



**48<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Agenda Item 10: Oral Update of the High Commissioner on the Technical Cooperation and Capacity Building in the Philippines**

*7 October 2021*

*Delivered by Fr Angelito Cortez OFM*

Thank you, Chairperson,

We<sup>1</sup> welcome the High Commissioner's oral update on the situation in the Philippines.

Despite the attention paid by the UN Human Rights Council to the situation in the Philippines, there is no substantial positive change on the ground. To the contrary, it has in fact gotten much worse. The Filipino people continue to be confronted with extreme widespread and daily State violence. Civil society and church-based organizations continue to document practices of reprisals and intimidation of human rights defenders, indigenous leaders, journalists, lawyers, church-workers and trade unionists. Furthermore, the COVID19 pandemic and its handling by the State has further worsened the human rights situation in the country.

While taking note on the agreement on the UN Joint Program on Human Rights (UNJP) which provides a framework for improvements, we remain very much concerned that the UNJP will be instrumentalized by the Government to please the international community, in particular the Human Rights Council, but remain an empty promise just to be able to say that it has complied with its international obligation.

On the accountability in addressing the victims of war on drugs, the Philippines domestic mechanism has failed to show meaningful progress. As of May, this year, the Philippines National Police opened only 61 cases to the Department of Justice, out of 7'000 cases they acknowledge.

In her report on the Philippines in 2020, the High Commissioner recommended to the Council that in the "absence of clear and measurable outcomes from domestic mechanisms, (the Council should) consider options for international accountability measures.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, we urge the Human Rights Council to consider establishing a Commission of Inquiry for the Philippines, to eventually start the long-overdue independent and transparent investigation on the human rights violation in the country.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a joint statement of Franciscans International; Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund (Fastenopfer); Dominicans for Justice and Peace; Dreikönigsaktion - Hilfswerk der Katholischen Jungschar Austria (DKA) and International Federation for Human Rights Leagues (FIDH); with the support of Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP); and the Franciscans Solidarity Movement of Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Philippines (FSM JPIC); Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (JPICC - AMRSP).

<sup>2</sup> See A/HRC/44/22.