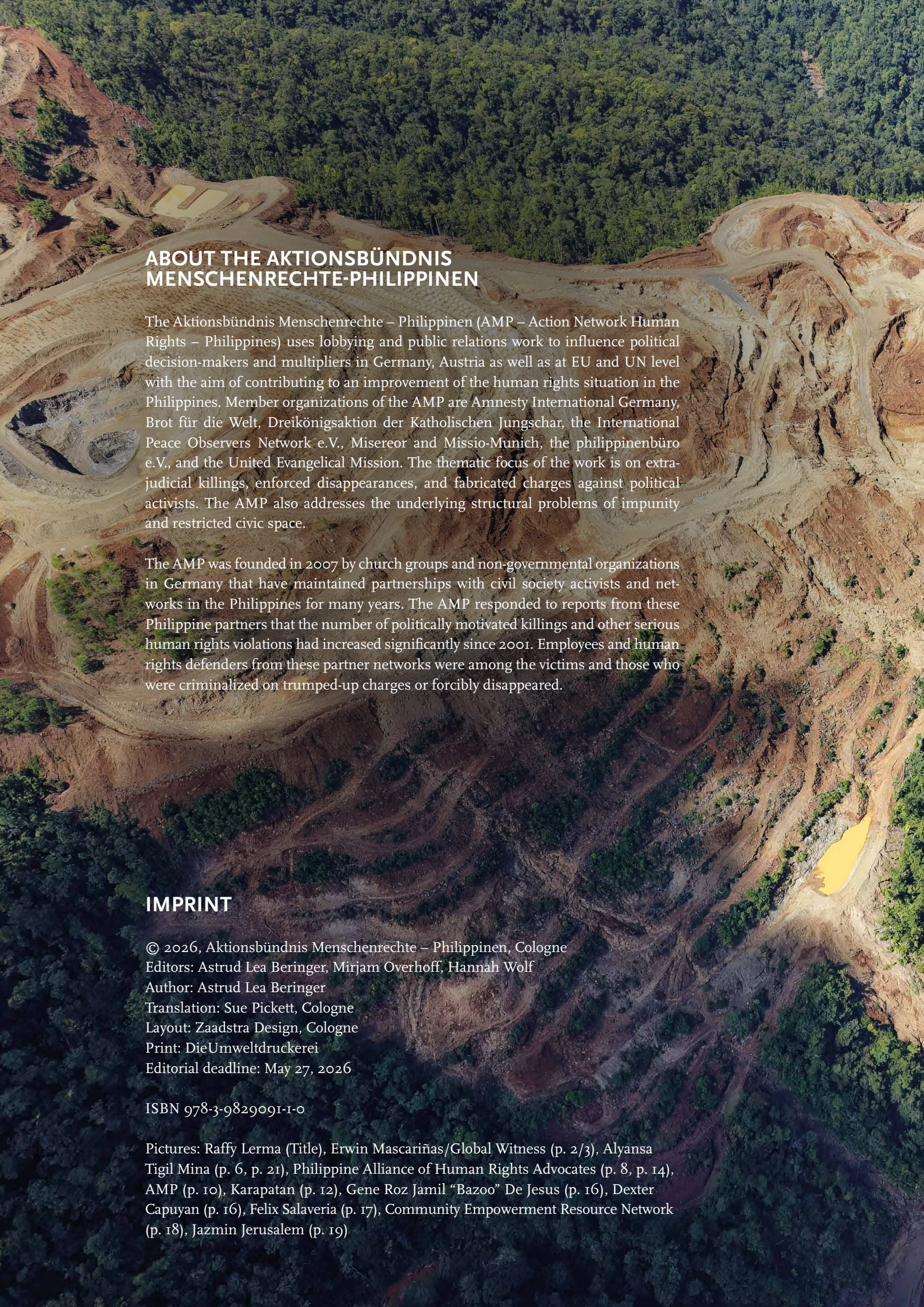




THE LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PHILIPPINES 2026



ABOUT THE AKTIONSBÜNDNIS MENSCHENRECHTE-PHILIPPINEN

The Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen (AMP – Action Network Human Rights – Philippines) uses lobbying and public relations work to influence political decision-makers and multipliers in Germany, Austria as well as at EU and UN level with the aim of contributing to an improvement of the human rights situation in the Philippines. Member organizations of the AMP are Amnesty International Germany, Brot für die Welt, Dreikönigsaktion der Katholischen Jungschar, the International Peace Observers Network e.V., Misereor and Missio-Munich, the philippinenbüro e.V., and the United Evangelical Mission. The thematic focus of the work is on extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and fabricated charges against political activists. The AMP also addresses the underlying structural problems of impunity and restricted civic space.

