



**55th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 10: General Debate**

3 April 2024

Delivered by Gyan Kothari

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Mr. President,

We draw the attention of the Council to the impending conclusion this year of the UN Joint Program on Human Rights (UNJP) for the Philippines amid continuing threats to human rights in the country.¹ As of November 2023, only two convictions were made in relation to extrajudicial killings out of 6.252 persons killed by state agents between 1 July 2016 and 31 May 2022, according to official statistics, while unofficial estimates report thousands more.

According to the University of the Philippines' Third World Studies Centre, extrajudicial killings in the context of the "war on drugs" continue under the current administration. Reports indicate over 300 extrajudicial killings in 2023 alone.² In this context, indications from the Government of potentially transitioning the UNJP into a government-led national mechanism called the Human Rights Coordinating Council³ devoid of meaningful international oversight, are alarming.

We urge the HRC to renew its attention to the human rights situation in the Philippines, including by adopting a resolution mandating the High Commissioner to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the UNJP, as recommended in OHCHR's last report to this Council. In the absence of such a resolution, we call upon Member States, including those that fund the UNJP, to join our call for the Office of the High Commissioner to undertake this assessment on its own initiative.

Thank you.

¹ UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression press release, February 2, 2024, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/philippines-un-expert-calls-more-sustained-reforms-prevent-threats-and>.

² Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines Diliman and the Department of Conflict and Development Studies of Ghent University, March 23, 2024, available at: [2024 - Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy in the Philippines \(upd.edu.ph\)](https://www.upd.edu.ph/news/2024-03-23-violence-human-rights-and-democracy-in-the-philippines).

³ Information according to the statement delivered by the Philippine Justice Undersecretary Raul T. Vasquez at the High-Level Segment of the 55th Session of the Human Rights Council on 27 February 2024 in Geneva. See: <https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/news-from-our-foreign-service-postsupdate/34203-ph-to-un-hrc-national-ownership-key-to-effective-and-sustainable-multilateral-human-rights-action>.