

## Get Involved, Make A Difference

- Volunteer your churches to serve as sanctuaries for victims of human rights violations and/or families.
- Refer a group, organization, family or an individual to host victims of human rights violations and/or families.
- Donate your time and skills. If you are a doctor, a psychiatrist or a psychologist, and you have time to spare, we would appreciate your assistance and participation.
- Share your blessings. Any financial assistance to augment our clients' needs will be very much appreciated.
- Learn more about the program by visiting our website/link at <http://www.nccphilippines.org> or you may contact our staff at 9270182/9228141.

*"Life and human dignity are gifts from God. They should be protected, not to be distorted, defaced and shattered"*

*(8th NCCP General Convention, November 17-19, 1977)*

*"Because everyone will work for peace there will be peace and security forever"*

*(Isaiah 32:17)*

*"Let us work for peace based on justice and open our Churches as Sanctuaries for the displaced, the dispossessed and those in flight for freedom"*

*(NCCP 21st General Convention, November 2003)*



**National Council of Churches in the Philip-**



**European Union**

Partners:  
Ecumenical Mission for Peace and Development (EMPD)  
Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights (KARAPATAN)

### **NCCP Human Rights Program**

879 EDSA, West Triangle, Quezon City  
Tel. 927-01-82/922-8141 \* Fax no: 926-70-76  
Website: [www.nccphilippines.org](http://www.nccphilippines.org)  
Email: [hrsanctuary@gmail.com](mailto:hrsanctuary@gmail.com)

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Churches as Havens

and Sanctuaries for

Human Rights

## The Program

Churches as Havens and Sanctuaries for Human Rights is a program aimed at promoting and protecting human rights by providing sanctuary and other services to victims of human rights violations and their families. It was initiated by the Program Unit on Faith, Witness and Service of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), in partnership with KARAPATAN or Alliance for the Advancement of Peoples Rights, a human rights group engaged in the investigation and documentation of cases of human rights violations and the Ecumenical Mission for Peace and Development (EMPD), an ecumenical organization of clergy and lay persons which provides holistic social services to internal refugees, displaced families and communities caused by armed conflict and development aggression.

The concept of sanctuaries, of safe havens dates back to biblical times, when God liberated the Hebrew people from the bondage of the Pharaoh's wicked rule and brought the first refugees from slavery to freedom. Sanctuaries serve as refuge and a place of protection from those fleeing persecution. It is in that spirit that monasteries and churches in ages past extended support to those in need. And it is also in this spirit that the NCCP and its partners have set up a program to offer sanctuaries to the victims and their families during these uncertain times.

## Recognizing the Need

*"Life and human dignity are gifts from God. They should be protected, not to be distorted, defaced and shattered"*

(8th NCCP General Convention, November 17- 19, 1977)

The climate of impunity that saw the loss of lives of many human rights and civil society leaders and activists including priests and journalists continue to worsen. Since 1 July 2010, the start of the new administration, KARAPATAN has already reported a number of human rights violations – 22 killed, 2 missing; 10 frustrated murders; 28 illegal arrests; 24 illegal detention; 10 torture cases; and 754 victims of forced evacuation.

From January 2001 to October 2009, KARAPATAN has documented 1,206 cases of extrajudicial or extralegal killings, 204 enforced disappearances and 1,026 victims of torture in the Philippines.

According to UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston, the Philippine government's counter insurgency plan, Oplan Bantay Laya, is the primary reason for the loss of lives of many civilians who have raised their voices denouncing human rights violations, thus instilling fear in the community. This has caused the narrowing of the country's political discourse.

## The Climate of Impunity

*"Let us work for peace based on justice and open our churches for sanctuaries for the displaced, the dispossessed and those in flight for freedom"*

(21st NCCP General Convention, November 17- 21, 2003)

The NCCP has a long history of engagement with social justice and human rights issues in the Philippines. Providing sanctuaries for victims of human rights violations, to witnesses and their families are part of its ministry. Never has this engagement been put to the test. Due to the Council's advocacy to its own member churches and associates to embrace the principle of opening their churches as sanctuaries, some of the NCCP member churches and associates have responded and offered their facilities for such.

For the NCCP, the set up for sanctuaries are temporary safe havens not only for witnesses but also for individuals or families whose lives are in danger from human rights violations usually by agents of the state. People who are served by these temporary shelters include those who are victims of internal displacement due to militarization.

## What We Do

### **Education and Advocacy for Churches**

We promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. The mission of the church is to protect God's gift of life by providing venues for discussion and making available advocacy materials such as primers, posters and audio-video materials to send the message.

### **Direct Services**

We provide direct services and immediate assistance such as *medical, educational, legal and paralegal, psychosocial intervention and livelihood assistance* to victims of human rights violations, human rights defenders and their families during emergency situations.

### **Mobile Sanctuaries**

We provide temporary shelters for the victims/survivors and their families whose security have been compromised.

### **Rebuilding Lives**

We provide assistance packages or grants to help rebuild the lives of survivors and/or the victims' families by providing educational assistance to their children and provide alternative livelihood for those who have been displaced.

### **Network Building for Sanctuary Providers**

We will build a network of sanctuary providers that can be tapped in providing temporary but secured havens. A system of referral will be put in place.

