

Hon. Mr. Benigno S. Aquino III
President of the Republic of the Philippines
Malcañang Palace
J.P. Laurel Street, San Miguel
NRC 1005, Manila, the Philippines

Brussels, 16 September 2014

Re: Concerns regarding the death of Mr Rodolfo Felicio, a human rights lawyer

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further thirteen European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its shock over the death of Mr Rodolfo Felicio, a human rights lawyer who was killed at Floodway, Taytay in the Rizal Province of the Philippines on 24 August 2014. According to our information, Mr Felicio was handling land dispute cases concerning a family's vast property in Taytay. At the time of the attack, he was reportedly sleeping in a tent with two caretakers of the land owned by his clients when four men on motorcycles opened gunfire on their campsite, killing Mr Felicio and injuring two others. Given that Mr Felicio was also involved in other high profile cases, including the Olalia-Alay-ay double murder case, the killing of Mr Felicio seems to be related to his legitimate practise of his professional duties.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Principles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Principle 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Principle 17 says that:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

Furthermore, principle 18 states that:

Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to investigate the killing of Mr Felicio, in order to identify all of those responsible and to bring them before a competent and impartial tribunal. In addition, the CCBE asks you to take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of lawyers in Philippines as well as their ability to perform their professional duties without fear of reprisal, hindrance, intimidation or harassment.

I look forward to hearing from your Excellency urgently.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aldo Bulgarelli', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Aldo BULGARELLI
President