

January 2026

**Statement of Support for Ms. Nolasco and the Talaingod 13**

To whom it may concern,

We are writing to express our strong concern at the court proceedings being conducted against Ms. Nolasco and the Talaingod 13. In our view their conviction on 3 July 2024, and ongoing legal proceedings against them, represent an effort to criminalize legitimate human rights defenders and further marginalize Indigenous communities in Mindanao from appropriate education and their land.

Ms. Eugenia Victoria M. Nolasco is an educator, an environmental defender and an advocate of the rights of Indigenous communities in Mindanao. She has played a particularly important role in the Salugpongan Schools, established by the Indigenous Peoples' group Salugpongan Ta'Tanu Igkanogon (Unity in Defense of our Ancestral Lands). From October 2022 to March 2023, Ms Nolasco held a fellowship at the University of York. The signatories to this letter came to know her – and hugely admire her work – during this period. We stood in solidarity with Ms. Nolasco then, and we continue to do so now.

For the past decade schools in the region of Mindanao have experienced sustained harassment, violence, and forced closures inflicted by state and paramilitary forces. Educators and students have been killed and illegally arrested, while school facilities have been closed and destroyed. The above-mentioned case dates back to 29 November 2018, when 18 people were charged with child abuse, human trafficking, and kidnapping as a result of their attempts to evacuate educators and students. On 3 July 2024, the Tagum Regional Trial Court Branch 2 convicted Ms. Nolasco and 12 others for child abuse, for violating section 10(a) of article VI of Republic Act 7610, also known as the "Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act". On 27 November 2025, the Court of Appeal affirmed their conviction, providing a heavily redacted public judgment.

The Talaingod 13 have received national and international support, notably from the UN Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders and on Education. We share their concerns about the criminalization of legitimate human rights activity, the targeting of Indigenous groups and education, and the need for fair and transparent legal procedures. This statement is issued to express concerns about due process, proportionality, and the broader human rights implications of the Talaingod 13 case, and to bring these concerns to a wider audience, without seeking to interfere in ongoing judicial proceedings.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Paul Gready, University of York

M. A. Crawshaw

Dr. Marilyn Crawshaw, on behalf of the Friends of Fellowship Scheme

D. J. R.

Professor David Maughan Brown, on behalf of the Advisory Board for the Fellowship Scheme