

45th Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 4: General Debate
25 September 2020
Joint Oral Statement

Madam President,

I speak on behalf of 35 organisations, deeply concerned by the situation in the Philippines. We urge this Council to respond credibly to the grave findings and recommendations of the recent OHCHR [report](#).

Developments since that report indicate further deterioration, with [ongoing incitement to kill](#) by the President, the [promotion of an architect of the anti-drug strategy to police chief](#), the passing of an [overbroad anti-terror law ripe for abuse](#), the [conviction of journalist Maria Ressa](#) and [shutdown of media network ABS-CBN](#), the [murder of activists and a journalist](#) and a [new spike in police killings](#).

In terms of cooperation, the Philippines refused access to OHCHR in the preparation of the report and continues to bar entry to Special Procedures. The Secretary-General and High Commissioner have raised significant concerns over reprisals. The Government does not acknowledge widespread and systematic killings as a problem, in fact it encourages them and rejects the OHCHR's findings. Serious violations continue.

The Government's announced Inter-Agency Panel lacks any transparency and directly involves branches of Government implicated in these abuses. As such, it clearly cannot satisfy international standards of independence,¹ nor can it be seen as credible or safe for victims to engage with.

Madam President,

Our organisations have urged and continue to urge this Council to launch an independent international investigation.

The High Commissioner has clearly asked the Council to renew her mandate to monitor and report on the wider situation, as well as to provide technical cooperation to "implement the report's recommendations," and "continue to pursue accountability". We urge this Council – at absolute minimum – to ensure continued monitoring and reporting on all aspects of the situation as clearly recommended by the High Commissioner. Anything less would not only be an insult to victims and their families, but send a green light to perpetrators that they can continue with impunity, with disastrous consequences on the ground.

Thank you.

Co-signatories:

1. Action Network Human Rights Philippines (AMP)
2. Amnesty International
3. Article 19
4. Child Alert Mindanao

¹ See for instance the [UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions](#), adopted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1989/65 of 24 May 1989; and Human Rights Committee, [General Comment no. 36 on the right to life \(article 6\)](#).

5. Children's Legal Rights and Development Center (CLRDC)
6. CIVICUS Alliance
7. Coalition Against Summary Executions
8. Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND)
9. Franciscans International
10. Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
11. Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG)
12. Freedom House
13. Harm Reduction International
14. Human Rights Watch
15. In Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement (iDEFEND)
16. International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICHRP)
17. International Commission of Jurists
18. International Drug Policy Consortium
19. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
20. International Service for Human Rights
21. Karapatan Alliance Philippines
22. Medical Action Group
23. National Union of Journalists of the Philippines
24. Network Against Killings in the Philippines (NakPhil)
25. Partnership Mission for People's Initiatives (PMPI)
26. Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA)
27. Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc. (PMPI)
28. Philippine Human Rights Information Center
29. Salinlahi Alliance for Children's Concerns
30. Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund (SCLF)
31. Tambayan
32. The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
33. Task Force Detainees of the Philippines
34. World Council of Churches
35. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)