

**KILLINGS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE
PHILIPPINES:
SEARCHING FOR PROTECTION**

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TILMAN JAN PAPESCH

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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KILLINGS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE PHILIPPINES: SEARCHING FOR PROTECTION

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M.A. (HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATISATION)

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ABSTRACT

Under the Philippine Government's ongoing 'War on Drugs', the killings of human rights defenders (HRDs) have become even more frequent than in previous years. Making the situation worse is the lack of government efforts to protect HRDs from lethal targeting. Thus it has become more important for activists to focus on protection techniques which do not rely on government responsiveness to advocacy efforts. These techniques, which neither contradict nor undermine advocacy work, can be termed Non-Advocacy Protection Techniques (NAPTs). NAPTs refer to those efforts HRDs' use to reduce their own vulnerability by changing certain habits such as disguising oneself to escape surveillance. Furthermore, institutionalized support efforts, such as HRD trainings, protection grants and other activities are offered by domestic and international organizations like the EU or Front Line Defenders. The research analyzes the use of personal protection techniques by Philippine HRDs to identify possible gaps between the protection efforts of the HRDs and the perception of international organizations towards the protection of HRDs. For this, interviews with colleagues and relatives of the killed HRDs as well as experts in the field were conducted. It was disclosed that self-organized protection techniques, such as reducing one's own vulnerability, countering surveillance and temporary relocation as well as HRD Trainings are used by HRDs in the Philippines. A lack of awareness of international institutionalized protection techniques and misperceptions between defenders and organizations have been identified as crucial for the failure to use generally available international institutionalized protection techniques, such as protection grants and protection manuals. The research reveals different perceptions on the accessibility of certain protection techniques which leads to a lack of awareness and use among Philippine HRDs. In addition, power relations between defenders and organizations are analyzed as a central topic throughout the paper, identifying greater equality in relations between both sides when HRDs protect themselves via NAPTs. Eventually it is argued that cooperation projects between international and domestic organizations might help to tackle these problems and thereby enhance the usage of NAPTs and ultimately protect defenders in the Philippines.

KEY WORDS: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS /NAPT /PROTECTION /KILLINGS /PHILIPPINES

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