

8 December 2017

Philippines: Human rights defender Father Marcelito Paez killed

On 4 December 2017, Father Marcelito “Tito” Paez, coordinator of the Rural Missionaries of Philippines in Central Luzon, was shot dead in Nueva Ecija.

Father Marcelito “Tito” Paez was a former parish priest in Gumbia and the regional coordinator of Rural Missionaries of Philippines in Central Luzon. In 1980, he was the leader of the Central Luzon Alliance for a Sovereign Philippines (CLASP), and campaigned for the removal of US military bases in the Philippines. He was also an anti-nuclear activist.

On 4 December, at around 8pm, Fr. Marcelito “Tito” Paez was shot while driving his vehicle in San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija. He was shot by unidentified assailants riding a motorcycle. He was taken to San Leonardo Hospital where he died at 10.45pm. Earlier that day, Fr Marcelito “Tito” Paez assisted in facilitating the release of peasant organiser and political prisoner Rommel Tucay, who was detained at the provincial jail in Cabanatuan city.

The climate of impunity that prevails in the Philippines has resulted in the serious deterioration of the situation for human rights defenders in the country. Defenders of economic, social and cultural rights, including land and environmental defenders, are among the most targeted groups. Filipino NGO [Karapatan](#) reported there have been 98 victims of extrajudicial killings between July 2016 and September 2017. On 28 November 2017, HRDs [Elisa Badayos](#) and [Eleuterio Moises](#) were shot and killed in the Negros Oriental province.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killing of Father Marcelito “Tito” Paez which it believes was solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful activities in the defence of human rights in the Philippines.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Philippines to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of human rights defender Father Marcelito “Tito” Paez, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Publicly condemn the killing of Father Marcelito “Tito” Paez and the targeting of human rights defenders, and take measures to ensure their effective protection;
3. 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.