The AMP was founded in 2007 by church groups and non-governmental organizations in Germany that have maintained partnerships with civil society activists and networks in the Philippines for many years. The AMP responded to reports from these Philippine partners that the number of politically motivated killings and other serious human rights violations had increased significantly since 2001. Employees and human rights defenders from these partner networks were among the victims and those who were criminalized on trumped-up charges or forcibly disappeared.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines	HRDP-Act	Human Rights Defenders Protection Act	TABAK	Tunay na Alyansa ng Bayan Alay sa mga Katutubo ("True Alliance of the People, Dedicated to Indigenous Peoples")
AMLC	Anti-Money Laundering Council	ICC	International Criminal Court	TFIP	Philippine Task Force for Indigenous Peoples' Rights
AMP	Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen ("Action Network Human Rights – Philippines")	IPRA	Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act	TJP	Trade Justice Pilipinas
ATA	Anti-Terrorism Act	KADUAMI	Katinnulong Daguiti Umili iti Amianan ("Cooperation of the People in the North")	UN	United Nations
ATM	Alyansa Tigil Mina	KATRIBU	Kabataan para sa Tribung Pilipino ("Youth for the Philippine Indigenous Peoples")	UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
CERNET	Community Empowerment Resource Network	LCDe	Leyte Center for Development		
CHR	Commission on Human Rights	NFI	National Forensic Institute		
CIDG	Criminal Investigation and Detection Group	NGO	Nongovernmental Organization		
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines	NPO	Nonprofit Organization		
CYCAD	Cycling Advocates	NPA	New People's Army		
EJKs	Extrajudicial Killings	NTF-ELCAC	National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict		
EU	European Union	OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights		
FTA	Free Trade Agreement	PDG	Paghidaet sa Kauswagan Development Group ("Peace in Progress Development Group")		
FATF	Financial Action Task Force	PNP	Philippine National Police		
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent				
GSP	Generalized Scheme of Preferences				
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders				

FOREWORD

In February 2023, residents of Sibuyan Island in Romblon Province erected a barricade to protest the activities of a mining company.



Since 2007, the Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen (AMP – Action Network Human Rights – Philippines) has worked to improve the human rights situation in the Philippines through its advocacy work. To this end, it documents human rights violations and reports on the situation of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in the country. Since 2014, the network has regularly published reports on human rights violations and issued concrete recommendations for political

decision-makers. Drawing on case studies carried out by HRDs and their organizations, these reports identify patterns of human rights abuses and political persecution.

The 2026 AMP Human Rights Report shows that the government of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has made no significant progress in improving the human rights situation. On the contrary, impunity and the political persecution of HRDs remain widespread.

Drug-related killingsⁱ and police violence continue to take place. The domestic criminal prosecution of at least 27,000 extrajudicial killings linked to the so-called “war on drugs” launched by former President Rodrigo Duterte in 2016 remains grossly inadequate, with only five convictions secured to date. Although President Marcos Jr. allowed Interpol to arrest Rodrigo Duterte in March 2025 following an indictment by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged crimes against humanity, his administration has otherwise failed to take effective measures or demonstrate genuine political will to hold perpetrators of human rights violations accountable or to prevent further abuses. The Philippines still has a long way to go in ensuring accountability for these crimes.

