



Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
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39th 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 Rin Fujimatsu on behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Tuesday, 18 September, 2018

Mr. President, we draw the Council's attention to human rights situations in a number of Asian countries.

We are deeply concerned by the lack of justice and accountability for thousands of deaths in the Philippine government's ongoing 'war on drugs', and threats to human rights defenders and members of the opposition, freedom of expression, and executive interference in independent state institutions. In July, the Philippine President stated that the anti-drug campaign would be as relentless and chilling as the day it began. 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.

Maldives is scheduled to hold Presidential Elections on 23 September. We call on Maldivian authorities to ensure a conducive environment for free and fair elections. A credible election cannot be held without the full restoration of democratic space and fundamental freedoms including the freedoms of expression and assembly as well as media freedoms and the independence of the Elections Commission, the judiciary and other independent institutions. We call on the Council to closely monitor the conduct of the elections, and to respond swiftly and appropriately should the credible evidence of electoral fraud and irregularities emerge in the immediate aftermath of the election.

We welcome the pledges by the new government of Malaysia to address longstanding human rights concerns in the country. However, we are concerned by the Malaysian Senate's recent rejection of a bill to repeal the Anti-Fake News Act 2018. The government must show meaningful commitment to human rights reform by expediting repeal or review of restrictive legislation that undermine fundamental freedoms and protection of human rights defenders, including the Sedition Act, in line with international human rights standards. In this regard, we urge Malaysia to cooperate with the Council's special procedure mandates as well as the OHCHR.

Finally, in India the recent arbitrary arrests of several high profile human rights defenders yet again adds to growing concerns over erosion of democratic and civic space in the country. We call on the Indian government to end targeted harassment and attacks against human rights defenders and civil society organisations.

Thank you.