



## Stand with the Heroes of the Environment!

Environmental Defenders Campaign for the International Human Rights Day

In 2018, the Philippines was declared the deadliest country in the world for land and environmental defenders. Indigenous people, farmers, activists and other common citizens have been systematically targeted by murders, criminalization, and other threats for dedicating their lives to protecting mountains, forests, rivers, agricultural lands, coasts, and seas from extractive and destructive projects.

Environmental defenders, fallen and standing, are truly modern day heroes who champion the people's rights to land, air, water, and natural resources necessary for genuine development. Our unified campaign going towards the celebration of International Human Rights Day this December 10, 2019 focuses on highlighting the importance of their work, the dangerous plight they face, and their demands for change.

### Context

The Philippines was recently declared as the world's deadliest country for land and environmental defenders in the 2019 annual report of international watchdog Global Witness entitled 'Enemies of the State?'

But the Philippines has already consistently ranked among the most dangerous countries ever since Global Witness started reporting in 2014, rising from third to second and then finally 'ground zero' this year.

National environmental campaign center Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan PNE) has monitored at least **225 environmental defenders killed** from 2001 to 2018. We found that spikes of killings over the years corresponded to major environmental or so-called internal security policy shifts, for instance:

1. The spike in 2005 to 2006 were the first two implementing years of the **Executive Order 270 or the Mining Revitalization Program** instituted by former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo upon their passage of the Mining

Act of 1995. Indeed, **67%** of the killings perpetrated during these two years involved anti-mining activists.

2. 2012 saw the passage of **EO 79 s. 2012**, known as the mining EO that was then president Noynoy Aquino's response to the clamor against mining plunder in the country. Killings almost doubled this year compared to the previous year, with **76%** of the cases also involving opponents of mining.
3. The biggest escalation of killings is the era of President Rodrigo Duterte. Annual killings reached unprecedented levels starting in 2016. From 2017 to 2018, the declaration of **Martial Law in Mindanao and the series of executive orders on counter insurgency** have markedly spurred a crackdown against restive communities in natural resource conflict areas under the logic that these are hotbeds of insurgency.

There were at least **104 killings** perpetrated from Day 1 of Duterte's presidency up to the end of 2018. In terms of annual rate of killings, environment-related murders under Duterte were **3.5 times the rate under the administration of Aquino and 8.4 times the rate under Arroyo**.

From these we could already see that **large-scale mining** has been a consistent driver of environment-related killings. Attacks against anti-mining advocates, such as the killings of farmers and indigenous Lumads like Rolly Panebio and couple Jean and Gilbert Labial in Compostela Valley comprise **58%** of the monitored killings from 2001 to 2018.

This is followed by land defenders opposing **agribusiness** such as the Sagay 9 and other farmworkers in the island of Negros who comprise **27%** of the total, and forest defenders campaigning against **logging** such as the recently murdered forest ranger in Palawan, Bienvenido Veguilla, comprising **17%** of the total.

The clear victims are defenders hailing from the most marginalized sectors in the rural countryside, with **43.5%** coming from **small farmers and landless agriworkers**, and **35.9%** coming from **indigenous people**.

Altogether, these valiant environmental martyrs have stood in defense of an estimated **2,670,850 hectares** of important landscapes and seascapes that provide us air, water, food, shelter, climate regulation, medicine, raw materials, and other natural resources that supply people's basic needs.

Where are these murders being perpetrated? **Compostela Valley** has long been the 'ground zero' of environmental defender killings with 33 cases, though the currently raging killing fields in the sugarcane haciendas of **Negros** have likely surpassed the mining province this year.

Other hotspots include **Palawan, Bukidnon, and South Cotabato. Mindanao** is clearly the deadliest island group with **50%** of all monitored cases occurring in its minerals, forest, and soil-rich areas.

Who are the perpetrators? **State security forces** such as soldiers, police, and their auxiliary forces such as paramilitary groups and Civilian Auxiliary Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) elements are either suspected or confirmed to be behind **65%** or **144** of the total number of environmental defenders killed since 2001.

Other cases involved unidentified assassins mostly in riding-in-tandem operations, private security, or armed poachers.

Almost the same trends can be seen under Duterte. State security forces are linked to **69%** of the cases under Duterte. Small farmers, farmworkers, and indigenous people comprise **81%** of all monitored cases. Agribusiness-related killings are markedly on the rise, however, comprising **50%** of the monitored cases. This can be contextualized in the Duterte government's drive to establish **1.6 million hectares** of new agribusiness plantations.

There are two patterns to the attacks. The first is the clear **reprisal** after a defender engages in environmental defense and other acts of asserting their environmental rights.

An example is the attacks against Palawan para-enforcers such as Veguilla and Barangay Captain Ruben Arzaga after they confiscated chainsaws from loggers. Another is the sustained offensive such as the suspected assassinations against members of the Compostela Farmers Association which coincided with the presence of the 66th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army after the farmers mounted a people's barricade against the San Miguel-owned Agusan Petroleum and Minerals Corporation.

The second is the systematic **criminalization** of defenders that lead to targeted hits. This is what happened in Negros where sustained vilification of agriworkers and activists preceded the Synchronized Enhanced Managing of Police Operations (SEMPOs) that led to massacres and mass arrests.

