



## INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEMOCRATIC LAWYERS

CHAUSÉE DE HAECHT 55, 1210, BRUXELLES-BRUSSELS, BELGIQUE-BELGIUM

info@iadllaw.org www.iadllaw.org

# International Lawyers Call for the Grant of Absolute Pardon for Filipina Mary Jane Veloso

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) commends the recent transfer of Mary Jane Veloso from Indonesia to the Philippines, thereby sparing her from the death penalty. This development marks a significant step towards justice for Ms. Veloso, a Filipino migrant worker who has endured 14 years of imprisonment in death row in Indonesia.

We have followed closely over the years the case of Mary Jane Veloso, a victim of human trafficking. Deceived by a drug syndicate, she was coerced into unknowingly transporting illegal substances to Indonesia, leading to her arrest in 2010. She was sentenced to die by firing squad in 2015 but was granted a temporary reprieve prompted by overwhelming calls and a global campaign to give her an opportunity to tell her story.

She remained on death row until a repatriation agreement was signed between Indonesia and the Philippines recently and she was finally transferred to the Philippines, her home country a few days ago.

Her case exemplifies the vulnerabilities of migrant workers, particularly impoverished women, who, in their pursuit of better opportunities, for lack of any decent work at home, become targets of exploitation. With her return to the Philippines, Ms. Veloso now has the opportunity to testify against the traffickers who orchestrated her exploitation, thereby aiding in her pursuit of genuine justice.

Unfortunately, while other foreign prisoners like the five Australians who were part of the Bali 9 death row convicts were immediately freed by the Australian government upon transfer from Indonesia, Mary Jane Veloso was imprisoned upon her repatriation.

Philippine President Marcos Jr., who has the power to grant her executive clemency and absolute pardon, when asked by the media on the matter remarked, “We are still far from that... We will leave it to the judgment of our legal experts to determine whether the provision of clemency is appropriate.”

This bureaucratic excuse is unnecessary. The IADL believes that Mary Jane Veloso, a victim of trafficking, has suffered long enough and the grant of clemency is primarily a presidential prerogative which may be given purely on a humanitarian basis, without the need of a lengthy administrative and legal review by experts. Justice delayed is justice denied.

We implore the Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. to free Mary Jane Veloso, by way of absolute pardon on compassionate grounds, in this, the Season of Peace.

Ms. Veloso's repatriation should also set a precedent for the Philippine government in proactively addressing the cases of the 59 other Filipinos on death row worldwide. We also urge host governments holding the prisoners, to follow the Indonesian example and facilitate their repatriation to their home state. This enlightened development in penology is exemplary and commendable.

Finally, we join the global call of migrants' rights advocates, human rights defenders, and grassroots organizations demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Mary Jane Veloso.

Despite the challenges ahead of us, the recent developments in her case are a victory and a testament to the tireless efforts of Mary Jane's family, grassroots organizations, migrants' rights advocates, people's lawyers, and social movements who have campaigned relentlessly for over a decade. Their perseverance and solidarity remind us that justice is achieved through collective action.#

IADL Governing Bureau

by:

Jeanne Mirer  
IADL President

*IADL is a global association of progressive lawyers, judges, law professors and jurists and has UN ECOSOC consultative status.*