

The Philippines Faces Barrage of Concerns at the UN Human Rights Council

(Bangkok/Geneva, 8 June 2017) – The Philippines faced international opprobrium on Wednesday at the UN Human Rights Council (Council) where 32 States jointly urged the Government to end extrajudicial killings and threats against human rights defenders. The joint statement, delivered by Iceland called on the Philippines to cooperate with human rights mechanisms by allowing the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions to visit the country without conditions, and to accept and implement the recommendations that it received during its Universal Periodic Review last May.

The statement followed a presentation by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, who expressed concern about personal threats and insults faced by the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, as a result of her work on the Philippines.

Despite a high level of international attention on the human rights situation in the Philippines, the Government has not taken any steps to address concerns. 'The joint statement on the Philippines by the 32 States shows that there is sustained attention on the human rights situation in the country despite its repeated attempts to deny that there is a problem when defending its 'war on drugs' at international forums,' says Rosanna Ocampo of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA).

This latest joint statement comes less than a month after the Philippines underwent its Universal Periodic Review at the Council, when 45 States also drew attention to extrajudicial killings in the country's 'war on drugs'.

'We appreciate the international community's continued attention on the Philippines,' says Ellecer Carlos of the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) and In Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement (iDEFEND), 'International solidarity is necessary in these difficult times to complement the work of human rights defenders on the ground. We hope that this results in an end to the killings.'

'If the Philippines does not take immediate steps to improve the situation, we urge the Council to take concerted action on the Philippines at the Council. A resolution establishing an independent investigation into the killings in relation to the Government's 'war on drugs' is urgently needed,' says John Samuel, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA, 'The Council has an obligation to hold the Philippines accountable to human rights standards expected of its members, both related to the domestic situation and its cooperation with Special Procedures. FORUM-ASIA is willing to work with all international human rights mechanisms to promote and protect human rights in the Philippines and to make sure extrajudicial killings become a thing of the past.'

About FORUM-ASIA:

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA has offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation.

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