

Cologne, 19.05.2025 | AMP – Statement

On fabricated charges against NGOs in the Philippines

The Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen (AMP) condemns the high number of fabricated charges filed against NGOs, development workers, and human rights defenders by the Philippine government for allegedly violating the domestic “Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act of 2012” (Republic Act No. 10168). These allegations are unfounded and aimed at intimidating the defendants, damaging their reputation, and hindering their work with marginalized communities.

In 2024, the AMP has observed a substantial number of charges of alleged terrorism financing filed against NGOs and their members. Among those targeted with arbitrary accusations were the Community Empowerment Resource Network (CERNET), Katinnulong Daguiti Umili iti Amianan-Peoples Partner in Northern Luzon (KADUAMI), Paghidaet sa Kauswagan Development (PDG), and the Leyte Center for Development (LCDE). Notably, on March 14, 2025, a regional court dismissed the fabricated charges against individuals affiliated with PDG, declaring the charges baseless. This decision was reaffirmed on April 22, 2025, in response to the prosecutor’s motion for reconsideration.

The Philippine Defend NGOs Alliance monitored cases of alleged terrorism financing charges against 24 NGOs between 2019 and 2024. The defendants are usually accused of having individually or institutionally financed an armed rebel group or terrorist organization. Trials often drag on for years in a deeply dysfunctional judicial system. The defendants have to spend tremendous amounts of money and time on their defense, are frequently subjected to so-called “red-tagging,” and can hardly, if at all, pursue their NGO work. “Red-tagging,” a practice of branding individuals or organizations as “terrorist,” often leads to further harassment, unlawful surveillance, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and even killings.

These fabricated charges piled up at a time when the Philippines was about to undergo its next review by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The FATF assesses whether countries are complying with international standards to combat terrorism financing and money laundering, among others. After four years, the Philippines was removed from the increased monitoring list or “grey list” of the FATF in February 2025. The AMP is concerned that the Philippine government filed fabricated charges of alleged terrorism financing against NGOs in view of the FATF compliance review. The indictments highlight the ongoing politically motivated persecution of human rights defenders in the Philippines.

We call on the Philippine government to withdraw all fabricated charges of alleged terrorism financing against NGOs and their members. Furthermore, thorough investigations should be conducted to bring to justice those responsible for “red-tagging” and fabricating the allegations. We urge the European Union, its member states, and international actors to amplify our call by pressuring the Philippine government to ensure that there is no misuse of anti-terrorism and anti-money laundering laws against NGOs, development workers, and human rights defenders.

The Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen (AMP – Action Network Human Rights - Philippines) 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 (BfdW), International Peace Observers Network (IPON), Misereor, Missio Munich, philippinenbüro e.V., and the United Evangelical Mission (UEM). The main focus of the network lies on the core human rights issues of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and fabricated charges against political activists.