

PHILIPPINES: PEN Canada condemns the attack in Ampatuan

November 25, 2009: PEN Canada joins the international community in condemning the politically motivated attack in the Philippines on November 23, 2009 in which at least seventeen journalists were killed. It calls on local authorities to take swift action to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

According to PEN's information, at least seventeen journalists were among the fifty seven people confirmed to have been killed when a convoy they were travelling in was attacked by gunmen in the Philippines on November 23, 2009. The convoy, which included journalists covering the forthcoming elections, was ambushed by approximately one hundred gunmen men in Ampatuan town whilst on its way to register local politician Ishmael 'Toto' Mangudadatu as a candidate for the provincial governorship elections. Ismael Mangudadatu has accused a clan said to be allied to President Arroyo of being behind the attack.

The free expression organization, Article 19 gives the following background:

Ampatuan is the home town of the incumbent governor Andal Ampatuan, and there are strong indications that the attack was politically motivated. According to the local media, Mangudadatu belongs to a clan that has been engaged in a long-running feud with the Ampatuan family, which has intermittently governed the region since 2001. This attack represents a troubling development in the Mindanao region, where Muslim rebels have been fighting for self-rule in the predominantly Roman Catholic nation.

PEN has been concerned for a number of years about the high levels of attacks against journalists in the Philippines, In the past five years, thirteen have been killed in the practice of their professions, making the country among the most dangerous in which to practice journalism.

PEN is alarmed at the number of journalists who continue to be targeted with apparent impunity for their reporting in the Philippines, and calls upon the Filipino authorities to ensure that all acts of violence against journalists are vigorously investigated and prosecuted so that those responsible are brought to justice.

Please send appeals:

- condemning the politically motivated attack in the Philippines on November 23, 2009 in which at least 17 journalists were killed;
- expressing alarm at the number of journalists who continue to be killed with impunity in the Philippines,
- urging that all necessary steps are taken to ensure that all acts of violence against journalists are vigorously investigated and prosecuted so that those responsible are brought to justice.

Her Excellency Gloria Macapagal Arroyo President

Office of the President
New Executive Building, Malacanang Palace Compound
J.P.Laurel Street, San Miguel, Metro Manila,
Philippines.
Fax: +632 735 80 06

Ambassador Jose Brillantes
Embassy of the Philippines
130 Albert Street, Suite 606,
Ontario K1P 5G4
Ottawa, Canada
Fax: (1-613) 233-4165
Email: ottawape@dfa.gov.ph

<http://cpj.org/2009/11/cpj-extends-aid-to-families-of-journalists-slain-i.php>

For more go to <http://cpj.org/killed/asia/philippines/>