



H.E. Aquilino Pimentel III
President of the Senate of the Philippines
Senate of the Philippines
Roxas Blvd. Pasay City
Philippines

13 September 2017

Re: ANNI Open Letter concerning the vote of the House of Representatives on the 2018 Budget for the Commission on Human Rights

Your Excellency,

With this letter, I would like to address you on behalf of the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) to express our concern over yesterday's vote by the House of Representatives to cut the budget of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) for 2018 to 1,000 Philippine Pesos (PHP). Forcing the CHR to work with insufficient budget will limit its ability to conduct activities to protect and promote human rights in the Philippines as mandated by the Constitution.

The Paris Principles require a State to ensure that its national human rights institution (NHRI) has adequate funding for it to function autonomously and independently. In particular, the Belgrade Principles stress that Parliaments have the responsibility to ensure that a NHRI has sufficient resources to perform the functions assigned to it by its founding law;¹ in this case, the 1987 Philippine Constitution.

At present, the CHR has been accredited 'A' status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA).² This means that the CHR has fully complied with the Paris Principles, a set of minimum standards required by NHRIs to operate effectively. Losing the 'A' status would be a discredit to democracy and respect for human rights in the Philippines.

Allocating insufficient funding to the CHR seems a serious attempt to discredit and discourage the commission from realising its Constitutional mandate and inhibits it from functioning free from partisan or political interference. Acknowledging the past track record of the Philippines, such attempts to cripple the CHR would mean a further step backwards for human rights in the country.

The role of the CHR has become even more relevant given the current state of human rights in the country, as basic human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be violated in the name of the 'war on drugs'. Active interventions by the CHR in extra-judicial killing cases is in line with the mandate provided for by the 1987 Constitution, which stipulates that the Commission shall investigate any forms of human rights violations by state actors, including those related to civil and political rights.³


¹ Belgrade Principles on the Relationship between National Human Rights Institutions and Parliaments, 2012, point B (9).

² GANHRI is a United Nations recognised umbrella body of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs).

³ Section 18 (1), 1987 Constitution of the Philippines.

We call on the Senate of the Philippines to defend the already approved 678 million PHP budget by the Senate Finance Committee and continue to fight for this position in the Bicameral Conference Committee. We also urge the Government of the Philippines to respect the mandate of the CHR and take all necessary steps to ensure an enabling environment for it to operate effectively and independently. We stand with the CHR for better protection of human rights in the Philippines.

Yours Sincerely,



John Samuel

Executive Director

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

The Secretariat of the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI)

About the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI)

The Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) was established in December 2006. It is a network of Asian non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders working on issues related to National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). ANNI has members that are national organisations from all over Asia. ANNI currently has 33 member organisations from 21 countries or territories. The work of ANNI members focuses on strengthening the work and functioning of Asian NHRIs to better promote and protect human rights as well as to advocate for the improved compliance of Asian NHRIs with international standards, including the Paris Principles and General Observations of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI).