



Human Rights Council

16th session

Item 3: General Debate

10 March 2011

Speaker: Francesca Restifo

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Thank you Mr. President,

Franciscans International and KARAPATAN¹ are deeply concerned about the alarming state of enforced disappearances, summary executions extrajudicial killings of human rights defenders in the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

In **The Philippines**, enforced or involuntary disappearances are practices that often go hand in hand with extrajudicial killings and torture. The main targets are predominantly political and community activists who express criticism with government's policies, particularly those related to economic, social and cultural rights, including the unsolved land issue in the country. Consequently, legitimate civil society organisations, such as human rights groups, as well as farmers, religious and indigenous organisations, are labelled as the “enemy of the state” and are targeted and silenced through the dissemination of terror and fear in the country.

Mr President,

As for Sri Lanka, the situation is of even higher concern. Notwithstanding the willingness expressed by the Government to address enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and summary executions, little has so far been done to curb the phenomenon and to fight impunity. In particular, FI would like to draw attention to the case of Mr. Patani Razeek - a well-known human rights defender - who disappeared in February 2010. Although the alleged perpetrators were identified, the Government has not taken any concrete actions to start an impartial investigation. FI is further concerned that many more disappearances, that are taking place in Sri Lanka, are not being reported for fear of reprisals.

Mr. President, FI and KARAPATAN urge the two governments to:

- Take effective measures to prevent and curb acts of enforced disappearances, summary executions and extrajudicial killings against human rights defenders and to carry out thorough investigations and to bring the perpetrators to justice.

¹ This statement of Franciscans International and KARAPATAN is also supported by the Asian Centre for the Progress of People, based in Hong Kong

- Abide by the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, especially Article 12.2 concerning the protection of human rights defenders.²
- Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol on the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).
- Implement UPR recommendations in respect to enforced disappearances that both Governments have supported and accepted.
- Extend, without further delay, an official invitation to the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances to visit their countries.

Thank you very much Mr. President.

² Which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”. UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998.