

Statement of Indignation Over the Unjust and Indefinite Detention Of Philippine Senator Leila M. de Lima

We stand in solidarity with Leila M. de Lima, a Philippine Senator and human rights defender, who is in unjust detention for 1,000 days on 20 November 2019. She was arrested by the government of President Rodrigo Duterte on 24 February 2017 on charges that are trumped-up and politically motivated. She is the staunchest critic of Duterte's bloody "war on drugs" and other anti-human rights policies.

We condemn the wrongful and indefinite imprisonment of Senator Leila de Lima whose cases are on protracted trial and are prosecuted with the use of perjured testimonies of inmates. In an unprecedented move, the Department of Justice has formed an 18-member team to prosecute – nay, persecute – Senator de Lima. The indictments were changed (from drug trading to conspiracy to trade in drugs) after more than a year from her arrest and without the benefit of a new investigation. These circumstances occur in the same judicial environment that has enabled the politically charged ouster of a Chief Justice, and the arrests of other political dissenters and activists.

We denounce the relentless political persecution of Senator Leila de Lima whose detention resulted from her personal convictions and public statements against human rights abuses in the Philippines, as found by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD). She launched the Senate investigation into the spate of extrajudicial killings in the "war on drugs". Even in detention, she remains vocal in her political beliefs and advocacies.

We decry the unabated public vilification of Senator Leila de Lima by Duterte and his political allies, including their supporters in media and social media, who have targeted her as an object of verbal assault, sexist tirade, false information and hate speech. She is discriminated against as a woman and a human rights defender.

Senator Leila de Lima's persecution -- highlighted by the prolonged detention -- is undeniably caused by her exercise of freedoms of thought, conscience, opinion and expression, and her right to participate in government affairs as a citizen and Senator, which are all enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of which the Philippines is a State Party.

Given the dubiousness of the charges against Senator Leila de Lima and the indubitable violations of her rights, we urge the Government of the Philippines to immediately free Senator Leila de Lima, and to drop the charges against her. Remedying Senator de Lima's situation without delay is a demonstration to the Filipino people and the international community that the Philippines can still stand with the rest of the world in defense of freedom and human rights.

#1KNotOK #FreeLeilaNow

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

AFFILIATION: _____