

# The Beaconsfield Initiative

## **Individuals and congregations urged to protest the Philippines government's attack on freedom of information**

The Beaconsfield Initiative urges you and your congregation to join a campaign condemning the Philippines government's recent shutdown of the nation's largest broadcaster. This attack on the freedom of the press constitutes an overt human rights violation, particularly dangerous during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Beaconsfield Initiative, through the newly formed Canadian section of the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP-Canada), is meeting with Canadian members of Parliament, arguing that it is Canada's duty to openly condemn the rulers of the Philippines for arbitrarily shutting down ABS-CBN, its largest broadcaster, on May 5, 2020. Unbiased news, not government propaganda, is essential to prevent more Filipino deaths and serious illness, say protesters in the Philippines, Canada, and other countries. If you would like to know more about how you can help this effort on behalf of this Southeast Asian nation and its 107 million Filipino citizens, contact the Beaconsfield Initiative at [beaconsfieldphilippines@gmail.com](mailto:beaconsfieldphilippines@gmail.com), or call Rev. Patricia Lisson at 514-241-9036.

The Beaconsfield Initiative is sponsored by Conseil régional Nakonha:ka Regional Council and Beaconsfield United Church on Montreal's West Island. It was created ten years ago to protest against the Canadian mining industry's work in the Philippines because it was having a serious negative effect on human rights there.

Today's Beaconsfield Initiative protest is only one of many. The United Nations recently reviewed President Duterte's government since it took power in 2016. The UN report was described in the New York Times on June 4 as a "scathing" list of widespread human rights violations. In separate statements, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP); the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP); and the Asian American Journalist Association's Asia Chapter

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(AAJA-Asia) condemned the government's May 5 media shutdown. ABS-CBN is not the only target of repressive measures regarding press freedom. On May 5, 2021, less than 24 hours after the announcement of the broadcaster's closure, Cornelio Pepino, a media worker, (also known as Rex Cornelio), was shot dead in Dumaguete City. Critical of national and local politics, Pepino is the third media worker to be murdered in Dumaguete City since 2018 and the 16th nationwide since the 2016 presidential election. The website Rappler and its chief executive officer, Maria Ressa, are facing close to 12 court cases filed by the Philippines government. And, following pressures from the government, the journal The Philippine Daily Inquirer was sold in 2017 to billionaire Ramon Ang, an ardent supporter of Duterte's government.