos's death constitutes the ninth assassination of a lawyer in the Philippines since the beginning of the year.

We understand that the regional police already ordered an investigation to solve the crime and insure that Mr Benjamin Tarug Ramos's murderers are arrested.

Remaining profoundly concerned about the situation, the Geneva Bar Association would like to draw the authorities of the Philippines' attention to the 1990 UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, according to which they have an obligation to ensure that lawyers can perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference and that they do not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution for any action taken while carrying out their duties (Principle 16).

Furthermore, according to Principle 17, "*Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.*"

The Geneva Bar Association therefore urges the authorities of the Philippines to comply with the standards set forth by the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers as well as their obligations under International Human Rights Law and to:

- protect all lawyers and human rights defenders in the Philippines against any present or future harassment, intimidation and/or reprisal in the exercise of their profession and of legitimate human rights activities;
- ensure that the investigations into Mr Benjamin Tarug Ramos's murder is independently and impartially conducted. All necessary steps should be adequately taken to bring to justice those responsible, in accordance with international standards.

I thank you for your attention to this very serious matter, which the Geneva Bar Association and I will continue to closely monitor.

Respectfully yours,

Lionel HALPÉRIN



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