



Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
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38th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 4: General debate on human rights situations that require the attention of the Council
Oral Statement Delivered by Rosanna Ocampo on behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Wednesday, 27 June, 2018

Mr President, FORUM-ASIA draws the Council's attention to human rights situations in several Asian countries. In Maldives, the government's assault on democracy and democratic institutions has severely compromised the possibility of an inclusive or free and fair Presidential Elections later this year. The Opposition's political activities remain restricted while most opposition leaders have either been convicted or face convictions in politically motivated criminal proceedings – that violate due process and fair trial standards. We are further concerned that recent amendments to electoral laws would limit the prospects for credible participation of the opposition in the upcoming elections.¹

In Bangladesh, we are concerned by allegations that the government's anti-narcotics campaign is being used for political intimidation. Many of the at least 160 people that were killed and over 20,000 that were arrested since the government announced the campaign are reportedly political activists with no connection to drug offences.² In an environment of endemic extrajudicial killings and disappearance primarily of political activists and dissidents³, this raises serious questions about prospects for free and fair elections in December.

In Cambodia, amendments to the criminal code and the Constitution, as well as a raft of new repressive legislation that prohibit criticism of the government, and impose restrictions on human rights defenders, civil society, media and the opposition have seriously eroded the democratic environment necessary for the July 2018 national elections to be free and fair. The government has tightened media regulation including through abuse of vague tax and licensing regulations to force the shutdown of several independent media outlets, and trumped up criminal charges to arrest and detain journalists.

The Council must call on these governments to take immediate steps to ensure free and fair elections and closely monitor the situation.

Lastly, we are deeply concerned over the lack of accountability for thousands of deaths in the Philippine government's ongoing 'war on drugs', as well as attacks on democratic institutions, the media, and human rights defenders. We call on the Council to establish an independent international investigation into deaths and mandate the High Commissioner to monitor and report on the government's descent towards authoritarianism.

Thank you.

¹ <https://maldivesindependent.com/politics/ruling-party-eyes-presidential-poll-win-with-electoral-law-changes-138944>

² <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=26608>

³ <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=25879>