

International Peace Observers Network (IPON) e.V.

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Philippine human rights defender shot dead – International Peace Observers Network invites to international online press meeting on August 24, 2020, 10.30 am (CEST)

August 20, 2020 - Zara Alvarez, a 39-years old, Philippine human rights defender was brutally killed on the evening of August 17, 2020 in Bacolod City, Philippines. Johannes Richter, coordination member of the International Peace Observers Network (IPON), calls for a proper investigation into the circumstances of Zara Alvarez' murder and invites interested journalists to join the online press meeting to be held on August 24, 2020, 10.30 am (CEST). For this purpose, Richter asks to register until August 21, 2020 under kontakt@ipon-philippines.org.

Since her youth, Zara Alvarez was actively involved in NGOs and built a strong profile as a social activist and rights advocate in the Philippines. Human rights advocacy and education were at the core of her work. Most recently she worked as a research and advocacy officer for the Negros Integrated Health Program for Community Development and as a paralegal for Karapatan, a human rights group. Her life was defined by her firm commitment to the needs of marginalized groups.

Alvarez' activism remained persistent despite numerous defamations, threats and harassments. A frequent target of trumped-up charges, she was unlawfully arrested for a year and a half and was only recently acquitted after more than eight years of prolonged trials. These harassments could not diminish her role as a staunch supporter in the fight for justice for her people.

“During this time IPON worked closely with Zara in the context of human rights monitoring. She became an invaluable partner, confidante and friend,” adds Margarethe Pfeifer, a former human rights observer in the Philippines.

Zara Alvarez' case stands for at least 182 of human rights defenders who have lost their lives in the context of brutal killings since President Rodrigo Duterte took office in 2016. Amid a culture of impunity, the Philippines is experiencing shrinking spaces for civil society to act.

“IPON condemns politically motivated violence, intimidation as well as killings and wishes for an end to extrajudicial killings on the Philippines. We demand that investigations into the circumstances of all killings of human rights defenders be conducted in accordance with the Philippines' obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” says Richter.

The International Peace Observers Network (IPON) is an independent, non-violent, non-profit human rights organization based in Hamburg, Germany. Its main work is to provide protective support to human rights defenders and to monitor the human rights situation in the Philippines. IPON aims to a situation where human rights are respected, and the accompanied groups are able to undertake their work free from threats, violence and repression.

For further information: <https://ipon-philippines.org>

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