

HUMAN RIGHTS MAKE MAN HUMAN

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No cause is more worthy than the cause of human rights. Human rights are more than legal concepts: they are the essence of man. That is why they are called human rights: deny them and you deny man's humanity.

Almost everywhere human rights are extolled. Yet almost everywhere they are violated, and nowhere with less shame than in our country. Here men in government, aided or abetted by foreign governments, international institutions and transnational corporations, debase the cause of human rights as they devalue our currency for ignoble purposes and with pernicious results. At times, they brazenly deny that anyone's right have been or are being violated. When their denials begin to sound hollow even to themselves, they admit with feigned sorrow that some violations have taken place, yet quickly add that the violations do not reflect policy, but are "aberrations" caused by overzealousness in protecting national security or promoting economic development- as if Filipino exists for the economy and the state, and not the reverse. Or they dismiss the cause of human rights with impatience, if not contempt, as an imposition of western culture alien to the Filipino soul-as if Filipino were less human than the men and women of the West. Most often, they raise their right hand in solemn pledge to uphold human rights, but with their left hand create situations and bless policies and practices that trample upon these rights.

In truth, distinguishing mark o government these days is not so much corruption or incompetence as a grim determination to displace the straightforward with the devious and to smother thought of slogans. That government succeeds partially is due not only power over mass media but also to our ignorance: too many of us are not aware of our rights or of the ways we can enforce them. So it is especially urgent that we restore the cause of human rights to its pristine purity and respond to the call which other nations has made upon "every individual and every organ o society...to strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms... and to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance.