

20 September 2021

## **Philippines: Human rights defender Juan Macababbad shot dead outside his residence**

On 15 September 2021 around 5:30 p.m., human rights defender **Juan Macababbad** was [shot dead](#) outside his residence in Surallah town, South Cotabato by two unidentified individuals. After the attack, the human rights defender was taken to Javelosa Hospital where he was pronounced dead.

[Juan Macababbad](#) was a public interest lawyer and the Vice Chair of the Union of Peoples' Lawyers in Mindanao (UPLM). He was also a member of the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL). He provided free legal service to poor and marginalized communities. He also served as legal counsel for indigenous people, teachers and political prisoners. The human rights defender was a part of several fact-finding missions, including on the massacre of indigenous peoples' leaders in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

On 15 September 2021, at approximately 5:30 p.m., human rights defender Juan Macababbad was shot by unknown individuals outside his home in Surallah town, south Catabato. It has been reported that the human rights defender sustained at least five gunshot wounds during the shooting and that the perpetrators fled the scene on a motorcycle. Juan Macababbad was taken to Javelosa Hospital where he was later pronounced dead. The police have stated that an investigation into the killing has been launched and they have identified persons of interest.

On 23 March 2021, the Supreme Court of the Philippines made a [statement](#) condemning the killing of lawyers and threats on judges in the country. According to NUPL, Juan Macababbad is among 57 other lawyers to be killed for their peaceful human rights work since President Rodrigo Duterte assumed power in 2016. Juan Macababbad is the third lawyer of NUPL to be killed.

Front Line Defenders condemns the killing of Juan Macababbad as it believes it to be in direct response to his peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights in the country. Front Line Defenders reiterates its concerns about the persistent violence and repression faced by human rights defenders and lawyers in the Philippines.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the relevant authorities in the Philippines to:**

1. Strongly condemn the killing of human rights defender Juan Macababbad;
2. Carry out an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Juan Macababbad, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Investigate reports of death threats and other forms of intimidation against human rights defenders and journalists, and adopt immediate measures to ensure their protection;
4. 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.