

Submitted by: Northern California Nevada Conference PAAM
[Pacific Islander Asian American Ministries]

PROPOSED ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION/AFFIRMATION
“When Justice Is Turned Back”

Brief Statement of Purpose: To insist that the Law of Justice be brought to bear upon the abhorrent injustices currently being carried out and tolerated in the Philippines.

“... let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Amos 5:24

Background Statement: It is a dark and shameful era in the life of a people that has allowed injustice to reign free. The Filipino people, our friends in faith and partners of a free world, today are facing an alarming cycle of violence that mocks the very principle of freedom and respect for human rights. The murders and assassinations of church workers, church people, and journalists, which began in January, and have escalated over the past 3 months, are a grave concern to us. These unresolved cases and the inability of the authorities to uphold justice mocks the very foundations of a religious and democratic society. It testifies to a very disturbing trend towards a tyranny that promotes a “culture of fear,” a despicable and repulsive condition that free world vowed historically to prevent.

We mourn the needless deaths of: The Rev. Edison Lapuz (United Church of Christ, NELCON Conference Minister); The Rev. Father William Tadeña (Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Parish Priest and advocate for Hacienda Luisita Workers); Joel Baclao (lay leader in UCCP Albay); Juancho Sanchez (son of Rev. Gabriel Sanchez - Balete Evangelical Church, UCC); Vicente Olea (70-year-old lay leader in UCCP San Vicente, Palawan); Isaias Manano, Jr. (a UCCP Christian Youth Fellowship leader and son of a pastor); Abelardo Ladera (Tarlac City Councilor and supporter of Hacienda Luisita Laborers); Romeo Sanchez, Atty. Julayo of La Union, Ronnie Almonte, Atty. Fedilito Ducut and others.

There are countless others whom we mourn as friends because their lives were ended as they worked for truth and justice, and for living out their genuine concern for the poor and the exploited. We also bleed with those who have been wounded because of their belief and adherence to the Christian principles of love, justice and peace. Such is Angelina “Angie” Ipong, a 60-year old human rights advocate, still a victim of illegal arrest, arbitrary detention, torture and sexual abuse. There are many like her whose lives have been wounded in various reported ambush incidents. They are our brothers and sisters! For whatever reasons these compassionate souls have been senselessly snuffed out or brutally wounded; such reasons do not speak of justice, righteousness, or peace!

These are friends, sisters and brothers, who only seek to proclaim the truth, who value genuine love and concern for others, and who have dedicated their lives to promote equality and abundant life for all. They are the ones who build the true foundations of a democratic society, upholding the principles of freedom and human rights. If their deaths and suffering are because of their faith and beliefs in these very foundations, then it appalls us no end, just as God is appalled by the lack of justice!

Administrative Action To Be Voted: That the Annual Meeting of the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church Christ urges President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, and all authorities and agencies under her leadership, to stop this appalling and shameful conduct of tolerating such violence to reign free in a land that calls itself the Pearl of the Orient, and that the Conference's prayerful concern be communicated to our partner denomination the United Church of Christ of the Philippines and to the Wider Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ, USA.

Fiscal Impact: None

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