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**PASTORAL LETTER**

**A call for an integral climate of peace and to end the killings in the Negros island**

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As we lost another defender of justice, **Atty. Anthony Trinidad of Guihulngan, Negros Oriental**, in the hands of the elusive 'riding-in-tandem', the Diocese of San Carlos joins the cry, **"End the killings!"** and **"Let justice and peace reign!"**

We also express the Church teaching of the sanctity of the human life as we reject the proposal to restore the death penalty mentioned in the 2019 State of the Nation Address.

**"End the killings!"** is the collective cry among us here living in the Negros island. This is an appeal not only of families of farmers, activists, lawyers, rebels, soldiers, police whose family member has become a victim of summary execution; but also, of the ordinary citizens who are longing for peace.

We are also offering our prayers for the repose of Atty. Trinidad's soul; as we join the call for justice of his death.

As your pastor, allow me to reiterate our call for the need to achieve an **"Integral Climate of Peace in the Island of Negros"**:

**The ambience of fear and violence must end.** Our people are longing for an end of barbaric killings due to the drug war and the anti-insurgency campaign.

**We need to promote integral peace.** When he just assumed the presidency, President Rodrigo Duterte opened the door for peace talks, achieving a more likely peaceful climate. Along the way, he put that on hold, until he closed all the doors for dialogue. We reiterate the call for *integral peace* -- one that addresses social injustice and promotes economic equality and inclusive development for all. We believe that integral peace benefits the country and the future generation.

**There is a need to resolve issues, advance a common dream for integral peace, and resume the peace negotiations.** While there were already attempts of developing an achievable peace agreement, both sides have to return to the negotiating table. Peace cannot be achieved through a one-sided or any militarist approach.

On the side of the church, we have supported the work and trust the capacity of the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP), a broad and experienced ecumenical peace movement of Church leaders in the Philippines; discouraging any attempts of propaganda to involve local church leaders of localized pseudo peace-making. We rather demand the pursuit of just and lasting peace, resolving the issues of peace and advancing our common dream, with the following:

- Advance the achievements of the existing peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP).
- Avoid any militarist maneuverings or strategy.
- Declare a unilateral ceasefire.
- Enhance openness on both sides.
- Embrace the pathways to peace: socio-economic reforms, land reform, socialized framework (health, education and housing), national industrialization.

Peace cannot be achieved by guns—nor by killing fellow Filipinos. Once more, we, with the rest of the Filipino people resonate the call to end the killings and to resume the "peace talks".

Let there be Peace, as Jesus desires it for all of us.

**+MOST REV. GERARDO A. ALMINAZA, DD**  
Bishop of San Carlos