

51st Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 10: Interactive Dialogue
High Commissioner Report on Technical Cooperation and Capacity Building in the Philippines

5 October 2022

Delivered by Fr Christian Buenafe O’Carm

Thank you, Chairperson,

We welcome the High Commissioner’s Report on the implementation of the Human Rights Council Resolution 45/33 and on the progress and result of technical cooperation and capacity building for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Philippines.¹

We support the findings of the High Commissioner’s report which rightly mentions that access to justice remains very limited in the Philippines despite more than a year of the implementation of the UN Joint Programme on Human Rights (UNJP). It also highlights the persistence of methodical attacks on cause-oriented groups, particularly killing of human rights defenders. We take note of a number of positive developments recently, although we think that they were not necessarily linked to the implementation of the UNJP.

Despite the implementation of the UNJP and the change of administration in the Philippines, the human rights situation in the Philippines continues to worsen. The Government of the Philippines fails to prove the effectiveness of domestic accountability, including investigation and prosecution, mechanisms to address human rights violations in particular those related to the “war on drugs” policy. As rightly reflected in the Report, the transparency and public scrutiny in investigative process and outcomes, remain a challenge.²

The civil society groups involved in the UNJP note a tremendously slow uptake in its implementation, particularly due to the lack of cooperation of the government. In addition, we notice that the government has put in great efforts to limit civil society participation in the UNJP, even pushing for pro-government and government-organized NGOs to be involved.

In conclusion, we understand that UNJP should provide a framework for improvement of the human rights situation. Yet, 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.

Therefore, we urge the Human Rights Council to consider the situation of the Philippines as a priority through the adoption of a follow-up resolution with the view to establish a Commission of Inquiry for the Philippines, and eventually to start the long-overdue independent and transparent investigation on the massive and systematic human rights violations in the country. Thank you.

¹ See A/HRC/51/58

² See A/HRC/51/58 para 16.

With the support of

1. Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), Philippines;
2. Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), Philippines;
3. In Defence of Human Rights and Dignity Movement (iDEFEND), Philippines;
4. Medical Action Group (MAG) of the Philippines;
5. Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND), Philippines;
6. Franciscans Solidarity Movement of Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Philippines (FSM JPIC), Philippines;
7. Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Conference of Major Superiors of the Philippines (JPICC - CMSP), Philippines
8. Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Carmelite in the Philippines;
9. Fastenaktion, Switzerland