

**PRESS STATEMENT INTERNATIONAL VERIFICATION & FACT FINDING MISSION
D.D. 12 NOVEMBER 2008**

In June 2006, the Dutch Lawyers for Lawyers Foundation (**L4L**) organized an *International Fact Finding Mission* (IFFM) on the attacks against Filipino lawyers and judges. Amongst other things, it concluded that Filipino lawyers and judges were threatened, harassed or even killed while carrying out their legal profession.

Since then, we have been aware of various developments in the Philippines. The Melo Commission was installed and reported its findings in the beginning of 2007. The Philippine government claims that it has followed up the Melo Commissions' recommendations and has taken other measures to address the killings.

However, international and Philippine civil society organizations claim that the reality remains that the killings, threats and harassment of persons involved in social activism, including lawyers and judges, still continue.

In view of the above, **L4L** organized a follow up Verification & Fact Finding Mission (**IVFFM**) in order to:

- (a) verify the status of cases of harassed or killed lawyers and judges investigated by the IFFM in June 2006;
- (b) verify and collect as many findings as possible regarding several new cases of threats, harassment and killings of human rights lawyers and judges as well as the (lack of) reaction thereto by the competent Philippine authorities;
- (c) verify and collect as many findings as possible regarding the effectiveness of the measures the Philippine government claims to have taken to address the *problem of extrajudicial killings*, and
- (d) inform the appropriate Philippine authorities and the international community, more specifically any national and international lawyers organization about these findings.

So far, the IVFFM has interviewed lawyers and judges facing threats, relatives of killed lawyers and judges, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, representatives of various state agencies concerned such as PNP, Task Force USIG, NBI, IALAG, DILG, civil society organizations and the CHRP. In addition, interviews are scheduled with the Ombudsman and a representative of DoJ.

Today, the IVFFM will only presents its initial findings. A full report with its conclusions and recommendations will follow in due course.