

**52nd Session of the Human Rights Council
Agenda Item 6: UPR Adoption – Philippines
Oral Statement of Franciscans International
Delivered by: Sarina Yamahata**

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24 March 2023

Thank you Mr President,

Franciscans International, Fastenaktion, Dominicans for Justice and Peace (DJP), the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission - Conference of Major Superiors in the Philippines (JPICC - CMSP) and Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), Philippines Alliance for Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) welcome the acceptance of important UPR recommendations regarding the protection of human rights defenders and the commitment to investigate the extrajudicial killing cases related to the war on drugs.

While welcoming the change of narrative of the current administration, we remain strongly concerned by the gap between the public discourse and reality on the ground. The practise of red-tagging of human rights defenders and organisations continues. One of the latest examples is the red-tagging of PAHRA, Karapatan, Flag and NUCL by the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), due to their demand for the adoption of the Human Rights Defenders Bill (HB 77).¹ This Task Force publicly opposes the adoption of the Bill, and accused the four organizations of being communist sympathizers.²

In a different instance, SMNI News Channel publicly accused the Catholic Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos Diocese in Negros who encouraged the resumption of the peace process as “*diabolic and demonic*” and the “*mouthpiece of the Philippines Communist Party*”.³

We urge the Government of the Philippines to end this practice of “red-tagging”.⁴

¹ In her statement during the NTF-ELCAC Press Conference on March 13, 2023, Assistant Solicitor General Angelita Villanueva Miranda accused and disseminated malicious and libelous claims that PAHRA is affiliated with Communist Terrorist Groups (CTGs). See the Press Conference of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) on Youtube Channel of NTF-ELCAC which took place on 13 March 2023 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjnGXsBy6yk>. See the complete statement at <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1197215>

² See the press coverage of the red-tagging incident of PAHRA at <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/03/15/2251887/groups-score-ntf-elcac-equating-human-rights-work-terrorism>

³ The incident took place on 22 February 2023 during the Sonshine Media Network International (SMNI)’s television program ‘Laban Kasama ang Bayan’. See the press coverage of red-tagging incident of Bishop Gerardo Alminaza D.D. at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/visayas/bishop-alminaza-says-cannot-be-silent-violence-injustices/>. See also the press statement of Bishop Gerardo Alminaza D.D. on the incident at https://www.facebook.com/gerardo.alminaza/posts/pfbid024v7W4K5C8FYPUv9vRoqac8RoxTirYqcLFGur197XOnKXq8reUsKp9K8DaCij3!/?tn=%2CO*F

On the UN Joint Programme on Human Rights as (UNJP), we take note of the progress in the implementation. However, concrete positive impact on the human rights situation remains to be seen, including on the investigation and prosecution of the cases related to the “war on drugs” policy. The victims and their family are still waiting for justice to be delivered. We believe that the international mechanism is needed to be put in place.

I thank you.

⁴ This call is in line with the Concluding Observation of the Human Rights Committee after the 5th Periodic Report of the Philippines.
See CCPR/C/PHL/CO/5