

## Philippines: The Marcos-Duterte government must restore human rights and democratic institutions for Filipino people

(Bangkok/Jakarta, 29 June 2022) - 'We urge the new Philippine government to repeal the repressive laws imposed by its predecessors and set a worthy example towards the protection and promotion of human rights,' said the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) ahead of Philippines presidential inauguration.

'The incoming administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has an opportunity to lead in improving the human rights landscape of the country by ceasing Duterte's notorious and unlawful "war on drugs". Repealing decades-old repressive laws that curtail civil liberties and contravene international human rights standards and ensuring cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms should be a priority,' said FORUM-ASIA .

FORUM-ASIA calls on the incoming Marcos Jr. administration to expedite the investigation of thousands of drug war cases stacked up in courts and the Inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs formed in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Five years since its establishment, the body has failed to prosecute those responsible for the killings committed in the 'war on drugs' and halt the cycle of impunity crippling victims and their families.

The Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP) and the International Criminal Court must be permitted to independently probe drug war cases to ensure accountability.<sup>2</sup> The prolonged investigation into the killings proves that the Duterte regime has not only failed to respect and protect the human rights of its citizens, in particular, victims of drug-related killings, but it has also encouraged a culture of impunity.

It is imperative for the Marcos-Duterte tandem to recalibrate the present government's strategy in curbing the Philippines' drug problem through the lens of human rights.<sup>3</sup> To ensure the credibility and transparency of the drug war investigations, FORUM-ASIA urges Marcos Jr. to appoint qualified human rights advocates in the CHRP and establish a truth commission.

FORUM-ASIA also calls on the new president to restore press freedom by renewing the franchise of ABS-CBN and reverse the Securities and Exchange Commission's 2018 revocation of Rappler's incorporation certificates. Rappler was ordered to shut down by the Securities and Exchange Commission yesterday.

'The incoming government must also seek accountability from those responsible for extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture of innocent people. Credible and thorough investigations into the "drug war" violations are imperative to provide reparations for victims and survivors while guaranteeing the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary,' said FORUM-ASIA.

FORUM-ASIA urges Marcos Jr. to be mindful in appointing allies with besmeared track records, including perpetrators of human rights violations and corruption. For instance, the newly appointed justice secretary and member of the Anti-Terrorism Council, Jesus Crispin 'Boying', has red-tagged and criticised human rights groups in his province Cavite.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://r3.rappler.com/nation/163833-duterte-anti-drugs-inter-agency-committee-task-force>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rappler.com/nation/commission-human-rights-pnp-doj-release-reports-results-drug-war-investigations/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1600019/chr-hoping-marcos-admin-will-recalibrate-approach-to-ph-drug-problem>

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/05/24/22/remulla-on-red-tagging-its-a-political-term-im-just-unmasking-them>

'The incoming government must unconditionally release all political prisoners and put an end to the red-tagging of human rights defenders and opposition leaders critical of the past governments' tight grip on politics,' said FORUM-ASIA.

'It is high time the controversial National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict is abolished and Anti-Terror Law repealed. Instead, the incoming government should expedite the passage of the House Bill No. 10576, also known as the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act, which was passed on its third and final reading earlier this year.'

The Filipino people should exercise vigilance against distorted information about the Marcos family's abuse of power. FORUM-ASIA, along with its members in the Philippines, will continue monitoring the policies and performance of Marcos Jr. administration and hold them accountable for human rights violations.

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