

PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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The peace is key because internal armed conflict has led to the deaths of so many, the displacement of hundreds of thousands, and human suffering on an even wider scale. The protection of human rights is vital because when this protection is undermined, as it has been in the Philippines, summary executions, enforced disappearances, torture, and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, become all too common.

When the Covenant speaks of "putting an end to political killings," it directly addresses the inherent right to life. When it talks of, "due respect" for the "diverse voices in our society," it highlights the right to hold opinions without interference, and the right to freedom of expression. Moreover, the Peace Covenant goes on to enumerate some of the "basic needs of the people." As it does so, it calls attention to the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to adequate food and housing, the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the right to education.

Human rights abuses are both a cause as well as a symptom of conflicts, and action to tackle them is often a vital component of policies to bring about peace. Action to protect human rights may also convince parties. That their fears of discrimination, domination and annihilation can be addressed by means of other than violence.

Recognizing that the change we seek will only come our way, when we seek it together, because no vested interest, no advocate of the status quo, no armed group, and no amount of wealth or power, can stand in the way of a people, possessed of courage, acting out of conviction, and motivated by a desire to make this nation a better place, for our us, and our children's children.