

Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte - Philippinen

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Human rights violations in the Philippines remain rampant under President Marcos Jr.

In view of the upcoming state visit of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in Berlin, the Action Network Human Rights - Philippines (Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen/AMP) is highly concerned about the human rights situation in the Philippines and the continuing lack of accountability for past and existing human rights violations.

Since President Marcos Jr. took office in June 2022, the AMP has not observed any significant improvements of the human rights situation in the Philippines. President Marcos Jr. has reaffirmed his government's commitment to human rights in various international forums. To date, however, he has continued the repressive policies of the previous government of Rodrigo Duterte and has not put an end to impunity. This is particularly evident in:

- 1) The continuation of the so-called "war on drugs," which is accompanied by brutal police violence and extrajudicial killings.
- 2) The lack of adequate investigations into the many thousands of cases of drug-related killings and several hundred murders of human rights defenders.
- 3) The refusal to cooperate with the International Criminal Court in its investigation of alleged crimes against humanity during Rodrigo Duterte's time as Mayor and Vice-Mayor of Davao City and as President of the Philippines (2011-2019).
- 4) The lack of condemnation of politically motivated persecution and criminalization of human rights defenders and the failure to put an end to these measures.

Despite President Marcos' supposedly new focus on rehabilitation in his anti-drug campaign, drug-related killings continue to take place. Documentation from the DAHAS university project shows that there were already more drug-related killings in the first year of the Marcos administration than in the last year of the Duterte administration. Under President Marcos Jr. there were 556 drug-related killings until February 26, 2024, according to DAHAS. Although the Marcos administration insists that it has a functioning judicial system, there have only been two further convictions of perpetrators in drug-related killings since 2016.

In addition, civic space continues to be restricted under President Marcos Jr. His government is deliberately criminalizing human rights defenders by taking advantage of the shortcomings of the dysfunctional judicial system and laws to combat terrorism and money laundering. State security forces and government officials are increasingly using the practice of so-called "red-tagging" against human rights defenders, i.e. branding political activists as "terrorists." In most cases, "red-tagging" leads to further defamation, criminalization, and in many cases ends deadly. Contrary to the claims of the Philippine government, numerous cases emphasize that "red-tagging" is part of government policy.



In its coalition agreement, the German government stipulates "human rights as a compass" and "an indispensable part of a successful and credible foreign policy." This also means that, for example, future partnership and cooperation agreements between the German government or the EU and the Philippines should depend on progress in relation to the protection of human rights. In addition, the geopolitical challenges in the Indo-Pacific region - also with regard to the National Security Strategy - should not downgrade human rights issues in diplomatic cooperation with the Philippines.

The AMP therefore asks the German government to urge President Marcos Jr. during his visit to Berlin on March 12, 2024, to take up clear measures that will bring about an actual improvement of the human rights situation. This includes, among others, that the Philippine government:

- Ends impunity, especially in cases of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture of human rights defenders and victims in relation with the Philippine government's anti-drug policy, through a thorough and impartial investigation of all such cases, especially when the perpetrators are members of the state security forces.
- Cooperates fully with the independent investigators of the International Criminal Court and international human rights mechanisms such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- Amends the Philippine Anti-Terrorism Act and the anti-drug campaign in order to comply with international human rights standards and to be consistent with democratic rule of law principles such as the presumption of innocence under Article 66 of the Philippine Constitution.
- Condemns and immediately stops politically motivated intimidation, threats, criminalization, and violence against human rights defenders by state security agencies and government officials.

The Action Network Human Rights – Philippines (Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen/AMP) is an initiative of seven major German church-based agencies and human rights organizations to promote advocacy and information work in Germany and the EU regarding the human rights situation in the Philippines. Member Organizations of the AMP are Amnesty International Germany, Brot für die Welt, International Peace Observers Network (IPON), MISEREOR, Missio Munich, philippinenbüro e.V., and the United Evangelical Mission (UEM). The focus of the network lies on the core human rights issues of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and fabricated charges against political activists.