



**Statement of the Commission on Human Rights
on the UN OHCHR Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Philippines**

delivered by

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Commissioner**

Madam President, Distinguished Members of the Human Rights Council, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights – as the world endures the impact of the pandemic, it is our privilege and duty to speak before you today.

The Commission on Human Rights welcomes the report on the Human Rights Situation in the Philippines.

We consider Government's engagement with the OHCHR as a sign of greater cooperation with independent mechanisms, and we acknowledge its response but regret the public rejection of the conclusions and recommendations.

We share the view that while the climate of impunity can be traced from the failure to fully address past human rights violations, present attitudes and behavior towards human rights have been conditioned by harmful rhetoric of inciting hatred, vilifying legitimate dissent, and incentivizing violence, allowing impunity to acutely persist today.

There is a continuing obligation for the State to end impunity, pursue social justice, and uphold the dignity and human rights of all. Part of this obligation is to accept the report's findings and recommendations, continue to dialogue, take definitive steps to demonstrate the effectiveness of domestic mechanisms, and cooperate with other independent accountability mechanisms including the special procedures.

The over-reliance on a 'strong-arm' approach has largely contributed to the pervading culture of impunity. To improve the human rights situation, the Philippines must change course guided by the human rights-based approach to democratic governance.

Government must translate these recommendations into concrete actions and establish a timeline to deliver results in the short and medium term.

The CHR therefore, recommends the following:

- Immediately halt the harmful rhetoric from the highest levels of authority. Communicate clear messages to frontliners who deliver the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground. Adopt a language in policy and practice respectful of democratic institutions and processes, including the media for its role to inform and stimulate public debate.
- Allow full cooperation of the Philippine National Police, the Internal Affairs Service, and other government agencies with the CHR to enable investigations into human rights violations including the killings that have plagued the anti – drug campaign.
- Enable accountability mechanisms to fulfill the rights to truth, access to justice and effective remedies for all victims:
 - o Account and locate each and every killing and other human rights violations in the justice system;
 - o Provide effective protection for victims, whistleblowers, and witnesses; and
 - o Prosecute all perpetrators;
- Provide direct and adequate assistance to all victims of the anti-drug campaign and families left behind.
- Accelerate the decongestion program to alleviate the condition of Persons Deprived of Liberty.
- Guarantee transparency and report to CHR all incidents of deaths in custody.
- Revise the current Legislative Agenda to:
 - o Remove the reintroduction of the Death Penalty and the proposal to lower the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility;
 - o Establish the National Preventive Mechanism as the Commission is ready to accept the designation, with civil society representative; and
 - o Reconsider the enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Bill to include stronger human rights safeguards.

We ask the Human Rights Council and the international community to support

- the technical cooperation between the Government and OHCHR;
- for OHCHR to have the mandate to continue to monitor and report progress on the recommendations;
- and in the absence of timely and measurable outcomes, to consider options for other international accountability measures.

The Commission stands together with the victims, disadvantaged groups and human rights defenders in valuing the Council as the fulcrum of international discourse and cooperation for the protection of all human rights. This has encouraged us to defend our shrinking civic space and respond to human rights attacks on the ground. Your sustained focus will continue to provide protection for human rights defenders, amplify the voices of victims as it presents Government with the opportunity to take proactive strides in responding to human rights concerns in the country.

To forge constructive dialogue and collaboration at home, we respectfully ask the Human Rights Council for this opportunity to remain open.

Mabuhay at Maraming Salamat po. (Thank you very much.)

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