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Philippines: Call for urgent safety measures and investigation of death threat against human rights lawyer Rey Gorgonio

27/02/2026

The undersigned legal and human rights organisations express their grave concern regarding a death threat directed at Atty. Rey Gorgonio, Chairperson of the Negros Chapter of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers (NUPL), in the Philippines.

The threat was issued on 25 January 2026 in the context of Atty. Gorgonio's lawful professional activities, including the provision of legal assistance and advocacy on behalf of farming communities opposing large-scale plantation operations in Negros Occidental, as well as his work concerning the treatment of detainees. The content and circumstances of the threat raise serious concerns for his safety and appear intended to intimidate him and disrupt access to legal counsel for his clients.

We have been informed that the threat was conveyed via a text message referencing Atty. Gorgonio by name, warning against his continued work and urging others to sever their association with him. The language used was explicitly menacing and implied grave consequences should he persist in his professional activities.

This incident does not occur in isolation. It forms part of a broader pattern of intimidation, harassment, and coercion affecting development workers, farmers, civil

society and the lawyers that represent them in Negros. The [report](#) of an international fact-finding mission published in 2025 identified a pattern of targeting of legal professionals undertaking human rights or politically sensitive cases in the Philippines which commonly escalates from surveillance, threats and intimidation to physical attacks and extra-judicial killing.

In this context, our organisations are gravely concerned for the safety of Atty. Gorgonio, particularly as this threat echoes earlier attacks against lawyers in Negros, including the 2018 killing of Atty. Benjamin Ramos, former Secretary General of NUPL–Negros, and considering Atty. Gorgonio now represents many of Atty. Ramos' former clients. The persistence of impunity in cases involving attacks against lawyers, including the killing of Atty. Ramos, heightens the risk that threats such as those against Atty. Gorgonio may escalate.

Attacks and threats against lawyers represent a direct assault on the independence of the legal profession and undermine the right of individuals and communities to access justice. Such actions create a chilling effect deterring other lawyers from taking up cases which are vital to ensure human rights and access to justice for all in the Philippines.

Under international standards, including the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, states are obliged to ensure that lawyers can perform their professional functions without intimidation, harassment, or improper interference (Principle 16), and provide adequate protection when their safety is threatened as a result of their work (Principle 17).

In light of the above, the undersigned organisations call on the authorities of the Republic of the Philippines to:

1. Ensure immediate and effective protection measures for Atty. Rey Gorgonio and those working with him, in consultation with him and his professional associations;
2. Conduct a prompt, impartial, and transparent investigation into the death threat and related incidents, with a view to identifying those responsible and holding them accountable;
3. Ensure lawyers are not associated with their clients or their clients' causes, and can conduct their professional duties without intimidation, harassment, or undue interference; and
4. Guarantee the independence of the legal profession and the right of communities to unhindered access to legal counsel, in line with domestic and international legal obligations.

The undersigned organisations express their solidarity with Atty. Rey Gorgonio, with NUPL–Negros, and with the communities they represent. Protecting lawyers who defend the rights of others is essential to the rule of law and to the effective protection of human rights.

Signatories: (in an alphabetical order)

1. Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD), Turkey
2. Center for Research and Elaboration on Democracy (CRED)
3. Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (Conseil des Barreaux Européens, CCBE)
4. Day of the Endangered Lawyer Foundation
5. Defense Commission of the Barcelona Bar Association
6. Democratic Jurists Italy
7. Democratic Lawyers of Switzerland
8. European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH)
9. European Democratic Lawyers (AED)
10. Human Rights Institute of the Brussels Bar
11. Indian Association of Lawyers (IAL)
12. International Association of Democratic Lawyers
13. International Association of Russian Advocates
14. International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
15. International Observatory for Lawyers at Risk (OIAD)
16. GeBehatokia - Basque Country Human Rights Observatory
17. Law Society of England and Wales
18. Lawyers for Lawyers
19. Lawyers for the Rule of Law, United States
20. Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
21. Legal Centre Lesvos
22. Nepal Peace and Solidarity Council
23. Progressive Lawyers' Association, (ÇHD), Turkey
24. Republikanischer Anwältinnen- und Anwälteverein (RAV e.V.)