



## **Mindanao Manifesto**

Mindanao Independent Press Council

October 26, 2018

Eden Natures Park and Resort Davao City

We, members of the Mindanao Independent Press Council (MIPC) from various media outfits and organizations, would like to call on the Philippine National Police as well as the Presidential Task Force on Media Security to immediately act to end the continued practice of requiring journalist to sign as witnesses to the inventory of contraband and other items seized during anti-drug law enforcement operations as it was made a legal requirement under Section 21 (1) of Republic Act No. 9165 of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drug Act of 2002 which mandated:

*Carmona*

“ The apprehending team having initial custody and control of the drugs shall, immediately after seizure and confiscation, physical inventory and photograph the same in the presence of the accused or the person/s from whom such items were confiscated and/or seized, or his/her representative or counsel, a representative or counsel, a representative from the media and the Department of Justice, and any elected public official who shall be required to sign the copies of the inventory and be given a copy thereof...”

*[Signature]*

Although this provision has since been amended by Republic Act No. 10640, enacted on July 15, 2014, which made media witnesses optional, our colleagues throughout Mindanao report that law enforcement units continue requiring them to sign on as witnesses, even posted their photos of reporters on social media that stems from the fact that it unnecessarily places journalists at risk of retaliation from crime syndicates, on the one hand, and also exposes them to prosecution.

We are also concerned over the limited information provided to the media since the Marawi siege happened a year ago, whereas all source of information have been centralized and controlled by the military and police officers.

In fact, in the case of Basilan reporters they were not allowed to file reports in the absence of official investigation report.

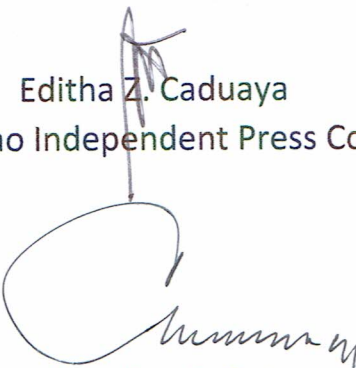
Another report, media covering the counter-insurgency program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines sometimes gets animosities from army officials when they also cover human rights abuses aired by militant groups.

We are also fully alarmed by the rising incidents of threats, harassment and intimidation targeting members of the press due to their reporting and critical commentaries, and the use of social media bots to spread lies and disinformation or "fake news".

We urge the authorities to fast track the prosecution of persons behind harassment and killings of media in Mindanao who remained at large. In lieu with this, we ask the authorities to strengthen the protection of journalist to exercise free press and the freedom of expression.

As we aspire free press in Mindanao, we members of the Mindanao Independent Press Council urged our authorities and law enforcement to act on these matters.

Editha Z. Caduaya  
Mindanao Independent Press Council



General Carlito G. Galvez Jr.  
Armed Forces of the Philippines