

**39<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Item 4: General Debate**  
**Friday, 18 September 2018**  
**Oral statement delivered by Fr. Angelito Cortez, OFM**

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Mr President,

This statement is on behalf of Franciscans International, the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP) and Fastenopfer.

We expressed our deep concern of the on-going and systematic human rights violations in the Philippines. As the member and Vice President of the Council, Philippines continuous to fails to uphold its international human rights obligations.

I am a Filipino Catholic Franciscan priest, who continuous to bury the victims of the “war on drugs,” launched by President Duterte since his election in 2016. I recall vividly the family of Lee James and Ramil, 17- and 16-year-old adolescents from Sampaloc, Metro Manila, killed by a death squad in August 2018. They were just two among the many victims whom I encountered this year with our Day/Night Watch ministry to response to the extrajudicial killings related to the war on drugs. Up to now, it is estimated that 27.000 people have been killed.

Mr President,

The horrible war on drug is one of the many policies by the current Philippines’ administration which lead to massive, wide-spread and systematic human rights violations. We are currently experiencing the martial law imposed in the Mindanao region; attacks against the judiciary and human rights institutions; threats against human rights defenders, indigenous peoples’ leaders, political activists, media actors, and church actors. Critical voices are silenced. Despite the national and international outcry, no domestic credible and independent investigation is taking place and the culture of impunity still prevails.

The Human Rights Council should not let the Philippines to be re-elected as a member without being accountable for the human rights violations to its own people. Therefore, we urge the Council to establish an independent international investigation into extrajudicial killings in the ‘war on drugs’ in the Philippines, and the OHCHR to use the UN Secretary General’s **Human Rights Up Front (HRuF)** initiative to monitor and report to the Council on the deteriorating situation in the Philippines.

Thank you.