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Lawyers Under Fire: Attacks on Human Rights Attorneys in the Philippines (1988)

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LAWYERS UNDER FIRE

Attacks on Human Rights Attorneys

in the Philippines

Lawyers Committee for Human Rights

Asia Watch

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Preface

This report describes recent cases of murder, threats and harassment of human rights lawyers in the Philippines. It is based on a mission to the Philippines undertaken by Norman Dorsen and Nadine Strossen.

Professor Dorsen, the Stokes Professor of Law at the New York University Law School and President of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and Professor Strossen, Visiting Professor of Law at New York Law School and General Counsel to the ACLU, visited the Philippines from July 19 to July 24, 1988 at the invitation of the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG). Professor Dorsen went on behalf of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, and the International League for Human Rights. Professor Strossen represented Asia Watch. They were accompanied throughout much of their stay by Asia Watch cooperating attorney David Pierce; Lance Lindblom, personal representative of the President of the American Bar Association; and Wood Foster, representing the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee.

While in Manila, the group met with numerous government and military officials, including: Fidel Ramos, Secretary of National Defense; General Renato de Villa, Armed Forces Chief of Staff, and other members of the General Staff; Raul Manglapus, Secretary of Foreign Affairs; and Mary Concepcion Bautista, Chairwoman of the Commission on Human Rights. In Cebu, Prof. Dorsen, Prof. Strossen and Mr. Lindblom met with Tomas Osmena, Mayor of Cebu; Brig. Gen. Jesus Hermosa, Cebu Regional Command; and Brig. Gen. Mariano Baccay, Metrodiscom Commander, Philippine Constabulary. The delegation requested but was not able to meet with President Corazon C. Aquino.

The group also met with U.S. officials in the Philippines, including Ambassador Nicholas Platt; James Wagner, Acting U.S. Consul, Cebu; and Second Secretary Lowry Taylor. In late July, Professor Dorsen, along with James Ross of the Lawyers Committee, met with David Lambertson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and

Pacific Affairs; and Charles Salmon and James Zumwalt of the Office of Philippine Affairs of the U.S. State Department.

On July 21, the delegation participated in the International Lawyers Forum held under the auspices of FLAG. Participants in the Forum, which included lawyers from Asia, Europe and the United States, issued a statement concerning the recent attacks against lawyers, which is attached to this report in the Appendix.

This report was written by Norman Dorsen and Nadine Strossen. It was edited by James Ross of the Lawyers Committee. The report expresses the views of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, Asia Watch and the International League for Human Rights, and should not be taken to reflect the opinions of other participants in the International Lawyers Forum.

We express our gratitude to FLAG, the Protestant Lawyers League of the Philippines, and others for assisting us in the preparation of this report.

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