

# FIVE YEARS OF NO JUSTICE IS TOO LONG!

## Statement on the commemoration of the 5<sup>th</sup> Year of the unsolved murder of Atty. Benjamin “Benra” Ramos Jr. <sup>i</sup>

November 6, 2023

STATEMENT

06 November 2023



*“One death is too many” and this is not the time to be cowed and silent. May the conscience of the perpetrators of Atty. Ben and the numerous victims of extra-judicial killings and human rights violations pay their toll. We continue to call on responsible government leaders and authorities to lead the way to genuine and lasting peace by respecting human rights and abolishing the unjust Anti-Terrorism Act that has victimized the innocents and development activists.*



Today, we remember the brutal murder of our dearly longed people’s lawyer Atty. Benjamin Ramos, Jr. The family, colleagues, friends, and the poor communities who were served “pro-bono” by Atty. Ben continue to long for justice to be served for his assassination. For five years now, there has been no progress on the investigation by responsible government authorities. Are we being made to believe that justice is a privilege for the rich and in a powerful position in government?

According to Global Witness, for a decade, the Philippines has remained the most dangerous country for environmental defenders in Asia after 11 were killed in the country last year. In its 2021 report, 80% of the killings in the Philippines were connected to defenders protesting company operations, and a third of the deaths were linked to the mining industry, followed by the agribusiness sector. “As well as lethal attacks, defenders are also increasingly being subjected to criminalization as a strategy for silencing those who speak out, with laws weaponized against them”. Since 2012, the country has continued to be the worst place in Asia for land activists. At least 281 land defenders have been killed in the Philippines in the past decade.

The people’s lawyer, Atty. Ben Ramos, Jr. was also the Executive Director of Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG) until he was assassinated. As if it was not enough, his death did not deter the perpetrators of their systematic red-tagging of PDG, but instead, well-funded blatant disinformation, vilification, and heightened attacks on PDG have been much more blatant and evident. Human rights abuses, threats, intimidation, and coercion are escalating among people’s organizations in rural communities in the South of Negros Island. It is now becoming so revealing how the state treats these abuses. Although assistance was sought from the respective local government units, the abuses continued. Last September 2023, 2 identified military intelligence agents were again observed sneaking around outside the vicinity of the PDG office in Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental. “We remain confident that sooner or later, the truth will come out and justice will be served, in God’s perfect time”. PDG is a

legitimate civil society organization (CSO), whose sole purpose is to capacitate the poor and exploited communities to achieve genuine peace and sustainable development, and for more than three (3) decades has been implementing programs and services so that farmers and fisherfolks continue to produce sufficient, safe, and affordable food for all so that we equally enjoy a decent life of dignity.

“One death is too many” and this is not the time to be cowed and silent. May the conscience of the perpetrators of Atty. Ben and the numerous victims of extra-judicial killings and human rights violations pay their toll. We continue to call on responsible government leaders and authorities to lead the way to genuine and lasting peace by respecting human rights and abolishing the unjust Anti-Terrorism Act that has victimized the innocents and development activists.

**JUSTICE FOR ATTY. BEN RAMOS, JUSTICE FOR ALL VICTIMS OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS!!!###**

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<sup>i</sup> Statement of Paghida-et sa Kauswagan Development Group, Inc. (PDG) on the unsolved murder of Atty. Ben Ramos, Jr. since November 6, 2018.