



PHILIPPINE COALITION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Coalition urges immediate Philippine ratification of treaty on the International Criminal Court

The Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court urges (PCICC) President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to immediately take action on the Rome Statute to allow the Philippines to be part of an international movement for justice and to prevent the country from becoming a safe haven for war criminals and dictators.

At a public action on July 16, PCICC spokesperson and Amnesty International Director Dr. Aurora Parong lamented, "We have long been waiting for a justice mechanism that will hold accountable the perpetrators of systematic and widespread atrocities that fall within the crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. An example of such war crimes was the Japanese military's condemnable sexual slavery of Filipinas during the World War II. We do not want the Philippines to be a safe haven for war criminals and dictators..."

"The President would miss an opportunity to leave a legacy on international justice if she fails to transmit the instrument of ratification to the Senate in her last few months in office," Dr. Parong continued.

Members of the coalition staged a Café Le Criminal in Manila to reflect the possibility of war criminals and dictators seeking refuge in a country, such as the Philippines, which has yet to ratify the Rome Statute. States parties to the Rome Statute are obliged to put in place legislation on international humanitarian law in the standard set by the treaty. They also have to cooperate with the Court in the arrest of criminals convicted under the ICC. The ICC has no clear jurisdiction on the transfer or extradition of war criminals if the State has not ratified and adopted the ICC as in the case of the Philippines.

"Almost nine years after the Philippines became a signatory to the treaty, the Rome Statute still remains within the walls of Malacañang. President Arroyo has yet to

transmit the treaty that could put in place the means of redress for the victims of crimes against humanity and war crimes." Parong added.

The Philippines adopted on July 17, 1998 and signed on December 28, 2000 the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. With the signing of the treaty, the Philippine Constitution mandates the President to transmit the treaty to the Philippine Senate for the ratification process.

"We are strongly urging President Arroyo to immediately transmit the Rome Statute to the Senate for the ratification proceedings and to prioritize implementing legislation. Victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity must be protected and given avenues for justice." Parong added.

The PCICC is also submitting today a research study on enhancing remedies for victims of extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances by integrating some of the principles of the Rome Statute regarding command responsibility. The study, "Uphold the Sanctity of Life*", will be submitted to President Arroyo through the Presidential Human Rights Committee headed by Secretary Ermita.

July 17 is World Day of Justice, sometimes also referred to as International Day of Justice, commemorating the day on which the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted by diplomatic representatives of 120 states in 1998. The adoption of the Rome treaty created the International Criminal Court, the first independent judicial body that would prosecute crimes of the most serious nature -- genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and, once defined, the crime of aggression.

NOTE:

* An electronic copy of Uphold the Sanctity of Life may be downloaded from www.pcicc.wordpress.com*

The PCICC is a coalition of organizations and individuals lobbying for Philippine ratification of the ICC treaty. Members include Amnesty International-Philippines, the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines, Medical Action Group, Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance, BALAY Rehabilitation Center, and the Ateneo Human Rights Center.