



48th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 10: General Debate on technical assistance and capacity building

Delivered by Ahmed Adam
On behalf of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
7 October 2021

Madam President,

We welcome the High Commissioner's update on the Philippines.

A year after its adoption, the Council's resolution 45/33 which offers technical assistance to the Philippines has proven to be insufficient to address the widespread and systematic human rights violations and persistent impunity *documented in the High Commissioner's groundbreaking report on the Philippines presented to the Council in June 2020.*

Extrajudicial killings in the so-called 'war on drugs' have continued and expanded to a war on dissent. Human rights defenders, lawyers, judges, journalists, indigenous peoples, and government critics *including critics of the government's handling of the COVID19 pandemic* continued to be killed, attacked, harassed, 'red-tagged' or labelled as 'communists' and accused of belonging to terrorist groups. The *draconian* Anti-terrorism Act 2020 adds to serious risks to defenders *and civil society.*

Similarly, there has been no tangible progress *at the domestic level* towards accountability for the thousands of extrajudicial killings *and other systematic violations.*

The three-year joint programme on human rights recently signed between the UN and the Philippines is a positive step towards the implementation of the resolution 45/33. But like the resolution itself, the joint programme fails to address the most immediate needs for credible investigations and accountability for ongoing violations, and has been used by the government as a fig leaf to cover up its murderous policies and impunity in the guise of cooperation with the UN.

The recent ICC decision to open an investigation on the Philippines and the government's actions over the past year once again highlight the urgency of more robust action by the Council, including mandating its own independent international investigation, to address ongoing serious violations and pervasive impunity *for violations beyond the scope of the ICC investigation.*

Thank you.