

Lawyers for Lawyers raises the alarm: Filipino lawyer at risk

- Labeling of lawyers by military continues
- Practice of labeling root cause of extrajudicial killings
- Pattern of ongoing threats against legal profession

Philippines, 23 April 2014 - Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L) and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) warn in an [open letter](#) to President Aquino of the **Philippines** for the continued labeling of lawyers as enemies of the state by the military. Since March, Atty. Maria Catherine L. Dannug-Salucon has been the subject of death threats, labeling, surveillance and verbal intimidation by military officers.

Labeling of lawyers by military continues

Atty. Dannug-Salucon is reportedly on the Filipino military's Watch List of so-called 'Communist Terrorist' supporters providing legal services. She has also been under the surveillance of the Intelligence Services of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The surveillance is particularly concerning in view of the killing - reportedly by members of the Intelligence Services - on 25 March 2014 of Mr. William Bugatti, a human rights defender who was also working as a paralegal for Atty. Dannug-Salucon.

Practice of labeling root cause of extrajudicial killings

The practice of labeling, in combination with the culture of impunity and the military involvement in politics, has in the past been identified by national and international fact-finding commissions as one of the main root causes for the spate of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines since 2001. At least 23 lawyers were killed from 2001 to 2009. Many of them were labeled as 'enemies of the state' or included in the so-called military watch-list prior to being attacked, apparently because they were identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of doing their job. So far, only one person has been convicted for these killings and this occurred in 2006.

Pattern of ongoing threats against legal profession

The case of Atty. Dunning-Salucon is not isolated. In July 2013, Army chief Lt. Gen. Noel Coballes reportedly branded the National Union of People Lawyers (NUPL) as an 'enemy' in reaction to the NUPL's criticism on the promotion of an army general who is facing credible charges of human rights violations. Till now, the tag of "enemy of the state" against NUPL has not been withdrawn by the Army chief. L4L and LRWC call on the Philippine government to ensure the personal and professional safety of lawyers in the Philippines and to effectively prevent and punish attacks on their independence and/or safety.

Note to the editor, not for publication:

Attachment: [Open letter to President Benigno S. Aquino III of the Philippines](#)



For more information, please visit www.lawyersforlawyers.nl or contact:

Ms Adrie van de Streek,

Executive Director Lawyers for Lawyers

+31 (0) 62 62 743 90

Lawyers for Lawyers | www.lawyersforlawyers.nl

Lawyers for Lawyers is an independent and non-political Dutch foundation that has committed itself to enable lawyers to practice law in freedom and independence. L4L provides support to oppressed lawyers and lawyer's organizations from all over the world. Lawyers for Lawyers has a Special Consultative status(ESOSOC) with the UN.

Secretariat

P.O. Box 7113

1007 JC AMSTERDAM

The Netherlands

T: +31 (0) 20 7171 638

info@lawyersforlawyers.nl

<http://www.lawyersforlawyers.nl/>

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