



# Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)

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## **A Tribute to Fr. Rudy Romano**

*You came to us as God's precious gift  
As a friend; a retreat master;  
A co-rallyist during Marcos' darkest years;  
A good shepherd to the little ones of God's flock;  
A spiritual adviser and an ardent follower of Christ Jesus,  
The Most Holy Redeemer.*

*You touched our lives in many a different ways;  
Opened your doors to the weary activists for social justice;  
Listened to our stories in as much as you shared yours;  
Shared our pains and anxieties; our fears and uncertainties;  
Owned our dreams and aspirations  
For a country where human rights are respected  
and the sanctity of life upheld;  
Where there shall reign the New Heaven and the New Earth.*

*In the spirit of accompaniment and camaraderie  
You immersed with the workers in their cry for just working conditions;  
Your inspiring presence had lifted the hearts of the urban poor  
Who were threatened with demolition and homelessness;  
You lived with the farmers in the hinterlands of Cebu  
As they struggled for land and life;  
You marched with the students  
in their search for academic freedoms;  
In so doing, you have truly lived up to Vatican II's  
preferential option for the poor,  
the deprived, the oppressed, the alienated and the struggling.*

*Yet, in one cowardly and desperate act to silence a just man,  
The forces of darkness plucked you, our good shepherd, from the bosom of your flock;  
They forced you to go with them;  
And never returned you to where you belonged;  
Since that fateful day of July 11, 1985,  
you have been forcibly disappeared.*

(Excerpt from a Poem by Mary Aileen Diez-Bacalso)

Fr. Rudy Romano, a Redemptorist priest, social justice activist and lover of the poor and the marginalized is remembered with deep honor today, 11<sup>th</sup> July on his 32<sup>th</sup> year of enforced disappearance. His body was never found, the perpetrators were neither caught nor prosecuted. Witnesses and documents say he was abducted by military intelligence in Labangon, Cebu City because of his staunch anti- Marcos and strong social justice stance. His case was the most highlighted *desaparecido* story under the Marcos dictatorship.

In 2012, the Philippines passed its domestic law criminalizing enforced disappearances. This was a result of a long drawn struggle after many other cases of enforced disappearances involving social activists. Under the era of RA 10353, or the Anti-Enforced Disappearance Act of 2012, many cases of enforced disappearances have neither been filed in court nor resolved. The victory of having a local law is threatened by a growing culture of impunity and hatred in a nation which worked hard to institutionalize democracy and democratic institutions and processes.

Because of the seeds of his bravery, other Fr. Romanos continue his advocacy to fight for truth, justice and democracy. The political, civil and economic liberties that every Filipino now enjoys is a part of Fr. Rudy's legacy. It is with a heavy heart that we remember him 32 years after a vicious dictatorship's downfall and after a new Constitution that embedded civil, political as well as economic, social and cultural rights were crafted.

The Filipino people are now tackling a great challenge involving issues of extra-judicial killings and the rise of impunity. Let us reflect and remember what Fr. Rudy taught us. The lessons go beyond his bravery and courage. It was most of all his love and respect for human rights which are worth our commendation. A nation genuinely survives and progresses only when human rights are respected and democratic spaces are enhanced and widened.

It would be a fitting tribute to Fr. Rudy Romano for the Philippines to ratify and implement the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons From Enforced Disappearance. We must not just aim for a world without poverty. While we aim for economic empowerment, we must achieve a world where all human rights are respected and no one is harmed regardless of his or her beliefs and ideology.

Signed and authenticated by:



**KHURRAM PARVEZ**  
Chairman



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Secretary-General