

## [Joint Statement] Philippines: Celebrate acquittal of Leila de Lima, hold those responsible for her arbitrary detention accountable

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) celebrates the [acquittal](#) of former Senator Leila de Lima—who also served as Chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights and Secretary of the Department of Justice—in the final politically motivated charge against her.

On 24 June 2024, the Muntinlupa City Regional Trial Court acquitted De Lima of the last of three drug-related charges made against her during the Rodrigo Duterte presidency. The court ruled that the prosecution failed to prove her guilt beyond reasonable doubt, in line with De Lima's motion claiming insufficient evidence for a conviction.

“FORUM-ASIA is pleased to witness the achievement of justice for Leila De Lima, demonstrating that justice is founded on truth and evidence. We demand accountability for those responsible for De Lima's arbitrary detention and the perpetuation of unfounded allegations against her,” said Mary Aileen Diez-Bacalso, Executive Director of FORUM-ASIA.

“In addition, FORUM-ASIA urges the Government of the Philippines to resolve all politically motivated cases in the country. In alignment with its international human rights obligations, the government must end all forms of judicial harassment and political persecution against Filipino activists and human rights defenders,” Bacalso added.

### Politically motivated charges

Despite lack of credible evidence, De Lima was [detained](#) in February 2017 in the Philippine National Police Custodial Center on criminal charges for allegedly facilitating drug trafficking in the National Bilibid Prison during her tenure as justice minister—from 2010 to 2015—to fund her 2016 senatorial campaign. She was confronted with three fabricated drug-related charges. In November 2023, De Lima was [acquitted](#) on two charges and granted temporary freedom after six years in detention.

From the very start, civil society has emphasised that the politically motivated and trumped up charges against De Lima were retribution for her [investigations](#)—as head of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights—on extrajudicial killings during Duterte's “[war on drugs](#).” Previously, as chair of the Commission on Human Rights, De Lima also investigated the “Davao [death squad](#)” during Duterte's term as mayor.

The dismissal of all charges against De Lima repudiates the Duterte administration's hostile attempts to suppress her human rights advocacy.

FORUM-ASIA calls on the Philippine Government to allow and facilitate the International Criminal Court to thoroughly investigate the crimes against humanity allegedly committed during Duterte's presidency. Doing so could help ensure justice for the thousands of extrajudicial killing victims left behind by Duterte's war on drugs.

Investigating human rights violations, speaking and honouring the truth, and holding perpetrators to account are essential to safeguarding people's fundamental rights and freedoms.

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**About FORUM-ASIA:**

**The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)** is a network of 85 member organisations across 23 countries, mainly in Asia. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. The FORUM-ASIA Secretariat is based in Bangkok, with offices in Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. [www.forum-asia.org](http://www.forum-asia.org)

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