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Philippines: Death and rape threats against Cristina Palabay

On 10 December 2019, woman human rights defender Cristina Palabay, received a phone call from an anonymous number threatening to kill her. Soon after, she received a number of texts with abusive and vulgar messages and threats of rape.

[Cristina “Tinay” Palabay](#) is the Secretary General of Karapatan, an alliance of individuals, groups and organisations working to promote and protect human rights in the Philippines. She is also a Regional Council Member (equivalent to Regional Board) of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development and Karapatan’s representative on an international coordinating group, including Front Line Defenders, on a global campaign to stop the killings of human rights defenders. Cristina Palabay additionally serves on the Joint Monitoring Committee as an independent observer of the peace agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, ensuring that international human rights and humanitarian law standards are upheld in the peace process. Recently, she was among the recipients of the Courage Awards of the Women Have Wings Foundation.

On 10 December 2019, after an event commemorating International Human rights Day, Cristina Palabay received a call and a series of text messages from an anonymous number threatening to rape and kill her. While some of the texts were defending the Duterte government, many included obscene and crude language roughly translating to - "Before I throw you to the ocean, I will have the drivers rape you", "You sound like a whore" and "prostitute dreamer".

Karapatan raised the possibility that the source of the threats could be the military or police agents, or an erratic follower of the Duterte government who have all, little or complete disregard for the ongoing and deteriorating human rights situation in the Philippines.

This is not the first time that the woman human rights defender has received threats. On 20 July 2017, Cristina Palabay received a threatening phone call ordering her to stop her human rights work in the wake of martial law in the southern Mindanao region. Over the last few years, the Philippines has been under the radar of the international community for its troubling stance on human rights and those who defend them.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the increasingly hostile environment for human rights defenders in the Philippines. It condemns the series of abusive threats, especially those that demean the woman human rights defender on the basis of her identity as a woman. It believes that the rape and death threats received by Cristina Palabay are the direct consequence of her legitimate and peaceful work for the protection of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Philippines to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats and intimidations against Cristina Palabay, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Cristina Palabay;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Philippines are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.



THE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS