



**The United Methodist Church
Philippines Central Conference
Board of Church and Society**

**ON LEGISLATING TERROR IN OUR LAND
12 June 2020**

(Criminal and Restorative Justice, The Political Community, The United Methodist Social Principles)

“We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections and to the freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, communications media, and petition for redress of grievances without fear of reprisal; to the right to privacy; and to the guarantee of the rights to adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. x x x. We also strongly reject domestic surveillance and intimidation of political opponents by governments in power and all other misuses of elective or appointive offices. The use of detention and imprisonment for the harassment and elimination of political opponents or other dissidents violates fundamental human rights. Furthermore, the mistreatment or torture, and other cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment or punishment of persons by governments for any purpose violates Christian teaching and must be condemned and/or opposed by Christians and churches wherever and whenever it occurs.” (Excerpts from ¶164.V, 2016 United Methodist Book of Discipline), The Political Community, on the Basic Freedoms & Human Rights), ¶ 164. V. The United Methodist Social Principles)

Using our Social Principles, as well as our biblico-theological faith, as guides, after a prayerful and thoughtful deliberation, we register our opposition to the passage of the so-called Anti-Terror Law of 2020. It must be clarified that we do not condone any terrorist acts that wreck havoc to lives and livelihood of the people. At the same time, we do not conform to any actions or legislations that trample on civil liberties and individual freedoms guaranteed and protected by the Constitution and recognized by our Social Principles as essential part of our humanity and existence. We are gravely concerned by the provision of the so called Anti-Terror Law of 2020 that are repressive and have adverse effects on the rights and freedom of the people.

In violation of constitutional requirements, the proposed law allows arrest without judicial warrant and on the mere suspicion that one is a terrorist and allowing detention without appropriate charges in Court for a period more than that required by law.

Even the exercise of the right to association, free speech and freedom of expression and redress of grievances are in danger of being encroached upon by the Government.

Moreover, the proposed law provides a vague definition of what constitutes terror acts. This gives law enforcers and the Anti Terrorism Council (ATC), the agency created by the law to implement its provisions, an unrestricted discretion to interpret its provision. This is very



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dangerous since the ATC is given the authority to wiretap, conduct surveillance and/or determine, on a mere suspicion, who are to be arrested, detained and prosecuted for any alleged violation of its provisions, and which organizations or individuals may be designated as terrorist or subjected to proscription as terrorist.

Recent red tagging/terror tagging of various individuals, legal mass organizations and even churches and church based organizations, should send chills to us citizens, since the red tagging/terror tagging is being made by a government agency whose members will also become members of the ATC. These same organizations which were baselessly and maliciously accused as terrorist organizations or front organizations will surely be designated or subjected to proscription proceedings once the law becomes effective and the ATC is convened.

More than the terrorists, it is the ordinary citizens, dissenters, critics and even the political opposition, will bear the brunt of the repressive provisions of this proposed law.

We therefore join the various organizations and individuals strongly opposing the New Terror Law. As the Scriptures say,

¹ Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees,

² to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.

³ What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar?

To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?

⁴ Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain.

(Isaiah 10 New International Version)

As we pray:

O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more. (Psalm 10.¹⁷⁻¹⁸ **ESV**)

Signed:

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