



**36<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Item 4 General Debate: Human rights situations that require the Council's attention**  
**Oral Statement Delivered by Milanga Abeyesuriya on behalf of**  
**Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

**Tuesday, 19 September 2017**

Mr. President, FORUM-ASIA draws the Council's attention to declining human rights situations in several Asian countries.

In Philippines, extrajudicial killings continue in the government's 'war on drugs'.<sup>1</sup> The President has verbally threatened to investigate and kill human rights defenders. The House of Representatives voted in favour of reducing the 2018 budget of the Commission on Human Rights to USD 20, which would make it unable to operate. Media outlets that criticise the 'war on drugs' have been accused of spreading misinformation and threatened. We call on the government to end incitement to killings in its 'war on drugs', denounce all killings, and ensure the right to freedom of expression without reprisals.

In Maldives, recent politically motivated criminal charges against several opposition members of the People's Majlis (Parliament) is symbolic of the unprecedented increase in restrictions on fundamental freedoms. These restrictions have been exacerbated by serious allegations of collusion between the government and judiciary to stifle political opposition and dissent. The government and judiciary have repeatedly rejected calls for judicial reform. On 10 September, the judicial watchdog indefinitely suspended 56 lawyers on allegations of contempt of court without due process for signing a petition calling for the independence and reform of the judiciary.<sup>2</sup>

In Bangladesh, freedom of association is restricted by the 2016 Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, which requires NGOs to obtain government approval for funding, appointments of foreign consultants, and all travel paid by foreign funding. The 2016 Digital Security Act curbs online free expression in the country, while the 2006 Information and Communication Act criminalises all forms of dissent.

Thank You

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=24750>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=24776>