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MISEREOR
● IHR HILFSWERK

Dear Honorable Senators of the Republic of the Philippines,

We are writing to you today as you will soon decide whether the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) for children should be lowered from 15 to 12 years old.

It is not our duty to advise you on how you should decide. Clearly, you alone can decide on this very important matter. Being the ones responsible for the future of your country, you certainly are always guided by your conscience. Like all of us, you must justify what you do before God and humanity.

Our only concern is that you see to it that you follow your conscience.

As we also know in our country, children are innocent and they need protection and security. They need parents' warmth and encouragement and a chance to have a good life. Without hope and confidence no child can really develop and hone its potential.

Children are not to blame for the precarious situations in which they live in. Unfortunately, too many of them suffer deprivations and the worst forms of violence that come with poverty.

We believe that we have the responsibility to help indigent families so that children may receive the guidance and support that they need.

It was for a film shooting for a German television crime series that we as film actors (Dietmar Bär, Klaus Behrendt, Joe Bausch) had visited your country for the first time in 1997. The film that we made showed how Germans also took part in the commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children. We have become advocates of children's rights since then, supporting the work of

the People's Recovery, Empowerment and Development Assistance (PREDA) Foundation in Olongapo since 1998.

As supporters of the work of the Preda Foundation for upholding children's rights, our organizations Tatort – Straßen der Welt e.V. and Misereor e.V. are able to generate considerable amount of donations in Germany which we then send to PREDA for its various projects to protect children and minors who get victimized by the sex industry as well as those children who come in conflict with the law.

Some of us visited the Philippines again early this year and saw some positive changes. You have passed the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (JJWA) in 2006, for example, thereby paving the way to the creation of programs that address the needs of children in conflict with the law.

Therefore, we call on you to keep the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 15 years old as stipulated in the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act and continue the efforts that you have started in promoting restorative and transformative justice instead of imposing more punitive measures against the well-being and welfare of the Filipino children.

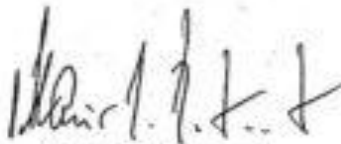
Lack of discernment and experience do push vulnerable children towards unlawful activities. But as we all know, jails are not at all effective in keeping them away from a life of crime. Please help create more compassionate measures that would instead empower children who get in conflict with the law. Let us help them believe that they do have a chance to live a good life and achieve a better future.

Yours sincerely,



Dietmar Bär

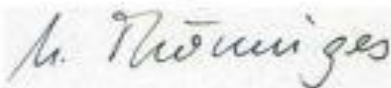
German actors, Co-Founders and Members of the Board, Tatort-Strassen der Welt e. V.



Klaus J. Behrendt



Jo Bausch



Ulrike Thönniges

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