This was also the pattern in the attempted murder of Chinese-American paralegal Brandon Lee, who was part of the Ifugao Peasant Movement that has led oppositions to hydro and geothermal projects in their province. Lee was fortunate enough to survive. Not many others do.

Environmental defenders around the world are **pushing back** against the impunity. The United Nations Environment Program embarked on an Environmental Rights Initiative to encourage state and non-state actors to promote, protect, and respect environmental rights. They have tied up with the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights to step up their support for human rights-based environmental policies.

In the Philippines, the historic First National Environmental Defenders Conference (Envidefcon) was launched in the auspices of the 2018 Human Rights Day to establish the country-wide unity of environmental defenders at risk together with

their supporters, equip them with knowledge and skills in responding to human rights violations, and intensify demands for the recognition and protection of environmental defenders in the Philippines.

The Envidefcon gathered 110 indigenous people, peasant farmers, scientists, lawyers, and other environmental defenders representing 66 organizations from 12 out of 17 regions in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The momentum set by the Envidefcon sets the tone for the **Environmental Heroes, Unite!**, a series of gatherings and actions to raise awareness and support for the heroic and important work of environmental defenders, and promote policies and practices for the defense of the environment and its protectors.

## Objectives

The 2019 Environmental Heroes Unite campaign aims to achieve the following:

1. To strengthen the social movements of environmental defenders through protection mechanisms and the magnification of their advocacies
2. To expose and oppose the environmentally destructive projects and policies and attached security policies that drive human rights violations against environmental defenders
3. To highlight and advance the democratic assertions and alternative policies and practices of environmental defenders in advancing environmental rights
4. To contribute to multi-sectoral efforts in amplifying the human rights crisis in the Philippines to the international community through the Iceland Resolution investigation

## Program of Action

People's movements and broad alliances working on critical issues such as large-scale mining, reclamation, dams, agribusiness, and climate change will hold broad gatherings and other buildup activities to project the struggles of defenders on the ground to protect their rights to the environment and its natural resources.

These issue-based actions will build momentum towards their unity in a **national alliance** of environmental defenders, which will lead a broad **march of environmental heroes** that will demand justice and accountability over the genocidal and ecocidal attacks suffered by the people and their environment. This march will anchor on the momentum of the **global climate strike** on November 29.

The campaign will be capped with a high level event for a high-profile submission of a **national report on the national human rights situation of environmental defenders** to the ongoing investigation of the UNHRC of killings in the Philippines. The consequences of ecological losses, natural resource plunder, and intensified

people’s vulnerability brought about by these attacks against defenders will be highlighted to emphasize the importance of the anti-fascist struggle of environmental defenders in the closing of COP 25.

### **Consolidated List of Initiatives coordinated with Stand with the Heroes of the Environment campaign**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>NOV</b>		
NOV 7	IRRI-PhilRice Anniversary Mobilization to stop Golden Rice	@Department of Agriculture
NOV 10	Global Day of Action to Commemorate Indigenous People’s Heroes	
NOV 14- 16	Ecumenical Bishops Forum Mindanao-wide Workshop on Environment and Peace	Organizational activity
NOV 15	5th International Symposium of the Philippine Native Plants Conservation Society Inc.	Organizational activity
NOV 18	Save Nueva Vizcaya Movement Protest Caravan on the Mines [Un]Safety Week	@Mendiola 9:30-11:30AM
NOV 20	Children’s Day – Children for Climate Justice	@UP Sunken Garden 6AM
NOV 21	World Fisheries Day Manila Bay-wide People’s Dialogue and Unity Walk in Baywalk	Dialogue @TBD 1-4PM Unity Walk @Rajah Sulayman Freedom Park 5-7PM
NOV 23	SUKI Consumers Fair	@Quezon Memorial Circle
NOV 25- 27	Constantino Foundation Art Exhibit of Women Resisters	@UP Asian Center Opening launch by invitation
NOV 26	SUKI and Water for the People Network Forum on Water Privatization	@Venue TBD 8:30AM-2PM
NOV 27- 28	Defenders Fight Back: A Capacity-Building Workshop on Human Rights Mechanisms and Environmental Advocacy	By invitation
NOV 28	Environmental Defender Congress Launch-Forum	@UP Balay Kalinaw 2-5PM
NOV 29	Environmental Heroes March join the Global Climate Strike	@Liwasang Bonifacio 5:00PM

NOV 30	Documentary Film on Best Practices of Agro-Ecology	@Cinema '76 Anonas 6-9PM
<b>DEC</b>		
DEC 3	Civil Society Workshop on People Economics on the Pillar on the Environment	Details TBD
DEC 8	Mass to Commemorate the Death Anniversary of Nicanor delos Santos	Details TBD
DEC 9	March of National Minorities	Details TBD
DEC 10	International Human Rights Day	Details TBD
DEC 13	Environmental Defenders Submission to the UN OHCHR Iceland Resolution Investigation	Details TBD
DEC 13	Environmental Heroes join the Lantern Parade	@UP Academic Oval
DEC 15	Protest on the Impending Court Decision on Martial Law extension in Mindanao	Details TBD