

## News Release

### **The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses concern about human rights violations faced by lawyers and members of the judiciary in the Philippines**

Toronto, ON — The Law Society of Upper Canada is deeply concerned about the ongoing human rights violations faced by lawyers and judges in the Philippines.

The 2015 Day of the Endangered Lawyer was dedicated to lawyers in the Philippines. **Reports indicate that at least 41 lawyers and 18 judges have been murdered in the Philippines since 2001.** An increasing number of lawyers and judges have been harassed and attacked. According to the [Basic Report on the Human Rights Lawyers under Continuing Threat in the Philippines](#), in these cases “only very scarcely a perpetrator is arrested and nearly never prosecuted or punished by the courts.”

The Law Society reminds the government of the Philippines of Principles 16, 17 and 23 of the United Nations *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*. Principle 16 states:

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, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Principle 17 states:

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

Principle 23 states:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation.

The Law Society urges the government of the Philippines to:

- a. put an end to all acts of violence and harassment against human rights lawyer and defenders in the Philippines;

- b. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological safety and integrity of all human rights lawyers and defenders;
- c. conduct a fair, impartial and independent investigation into the cases of human rights lawyers who have been murdered, harassed or attacked in order to identify all those responsible, bring them to trial and apply to them civil, penal and/or administrative sanctions provided by law;
- d. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

*\*The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 47,000 lawyers and 7,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society.*

*The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.*

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