

**Police General Oscar Albayalde**

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Dear General Albayalde:

I am writing to express my concern over death threats received by human rights defender in the Philippines, **Cristina Palabay**. Cristina is the secretary general of Karapatan, a coalition of several human rights groups and individuals. On 22 April, she received a text message from an unidentified person, warning her and several other human rights defenders that they are targeted to be killed this year.

The threats were all the more alarming as they came just hours after another human rights advocate, Bernardino Patigas, was gunned down in Escalante City, Negros Occidental province. The killing of Patigas and the threats against Palabay and other human rights defenders come amid what appears to be an increasingly deadlier campaign against human rights defenders and political activists.

I note with grave concern that Patigas is the second human rights defender killed who was on a supposed 'hit list' disseminated by unknown individuals in Negros Occidental in 2018. The list, reported by Philippine media, asked the public to report through a specified phone number the whereabouts of these people, putting their lives at great risk. Also on the list was human rights lawyer Benjamin Ramos who was killed in November 2018. Dozens of other human rights activists, including environmental defenders, have also been killed since June 2016, as reported by media and human rights groups within and outside the country. All these point to the gravity of the threats against Palabay and other activists.

I therefore urge your office to act swiftly to protect human rights defenders in the country. Specifically, I call on you to:

- Open a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the death threats against Cristina Palabay and other human rights defenders in the country, and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials;
- Put in place effective mechanisms to protect human rights defenders at risk in consultation with them and in accordance to their wishes, and ensure they are able to carry out their work without fear of reprisals; and
- Launch an effective investigation into the killings of human rights defenders and bring all those responsible to justice in fair trials.

Sincerely,