

# Full Text of Global Appeal 2007

Issued in Manila, the Philippines on January 29, 2007

*"Every person is born free and equal in dignity and human rights." \**

Many people think that leprosy no longer exists. But it does — and also the stigma and discrimination it causes.

Discrimination against persons affected by leprosy is one of the oldest and most pervasive examples of social injustice in the history of the human race.

Even today, millions of men, women and children continue to suffer social, economic and legal discrimination, simply because they or a family member have had leprosy.

Leprosy is curable disease. Yet misguided notions about leprosy persist, with devastating consequences for those thus stigmatized.

Denying the inherent human rights of anyone on the basis of disease is indefensible.

Discrimination can never be justified.

Silence on this issue is not acceptable. We urge you to join us in the fight to end this social injustice

Together, let us create a society in which every individual is free and equal in dignity and human rights.

## SIGNATORIES

The appeal was signed by 16 people affected by leprosy from 13 countries, and by Goodwill Ambassador Yohei Sasakawa.

Present at the launch ceremony at the Philippine

International Convention Center in Manila were Adi Yosep (Indonesia), Hilarion M. Guia (the Philippines), Sarat Kumar Dutta (India), P.K. Gopal (India), and Zhuo You (China).

The other signatories are Shehu Abdullah S/Fada (Nigeria), Birke Nigatu (Ethiopia), Cristiano Claudio Torres (Brazil), José Ramirez, Jr. (USA), Kofi Nyarko (Ghana), Lak Kiri (Cambodia), Michihiro Koh (Japan), Natália Isabel da Graça Marçal (Angola), Nicole H. Holmes (USA), Parawati Oli (Nepal) and Vadenora da Cruz Rodrigues (Brazil).

The appeal can also be found online at the website listed on this page. ■



## FROM THE EDITORS

### POLITICAL AND PERSONAL

Dr. Antonio G.M. La Vina, the dean of the Ateneo School of Government, said it best. The global appeal launched in Manila on January 29 is in many ways a political event, directed at all governments and all peoples. But because the appeal is signed by people affected by leprosy, this political event is truly a personal one, too, he said.

The dean had his own personal memories. He recalled as a small boy growing close to a young man who lived in the family home. One day, the man mysteriously disappeared and they later learned he had died in a leprosy sanitarium. The young man had often painted landscapes and loved nature, and although the family only spoke of him in whispers, his memory was everywhere in the pictures he had left behind. "This political event is also personal for me," the dean said.

The previous day, participants at a one-day National Forum were treated to a similar blend

of the political and the personal. The forum produced a Philippine Declaration, a political document demanding respect for the human rights of people affected by leprosy and making a number of specific demands. Yet it was forged on the personal testimonies of people such as Zalika G. Dimalenda, once a promising student and now a volunteer health worker and day-care assistant; in between, a diagnosis of leprosy had brought discrimination and despair and led her to attempt suicide on more than one occasion.

As in many countries, there is still stigma and discrimination in the Philippines toward people affected by leprosy. But the inherent warmth of its people, the sense of mission possessed by many committed individuals and their enthusiastic participation in the events of January 28-29 lead us to hope that this political-personal appeal from Manila will strike a chord near and far.

## Reference

\* From the First Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

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