

44th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council**Item 2: Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on the human rights situation in the Philippines****Oral Statement Delivered by Ahmed Adam****On behalf of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND), World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), and International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)****Tuesday, 30 June 2020**

Madam President, we welcome the report of the High Commissioner on the Philippines.

The Duterte Administration has been characterised by widespread and systematic human rights violations in relation to the country's 'war on drugs'. OHCHR's findings confirm reports by civil society on the systematic nature of these violations, and the impunity with which they have been committed.

Instead of addressing these violations, the Government has attempted to silence human rights defenders, civil society organisations, journalists and critics through repressive laws, surveillance, attacks and reprisals. It shut down the country's largest TV network. Maria Ressa, CEO of Rappler which had reported on the killings, was convicted on a trumped-up cyber libel charge. The Congress fast-tracked an Anti-Terrorism Bill which contains provisions that would effectively criminalise dissent.

Its Covid-19 response mirrors its approach on the 'war on drugs', with the use of cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment, and the repression of freedom of expression through a 'false information' provision in the emergency decree.

The domestic system has failed to provide accountability for the extrajudicial killings and other grave violations. The Government has labelled as terrorists, and encouraged violence against, human rights defenders and activists calling for accountability.

We echo the findings of OHCHR, and note that these violations continue to be committed by the State. We echo the call of 31 special procedure mandates for an 'on-the-ground international investigation'. The Government's actions have proven that it is unwilling and incapable of providing accountability. The Council must act on the recommendations of the High Commissioner and mandate an independent, international investigation into widespread human rights violations in the Philippines including the thousands of killings in the 'war on drugs.'

Thank you.