



International Fair Trial Day

## 2024 Ebru Timtik Award Goes to National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL) in the Philippines



**The National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL)** was established during its Founding Congress of September 15-16, 2007 in response to significant human rights violations during the administration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. These violations included extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and political persecution, which, alongside the potential implementation of the Republic Act No. 9372 (Human Security Act of 2007), underscored the need for organized legal advocacy and intervention.

Historically, human rights lawyers have addressed legal challenges independently, either through personal efforts or in collaboration with law firms, people's organizations, or grassroots movements. While regional or local groups existed, a unified national organization to consolidate these efforts was lacking.

The NUPL emerged to fill this gap, forming a nationwide voluntary association of human rights lawyers, including those from mainstream bar groups or traditional legal practice with an interest in human rights lawyering and advocacy. The organization aims to coordinate and facilitate legal services and advocacy efforts to counter politically motivated legal actions and state oppression against vulnerable populations. It provides pro bono legal services, engages in community education, legislative advocacy, and legal research, and champions the protection of lawyers' rights. The organization remains a pivotal force in promoting justice and human rights in the country.



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## Excerpts from the decision of the 2024 Ebru Timtik Award Selection Committee

The majority of the Selection Committee members decided “[t]he Ebru Timtik 2024 award is given to NUPL, an organization which has been active in defending and promoting the right to a fair trial in the Philippines. Members of the NUPL succeeded in upholding the fundamental values of human rights enshrined in the Philippine Constitution. NUPL is thus awarded for giving meaning and substance, at the risk of personal harassment, false accusations, imprisonment, death threats, and even state-mandated liquidations, to the Philippine Constitutional concept of due process of law. This includes the accused’s rights to be heard by counsel, to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation against them, to have a speedy, impartial, and public trial, to meet the witnesses face to face, and to have compulsory process to secure the attendance of witnesses and the production of evidence in his behalf, and the right to appeal. The NUPL’s members have rendered legal services especially to political dissenters, the poor and the oppressed, *pro bono*, without any expectation or hope of reward.

Human Rights are universal and must be defended when governments tend to ignore them or even deliberately violate them. An organization to provide people with adequate legal aid in such circumstances is a necessity. The jury wants to award the NUPL for the work they have been doing for decades.”

“The majority of the jury agreed on the consideration that the individual nominees for the 2023 Ebru Timtik Award didn’t entirely operate on their own. Support was given by the NUPL as a vehicle for all of most of their actions. The organization was also nominated and it seemed reasonable to the majority of the jury to grant the NUPL the Ebru Timtik Award.”

“The jury would like to acknowledge that to succeed the continuation of the efforts for fair trials collectively, in such a long-term from one generation of lawyers to others, in such a high-risk conditions is very impressive and inspiring.

The jury also expresses their hope that the international recognition for the NUPL’s work to aid Phillipine citizens for fair trials and justice in difficult circumstances will help the NUPL and its members to continue their work.”