



**136th Session of the United National Human Rights Committee
Review of the Philippines
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Dominicans for Justice and Peace and Franciscans International thank the Committee for convening this meeting.

The Philippines is going through a deep human rights crisis, with severe breaches of the State's obligations under the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Under the framework of the War on Drugs and alleged counter-terrorism policies, the right to life, the protection of human rights defenders, as well as the freedom of expression and participation in public affairs are systematically violated.

Human rights defenders, political dissidents, journalists, religious leaders and indigenous peoples are constantly under threats of vilification, arbitrary detention, legal harassment, enforced disappearance, torture and killing. With the issuance of the Executive Order No. 70 (EO 70) and the adoption of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), "red-tagging" and the surveillance of civil society were institutionalised under the pretext of ensuring national security. Under the War on Drugs policy, civil society organisations estimate that around 27,000 people died, victims of extrajudicial killings since July 2016. According to Dahas, a multi-sectoral research project looking into violence in the Philippines, around 200 people were killed in anti-drug operations since January 2022. Between July and September 2022, 90 persons were killed under the current Marcos administration.¹

The excessive use of force by military and paramilitary forces against indigenous communities opposing development projects and denouncing human rights violations has also increased.

Presented last week during the 51st Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the most recent report of the UN Joint Program for the Philippines highlighted the persistence of impunity for human rights abuses, and the lack of transparency and cooperation of

¹ See Dahas, *July, August and September 2022 Drug-Related Killings*, July, August and September 2022 at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DFqBVbNVkgtgAHTXdW09QRkHcsyrVbXPvP71E1nziFs/edit?usp=sharing>; <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SY3wQkf5JUQIRnR-AztcH79fW09SneHmxOGDjr7ghFl/edit> and https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E_1HWcc4n4pU651Wp2htyguig7J0vNy-NIZSuDPjIB4/edit?usp=sharing

the State with the Program. In the context of the withdrawal from the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the delay in the adoption of the Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill, the State deliberately fails to investigate, prosecute and enforce comprehensive mechanisms to address the gross and systematic human rights violations.

As another consequence of the repressive policies adopted by the State, the situation of overcrowding in penitentiary facilities continues to deteriorate. In July 2022, the congestion rate amounted to 396%.² The living conditions of inmates are inhuman, and allegations of torture by police officers continue to surface with no accountability for perpetrators of the violations of article 7 of the Covenant.

Furthermore, corruption in the Philippines remains a strong concern, and alarming cases were presented by the Commission of Audit in 2021. These cases give strong indications of overpricing and anomalous transactions involving the Department of Health and the Department of Education. This resulted in major obstacles in the Country's response to Covid-19.

Taking into consideration the issues raised in the present statement, we respectfully ask the Committee to recommend the State to:

- Take the necessary concrete measures to end and prevent extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, and ensure that alleged perpetrators of these crimes are effectively investigated, prosecuted and, if convicted, punished with appropriate sanctions.
- Adopt the Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill and repeal all legal dispositive in contradiction with the Covenant, including the Executive Order No. 70 and the Anti-Terrorism Act.
- Revise its repressive-oriented policies, adopting a human rights-based approach to the use of drugs, and to the related penal policy.
- Enforce domestic accountability mechanisms for past and future human rights violations, promoting an environment enabling the respect for human rights and political diversity, the protection of human rights defenders, religious leaders and indigenous communities, as well as the promotion of civil society participation.

² See Rappler, *IN NUMBERS: Philippines' perennial problem on jail congestion*, 8 July 2022, at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/philippines-jail-congestion-statistics/>