

15 February 2017

Solidarity Statement from Regional MPs: Against Death Penalty in the Philippines

As lawmakers from across Southeast Asia, we stand opposed to the reintroduction of capital punishment in the Philippines, and we urge our counterparts in the Philippine Congress to reject the bill currently before them that would legalize the practice. We stand shoulder to shoulder with those Philippine legislators who are fighting this bill and support them in their principled struggle, which is based on strong evidence that this policy is wrong for the country.

The death penalty is a barbaric and outdated form of punishment and represents the kind of policy our region should be moving away from, not back toward. The bill currently before the House of Representatives puts the Philippines' international credibility at risk, as well as the stunning progress made in the past decade toward the eradication of capital punishment globally.

We represent a diverse set of religious and ethnic backgrounds, but we share a commitment to the belief that life is sacred and that capital punishment is an impediment to our shared progress as a regional community.

We have worked across Southeast Asia toward abolition of the practice. Sadly, many regional governments maintain capital punishment. But the Philippines has been a rare bright spot. Since its decision to abolish the death penalty in 2006, the Philippines has stood out as a regional leader and an example to look toward and seek to emulate. The country's ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 2007 marked another important milestone, not only for the Philippines, but for our collective regional struggle. It commits the Philippines to the perpetual abolition of capital punishment and renders the current push to reintroduce the practice in violation of the Philippines' international commitments.

Over the course of the last decade, the world has moved steadily toward the abolition of the death penalty. Over 140 countries have now embraced abolition in law or practice, and over 80 countries have ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR. The Philippines was on the right track and a major part of this push. Now the passage of this bill threatens to throw all that away and jeopardize the Philippines' international standing.

The current push to reintroduce the death penalty is ultimately a recipe for more cruelty and strife, not a means to improve the lives of everyday Filipinos. The poor will be particularly vulnerable to abuse in the context of a judicial system that—like so many in Southeast Asia—suffers from weak rule of law, partiality, and corruption. Past experience in the Philippines also suggests that the implementation of capital punishment will not be equitable and will cause marginalized populations, including the poor, to suffer disproportionately. It also places undue hardship on families, including women and children. Meanwhile, no credible evidence exists that capital punishment is an effective deterrent against crime.

It is clear that reintroducing capital punishment would be a mistake for the Philippines and a setback for our region. As fellow legislators, we strongly urge our counterparts to oppose this bill and keep the death penalty illegal in the Philippines.

Signed:

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MP, Cambodia

Son Chhay
MP, Cambodia

Phirum Keo
MP, Cambodia

Ho Vann
MP, Cambodia

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MP, Cambodia

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MP, Cambodia

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MP, Malaysia

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