

4 April 2016

## **PASTORAL STATEMENT**

*“Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD.” (Psalm 130:1b)*

Nights are neither quiet nor peaceful for hungry and poor ones. When they cry out for food, this is also a cry for justice. The poor in our midst remind us that God’s abundant life is still a promise to be fulfilled—when farmers are left without adequate sustenance and pushed toward the brink of starvation, injustice has prevailed.

It is never a sin when poor farmers demand for food, but it is a sin to deny them food. And when the might of bullets and guns are used against the poor in their rightful demand for their basic needs, a monstrous violation of what is decent, upright, and just has been committed. Three people’s lives have been snuffed off the face of this earth in their simple plea for “bread;” entire communities of men, women and children ache in hunger, mourning and desolation, as their cries for food were answered through the barrel of a gun. As bullets rained upon them and pierced their bodies, the gathered crowd sought only the fulfilment of a simple prayer: rice for their families.

The flagrant and vicious use of live munitions to disperse the poor farmers on April 1, 2016 is abominable. No justification exists for this murderous and terror-inducing act by the Philippine National Police.

The shooting of the poor farmers that claimed the lives of three people on April 1 during their protest is condemnable. There is no justification for this murderous act of some concerned members of the PNP.

Likewise, the church asserts not only its right to protect the vulnerable ones, it is an imperative of our faith to care for the weak and the poor specially during the crucial moments when they are being beleaguered by the powerful and the mighty.

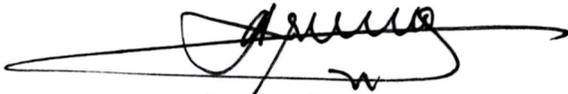
By offering our sanctuary, we are not just being hospitable to our farmers and hungry ones, but we are making them as one amongst us. When we welcome them in our “home”, our sanctuary, we do not only give our best, but we share with them our deep kinship. By offering them our sanctuaries, we recognize their suffering and hopes, their struggles and aspirations.

I am humbled by the capacity of the poor to claim their rights and defend their dignity. They are without “connections” to the corridors of power, but has never given up their HOPE.

I am thankful to the people's organizations, institutions and ecumenical community here and abroad who expressed their solidarity. My prayer is that you will keep us in your thoughts and that you will stand with the poor farmers until they have seen the fulfillment of their aspirations. The church can only fulfill its mission as long as it stands with the poor and side with Justice.

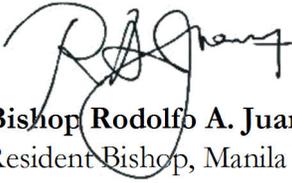
I call on our church members. Let this response of our church to give sanctuary to the poor strengthen our unity. We must not let the enemies of life divide us, but let the peace that is built on compassion and understanding lead us to where our hearts should be- Justice, Peace and Truth.

In the Service of Christ,

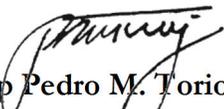


**Bishop Ciriaco Q. Francisco**  
Resident Bishop, Davao Episcopal Area

In conformity:



**Bishop Rodolfo A. Juan**  
Resident Bishop, Manila Episcopal Area



**Bishop Pedro M. Torio, Jr.**  
Resident Bishop, Baguio Episcopal Area