



**43rd Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 4: General Debate on situations that require the Council's attention**

**Oral Statement Delivered by Ahmed Adam on behalf of
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)**

Tuesday, 10 March 2020

Madam President, FORUM-ASIA aligns with statements by FIDH on Kashmir and ICJ on India. We call for the Council's attention on human rights situations in the Philippines, Maldives and West Papua.

In the Philippines, vilification of human rights defenders (HRDs) and labelling of those who have called for Council action as terrorists have escalated. The Philippine government's inflammatory remarks at this session of the Council including at the high-level segment add to the long list of its attacks and reprisals against HRDs. The recently approved Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, if passed into law, would allow increased surveillance, warrantless arrests, and extended detentions, and add to the existing arsenal of repressive laws used to target civil society and stifle dissent. Domestic mechanisms continue to fail HRDs, as they have failed thousands of victims of the 'war on drugs'. We call on the Council to mandate independent investigations, and regular monitoring and reporting by the High Commissioner.

In Maldives, growing religious extremism threatens human rights and HRDs. Prominent human rights organisation, Maldivian Democracy Network, has been dissolved for alleged blasphemy in relation to a report on religious extremism. Extreme interpretations of religion are increasingly used to justify violence and discrimination against women and children. We call on Maldives to act urgently to protect HRDs from threats by extremist groups, and guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of religion or belief and abolish blasphemy in line with international standards.

Finally, we remain concerned at the systematic restrictions on fundamental freedoms in West Papua. We call on Indonesia to demilitarise the region, release all human rights defenders and political prisoners facing treason charges in relation to their work on West Papua, and allow the OHCHR and other independent observers unfettered access to monitor the situation in the region.

Thank you.