

INSERT ORGANISATIONAL LOGO (if relevant)

President Benigno S. Aquino III
Malacañang Palace
1610 J.P Laurel St.
San Miguel
Manila, Philippines
Email: opsnews2004@gmail.com

INSERT DATE

RE: Ampatuan Massacre – One Year On

Dear President Aquino,

The **[insert name of organisation or individual]** alerts you to the deep concerns felt around the world about the continuing culture of impunity in the Philippines, particularly in regard to the massacre of at least 58 people in Maguindanao province, Mindanao, on November 23, 2009.

Included in this gruesome toll were 32 of our media colleagues, whose murders mark the worst mass killing of journalists and media workers ever recorded.

We respectfully note that your election as President in 2010 presented an opportunity for the Philippines to turn a new page and end the impunity that has plagued your country for decades. We join our colleagues in the Philippines in hoping for change. However, we also share their concerns about ensuring that the perpetrators of the atrocity in Ampatuan and other murders of media personnel are brought to justice.

Since the massacre, four more media workers have been killed in the Philippines, bringing to 140 the total number of media deaths since 1986. Regrettably, threats and attacks on journalists remain commonplace across the Philippines, notably in Mindanao.

During the nine-year tenure of your predecessor, at least 75 journalists were murdered, not counting those who died in the massacre, but just four convictions were secured. We respectfully call on you to ensure the Ampatuan massacre trials will defy this appalling record, and for your Government to actively uphold a commitment to justice and a truly free press.

We are informed that the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliate, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), submitted to your office an Action Plan to end impunity (see <http://asiapacific.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-action-plan-for-president-aquino-to-end-impunity-in-the-philippines>). We draw your attention to the first point of action, which requests:

Immediate prosecution of all perpetrators of the Ampatuan Town Massacre in Maguindanao on 23 November 2009. The trial or trials must be fully open and transparent so that the public may observe the proceedings without hindrance.

There is to be no political interference in any aspect of the conduct of the cases.

However, we understand the trials have been slow to progress, and that many of the suspects remain at large.

Under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1738 (2006), which requires governments to actively protect journalists and media workers in areas of conflict within national borders, your government is obliged to ensure the safety of media personnel as civilians.

With this in mind, we call on you to ensure your Government and police and security forces act on their responsibilities to bring the perpetrators and instigators of the November 23 atrocity to account, without further delay, and to act now to end the culture of impunity that has plagued the Philippines for so long.

We sympathise deeply with the families of the victims and our colleagues from the Philippines journalism community, and trust you will do all in your power to assist them to see justice is achieved.

Respectfully Yours,

INSERT NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS (INDIVIDUAL OR FOR YOUR ORGANISATION)