

The Philippines: 38 States express serious concern over the Philippines' lack of commitment to human rights

(Bangkok/Geneva, 28 September 2017) Through a joint statement delivered by Iceland on Thursday, 38 States said that the human rights situation in the Philippines continues to be of serious concern, particularly in light of the thousands of killings and impunity associated with the 'war on drugs'. The States called on the Philippines "to cooperate with the international community to pursue appropriate investigations into these incidents, in keeping with the universal principles of democratic accountability and the rule of law".

The States also expressed concern over threats against human rights defenders and called upon the Government to "ensure they are accorded full protection." They also called for a safe environment for human rights defenders, as well as journalists and indigenous communities.

The joint statement comes at the 36th session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council in which the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Philippines was adopted. The Government did not fully accept 154 of the 257 recommendations it received from States during the Philippines UPR in May.¹ The statement, with an increase in the number of signatories, is also a follow up to a joint statement supported by 32 States at the 35th session of the UN Human Rights Council in June.²

"The Philippine Government's failure to fully accept and implement nearly 60 per cent of the recommendations it received during its UPR is deeply concerning – especially given that this includes most of the recommendations by over 40 States³ on the Government's so-called 'war on drugs', " says R. Iniyang Ilango of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA). "Clearly, this failure to cooperate merits concerted action from the UN Human Rights Council."

"We appreciate the international solidarity against the deteriorating human rights situation in the Philippines, especially at a time when human rights defenders are vilified and threatened for the work that we do," says Ellecer Carlos of the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) and In Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement (IDDEFEND). "Urgent action is needed as the 'war on drugs' has been compounded with threats to freedom of expression and political freedoms."

"We welcome joint statements, as well as national statements, on the Philippines at the UN Human Rights Council, which highlight that the international community is paying close attention to the human rights situation in the country," says John Samuel, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA. "However, these are only the first steps in pressuring the Philippine Government to comply with its international human rights commitments. If the situation in the country does not improve, the UN Human Rights Council must pass a resolution at its next session in March, establishing an international, independent investigation into killings associated with the 'war on drugs'."

¹<https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=24852>

²<https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=24194>

³<https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=23805>

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 democratization.

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