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Secretary Jesus Crispin C. Remulla
Department of Justice
Padre Faura Street
Ermita
Manila 10020
Republic of the Philippines

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Dear Secretary Remulla,

**I welcomed the good news before the end of 2023 that human rights defender and former Philippine senator Leila de Lima was finally freed, although temporarily, after she was granted bail in the third and last fabricated charge against her**. I remain concerned, however, as court proceedings for this final case are resuming in March, and she continues to face the risk of being sent back to prison solely for her human rights work. I write to urge your office to impartially review the last charge against her, with a view to dropping it, and put an end to her years of persecution.

As of December 2023, at least 13 witnesses had retracted their testimony against de Lima, with the court also citing the weakness of the allegations against her as the basis for the granting of her bail petition last year. These retractions and the latest court decision are veritable proof of concerted efforts to fabricate evidence against de Lima and persecute her, which resulted in her arbitrary detention for nearly seven years and other human rights violations against her.

The arbitrary detention of de Lima clearly violated her right to presumption of innocence and other fair trial guarantees. Beyond this, she has also been the target of vicious attacks and political persecution for her human rights work. Now that she has finally been freed, while only temporarily, the dropping of this final bogus case is a necessary next step to correct this grave injustice against her. If the Marcos administration were indeed serious about restoring respect for human rights in the country, it must finally put an end to the persecution of all human rights defenders, including de Lima.

**I call on your office to:**

* **Drop the final fabricated case against de Lima and put an end to her years of persecution;**
* **Conduct thorough, independent and impartial investigations into those responsible for her arbitrary detention and ensure full accountability for the years of human rights violations she has had to endure; and**
* **Work toward creating an environment that enables human rights defenders like Leila to carry out their important work, without fear of reprisals.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

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