39th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 3: General Debate
Oral statement delivered by Fr Christian Buenafe O'Carm
Franciscans International
Friday, 14 September 2018

Mr President,

This statement is a joint statement of Franciscans International with the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) and the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP). We welcome the reports of the Working Groups on Enforced Disappearances and on Mercenaries. Those two mandates are very relevant to the continuously deteriorating human rights situation in the Philippines.

Since President Duterte declared a "War on Drugs" policy in July 2016, it is estimated that more than 27'000 people, mainly poor people, have been killed either by the Philippines security forces or by *death squads*, allegedly mandated by the Philippines authorities. We received information from the Diocese of Kalookan in Metro Manila on cases of enforced disappearances of persons tagged as drugs peddlers. Most of them are from urban poor areas.

Mr President,

The Philippines is a current member and the vice president of the UN Human Rights Council. However, not only that the Philippines fail to comply with their international obligations, the President of the Philippines also undermined and discredited some UN mandate holders publicly. The situation is in general extremely dangerous and difficult for human rights defenders and those who are critical to the government. We strongly condemn increasing attacks against human rights defenders, indigenous peoples' leaders, church members and leaders, media personnel and political activists. The culture of impunity still prevails.

The Human Rights Council has to hold the Philippines accountable. Therefore, we call on the Council to establish an independent international investigation into extrajudicial killings in the 'war on drugs' in the Philippines and on the Office to monitor and report to the Council on the deteriorating situation in the Philippines. Thank you.