

By e-mail

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Honorable Chief Justice
Alexander G. GESMUNDO
The Office of the Chief Justice
Supreme Court Bldg
Padre Faura
Manila 1000
Republic of the Philippines

Geneva, 23 October 2023

Assassination or Mrs Maria Saniata Liwliwa ALZATE

Honorable Chief Justice,
Mr President of the Supreme Court,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Geneva Bar Association (ODAGE).

As an association representing the interests of lawyers, the Geneva Bar Association places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law and is particularly concerned by the situation of fellow lawyers in the world.

The Geneva Bar Association has been deeply shocked by the news of Mrs Maria Saniata Liwliwa ALZATE's assassination on 14 September 2023 in Bangued, Abra, Philippines. According to our sources, Mrs Maria Saniata Liwliwa ALZATE was allegedly murdered outside her home while in her car, shot dead in broad daylight by two people on a motorbike.

Mrs Maria Saniata Liwliwa ALZATE was a human right lawyer and the former President of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines. She provided legal assistance to a victim of unlawful arrest and torture by members of the Philippine National Police in January 2023, for which she obtained an *Amparo* order issued by the Abra Regional Trial Court. She has also provided *pro bono* legal services to the poor and acted as defense counsel in the murder of a teacher, allegedly by the president of a small district.

The Geneva Bar Association is all the more concerned that this tragic event occurs in a series of killings of human rights lawyers in the Philippines, including the murder of colleagues Ben RAMOS, Anthony TRINIDAD and Eric Jay MAGCAMIT, killed in 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively.

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).

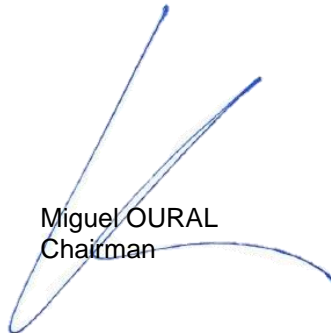
Furthermore, according to Principle 17: "[w]here the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities."

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 Mrs Maria Saniata Liwliwa ALZATE's assassination is independently and impartially conducted and that all necessary steps are 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,


Miguel OURAL
Chairman

- cc. - Mr President Rodrigo DUTERTE, Office of the President of the Republic of Philippines, Bahay Ugnayan, J.P. Laurel Street Malacanang, Manila, Philippines (pcc@malacanang.gov.ph)
- Mr Secretary of Justice, Jesús Crispín REMULLÁ, Department of Justice, Padre Faura Street, Ermita, Manila 1000, Philippines (communications@doj.gov.ph)
- Mr Secretary of the Interior and Local Government, Benjamin "Benhur" C. ABALOS, Jr, DILG NAPOLCOM, Center EDSA corner Quezon Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines (dilgmailto@dilg.gov.ph)
- UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of Judges and Lawyers, Mrs Margaret SATTERTHWAITTE, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Office at Geneva (hrc-sr-independencejl@un.org)
- Embassy of Philippines in Bern, Kirchenfeldstrasse 73-75, 3005 Bern, Switzerland (berne.pe@dfa.gov.ph)
- Swiss Embassy in the Philippines, P.O. Box 2068, Makati Central Post Office, 1260 Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines (manila@eda.admin.ch)
- Integrated Bar of the Philippines, Antonio C. PIDO, IBP Building, No.15, Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1600, Philippines (executive@ibp.ph)
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