

35 05-GS-58 VOTED: The Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ votes to adopt the resolution,
36 “Investigations into Human Rights Violations in the Philippines,” as amended by the committee.
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38 **INVESTIGATIONS INTO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES**
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40 WHEREAS the United Church of Christ (in North America) and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines,
41 through our predecessor denominations, have been in partnership for over 100 years, a partnership that was
42 celebrated at General Synod 23 with the presence of Bishop Elmer Bolocon, General Secretary of the United Church
43 of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), and which has been realized in global church partnerships between the
44 Michigan Conference and the Visayas District Conference, California-Nevada South Conference and the Negros
45 District Conference and Central Mindanao Conference, the Minnesota Conference and the South East Mindanao
46 Jurisdiction (SEMJur), and the Southwest Conference and the Mindanao District Conference, all with the guidance
47 of Wider Church Ministries and the East Asia and Pacific Office of Common Global Ministries; and
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49 WHEREAS our partnership calls us to prayer and advocacy for peace based on justice (religious, racial, economic,
50 social and political) in our own contexts and on behalf of all persons and the whole of creation; and
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52 WHEREAS we seek to keep the faith of the prophet Isaiah, who calls on God’s people to share our bread with the
53 hungry, our houses with the homeless, and clothe the naked because those in need are our own (Isaiah 58:7), and to
54 keep the faith of Jesus, who not only echoes Isaiah when he announces his ministry as one in which oppression and
55 captivity are undone (Luke 4:18), but who also speaks of blessings for those who mourn, are meek, and hunger and
56 thirst for righteousness, assuring that peacemakers will be called children of God (Matthew 5:4-9); and

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2 WHEREAS in faithfulness to that tradition, we are called to give voice to the voiceless, to listen to the voices of all
3 God's people, especially those who have historically been ignored, dismissed or silenced, and to not only listen but
4 to speak with and for them in the pursuit of justice and peace, speaking truth to power where that power has been
5 used to oppress rather than liberate; and
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7 WHEREAS we recognize that our brothers and sisters in The United Church of Christ in the Philippines are called
8 to "participate in the establishment of a just and compassionate social order" (from the UCCP *Statement of Faith*),
9 and we respect their vision of ministry as one "where the church becomes a genuine partner of the people in the
10 mission of transforming society toward a truly democratic, truly national and free and sustainable society whose
11 governance is truly pro-people, free from all forms of corruption and any form of foreign domination, where the
12 nation will be able to emerge and stand as an equal among nations" (from the *UCCP Vision, Goals and Mission in*
13 *the Next Jubilee*): and
14

15 WHEREAS an alarming increase in human rights violations in the Philippines has been documented by Amnesty
16 International, Human Rights Watch, the United Nations, the Philippine Commission on Human Rights and many
17 non-governmental Philippine human rights organizations; and
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19 WHEREAS between April 1986, when Ferdinand Marcos was ousted and the 20 year reign of martial law was
20 suspended and democracy and free press were restored, and December 2004, over 60 Filipino journalists were killed
21 because of their investigative journalism work on human rights violations, and 25 of these killings have taken place
22 under the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who came to office in January 2001, and none of these cases
23 have resulted in a conviction (according to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines), and 16 such
24 murders took place in March 2005 alone, with 6 UCCP members in Leyte and Samar ambushed and/or assassinated
25 in March and April; and
26

27 WHEREAS in response to the murder on May 12, 2005, of Rev. Edison Lapuz, Conference Minister of the North
28 Eastern Leyte Conference and local coordinator for Bayan Muna, a progressive and grassroots political party,
29 Bishop Elmer Bolocon has called on the UCCP's global and ecumenical partners to join them in prayer and
30 resistance by calling for investigations into this and the other violations that continue unchecked, a systematic
31 campaign against progressive church and community leaders whose prophetic voices are being silenced by
32 harassment, intimidation and death;
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34 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that General Synod 25 of the United Church of Christ joins the United Church of
35 Christ in the Philippines in calling on the President of the Republic of the Philippines to

- 36 a) aggressively conduct timely, full, and impartial investigations into the human rights violations that
37 have occurred during her presidency, and those of which may yet occur, in particular, the extra-judicial
38 executions and disappearances of human rights workers, including journalists, church leaders and
39 political activists, so that the perpetrators may be promptly brought to justice;
- 40 b) ensure that any member of the security forces suspected of committing human rights violations (in
41 particular extra-judicial executions, disappearances and death threats) are suspended from duty
42 pending a full investigation into their conduct;
- 43 c) and establish effective programs for the protection of peaceful human rights workers, victims and
44 witnesses called to give testimony or evidence during the judicial process from violence, threats or
45 other forms of intimidation.
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47 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that General Synod 25 call upon United Church of Christ members and churches to
48 unite in prayer to support the ecumenical-pastoral teams visiting the Philippines beginning in July, 2005.
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50 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that as a sign of our solidarity and in witness to our commitment to pray for our
51 partners in the Philippines, the General Minister and President of the UCC forward this resolution to the President of
52 the Republic of the Philippines and the Chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights. The resolution
53 shall also be forwarded to our global and ecumenical partners through the offices of the Chairperson of the National
54 Council of the UCCP, the General Secretary of the UCCP, and our own Wider Church Ministries.
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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this General Synod requests the East Asia and Pacific Office of Common
2 Global Ministries to regularly update the local churches and conferences of the United Church of Christ on the
3 human rights situation in the Philippines, especially as it impacts the life and work of the UCCP.
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5 Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds
6 available.