

**Open Letter to the Senate of the Philippines
On the Approved House Bill 4727 by the House of Representatives on 7 March 2017**

To Excellency:

1. Senator Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III (Senate President)
2. Senator Ralph G. Recto (Senate President Pro-Tempore)
3. Senator Vicente C. Sotto III (Majority Leader)
4. Senator Franklin M. Drilon (Minority Leader)
5. Senator Sonny M. Angara
6. Senator Paolo Benigno Aquino IV (Assistant Minority Leader)
7. Senator Maria Lourdes “Nancy” S. Binay
8. Senator Alan Peter “Companero” S. Cayetano
9. Senator Leila De Lima
10. Senator Joseph Victor G. Ejercito
11. Senator Francis “Chiz” G. Escudero
12. Senator Sherwin Gatchalian
13. Senator Richard J. Gordon
14. Senator Gregorio B. Hosanan II
15. Senator Risa Hontiveros
16. Senator Panfilo M. Lacson
17. Senator Loren B. Legarda
18. Senator Emmanuel “Manny” D. Pacquiao
19. Senator Francis “Kiko” Pangilinan
20. Senator Grace L. Poe
21. Senator Antonio “Sonny” F. Trillanes IV
22. Senator Joel Villanueva
23. Senator Cynthia A. Villar
24. Senator Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri

Honourable Senators,

We, the undersigned civil society organisations from the Southeast Asia region, express our grave disappointment at the decision of the House of Representatives of the Philippines to approve **the House Bill 4727**, which seeking to reinstates the death penalty. Such a decision sends an alarming signal to the ASEAN region given the Philippines’ role as the current Chair of ASEAN, a regional body that will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year.

As a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its Second Optional Protocol aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the Philippines had played an important role among the Asian states in campaigning for a moratorium and abolition of the death penalty. The Philippines is the first country in Asia to abolish the death penalty in 1987. Despite being restored in 1994, the death penalty was abolished for the second time in 2006.

In the midst of the administration’s highly-criticised ‘war on drugs’, with more than 7,000 people have been killed, the Bill represents another baseless argument that the death penalty for drug-related offenses is the way forward to ending the drug menace in the country. To date, there is no ample and conclusive evidence proving that the death penalty can act as a deterrent of crime. Similar to the use of extrajudicial killing that targets mostly the poorest members of the community, the use of the death penalty will likely target the marginalised people who are

mostly defenceless in the judicial system. The use of the death penalty often overlooks the root of crimes in the society, such as poverty and inequality.

The passage of the Bill is a major setback for human rights in the country and erodes the Philippines' reputation for leadership on the abolition of the death penalty in the ASEAN region and Asia. As the Chair of ASEAN, the Philippines should set an example to all ASEAN Member States to also abolish death penalty and continue to affirm that the use of death penalty is an ultimate denial of human rights.

Nevertheless, we recognise the existing opportunity to challenge the decision made by the House of Representatives upon the House Bill 4727 through the proceedings at the Senate.

Therefore, on behalf of civil society organisations, human rights defenders, and the people of ASEAN, we would like express our truthful hope and call on the honourable members of the Philippines Senate to reject House Bill 4727. We further request the Senate to continue monitoring and critically observing any attempts to regress human rights standards and practices in the Philippines and in the ASEAN region.

In solidarity,

1. Solidarity for ASEAN People's Advocacies (SAPA)
2. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
3. Progressive Voice, Myanmar/Burma
4. Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (KontraS), Indonesia
5. Think Centre, Singapore
6. ASEAN SOGIE Caucus
7. Hak Association, Timor-Leste
8. Boat People SOS (BPSOS)
9. Pusat KOMAS, Malaysia
10. Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia)
11. The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), Cambodia
12. International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID), Indonesia
13. Altsean Burma
14. Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), Philippines
15. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
16. ASEAN Services Employees Trade Union Council (ASETUC)
17. People's Empowerment Foundation (PEF), Thailand
18. Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM), Malaysia
19. Indonesia Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), Indonesia
20. Initiative for International Dialogue (IID)
21. Philippines Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), Philippines
22. Asian Network for Free Election (ANFREL)
23. International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW Asia Pacific)

Contact person of SAPA Secretariat

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