

**49<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders**

**11 March 2022**

*Delivered by Ana Rita Supan*

Thank you Mr President, I speak on behalf of 15 organizations.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's war framework on drugs, insurgency, terrorism, and COVID-19 carried out through police and military might has spawned violations of human rights and basic freedoms. Human rights defenders (HRDs), who condemn these atrocities and assist victims are labeled terrorists or coddlers of criminals. They are subjected to public vilification, intimidation, reprisal, profiling, surveillance and judicial harassment. Some are tortured, forcibly disappeared and/or killed.

Last November, child rights defender Sally Ujano was arrested on alleged rebellion charges filed over 15 years ago. She remains imprisoned. On 18 February 2022, red-tagged Dr. Naty Castro, who serves poor indigenous communities, was arbitrarily arrested and temporarily disappeared despite the Philippine Anti-Enforced Disappearance Act. Dr. Castro's family later found her in a distant jail. Eight days later, Chad Booc, an HRD teacher, was massacred along with four suspected communist rebels.

In 2020 the Philippines had the highest number of HRDs killed in Asia and second highest in the world.<sup>1</sup>

In order to institute strong legal protection of HRDs in the Philippines, exact accountability in case of violations, and guarantee non-repetition, we have steadfastly lobbied for the HRD Protection bill which eventually passed on final reading at the House of Representatives in the previous and present Congresses.

We thank Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Mary Lawlor for strongly endorsing the approval of the bill and look forward to similar endorsements from other SRs.

In view of the global assault on HRDs, we request the Council to urge States to enact HRD Protection laws.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the finding of Frontline Defenders Global Analysis 2020, available at [https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/fl\\_d\\_global\\_analysis\\_2020.pdf](https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/fl_d_global_analysis_2020.pdf)

**Co-sponsors:**

- Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND)
- Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA)
- Children's Legal Rights and Development Center (CLRDC)
- Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP)
- Conference of Major Superiors in the Philippines (CMSP)
- Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court (PCICC)
- In Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement (iDEFEND)
- Franciscans International (FI)
- Medical Action Group (MAG)
- Balay Rehabilitation Center
- Aniban ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (AMA)
- Philippine Human Rights Information Center (Philrights)
- Center for Migrant Advocacy (CMA)
- Alyansa ng mga Mamamayan para sa Karapatang Pantao (AMKP)
- Coalition against Enforced Disappearance (CAED)