HRDs continue to face persecution under President Marcos Jr., including through charges of terrorism financing. This report describes the patterns underlying these fabricated charges and highlights the significant risks they pose to human rights work in the Philippines. According to AMP records, 13 HRDs have been subjected to enforced disappearance since President Marcos Jr. took office on June 30, 2022ⁱⁱ; seven remain missing. In at least two of the cases of enforced disappearance documented in this report, courts found that government authorities had failed to fulfil their duty to conduct thorough investigations. Alongside limited forensic capacity, a complete unwillingness on the part of the police and military to cooperate with the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, victims’ families, and supporting human rights organizations remains a major driver of impunity.

In 2026, the European Commission also undermined its own credibility on its commitment to human rights when it negotiated a bilateral free trade agreement with the Philippines despite unresolved human rights issues. The diversification of raw material imports, particularly of critical minerals, must not come at the expense of human rights in the country. Many human rights organizations argue that it is irresponsible to advance the Green Deal within the European Union (EU) if doing so increases risks to human rights in the Global South. Human rights are universal and non-negotiable; they must not be compromised by regional interests, including those of the EU. To push back against an increasingly authoritarian global political landscape, it is more important than ever to strengthen functioning democracies and the rule of law, independently of economic and state interests. This also means upholding human rights and protecting those who defend them.

This sixth AMP Human Rights Report concludes with recommendations addressed to political decision-makers within the international community. With these recommendations, the AMP calls on the Philippine government to take clear measures to end impunity, protect HRDs, and cooperate with international human rights mechanisms.

On behalf of the members of the Aktionsbündnis Menschenrechte – Philippinen:

Dr. Janina Dannenberg
International Peace Observers Network e.V.

ⁱ The Dahas Project by the University of the Philippines defines a “drug-related killing” as a drug-related incident in which the victim was killed by violent means (e.g. beaten, shot, or stabbed to death), and at least one of the criteria specified by Dahas is fulfilled (see bit.ly/4tT18Ho). “Dahas” means “violence” in Tagalog and is a project carried out by the Third World Studies Center at the University of the Philippines’ College of Social Sciences and Philosophy. Dahas has been monitoring drug-related killings in the Philippines since June 2018.

ⁱⁱ Enforced disappearance refers to the involvement of state actors in abducting and detaining individuals and concealing their whereabouts. This practice was systematically deployed under numerous previous administrations.

SPOTLIGHT I – THE LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE

Supporters of the ICC proceedings against Rodrigo Duterte gather in Manila for the confirmation-of-charges hearings in February 2026.



The ongoing proceedings of the International Criminal Court (ICC) against former President Rodrigo Duterte are a first significant step towards justice. Duterte is accused of crimes against humanity in connection with tens of thousands of killings carried out during his “war on drugs.” Nevertheless, extrajudicial and drug-related killings, unlawful arrests, police violence, and widespread impunity persist, while domestic accountability for human rights violations remains largely absent.

Ten years have passed since the start of the “war on drugs” under former President Rodrigo Duterte (2016–2022), during which at least 27,000 peopleⁱ were killed, many by state security forces.ⁱⁱⁱ Even now, four years into

his term, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.^{iv} still shows no sign that he intends to conduct a comprehensive political and legal reappraisal of past and ongoing human rights violations.

NATIONAL COURTS OFFER LITTLE PROSPECT OF JUSTICE

Attaining justice at the national level remains virtually impossible for victims of the “war on drugs” and their families. This is due, on the one hand, to lack of political will and weak rule of law in the Philippines. On the other, forensic investigations into killings remain inadequate, access to police and autopsy reports is limited, and criminal investigations are often deficient. In many cases, the available evidence is insufficient even to bring charges before a court. According to the Commission

ⁱⁱⁱ The most recently published government statistics on killings carried out during so-called anti-drug operations by state security forces cites 6,252 cases between July 1, 2016 and May 31, 2022. The Philippine Commission on Human Rights estimates that at least 27,000 extrajudicial killings occurred between 2016 and 2018 in the context of the “war on drugs,” including killings carried out by state security forces as well as by unidentified perpetrators.

^{iv} Ferdinand Marcos Jr. took office as President of the Philippines on June 30, 2022. His regular six-year term ends on June 30, 2028.

on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR), one fundamental problem is the Philippine National Police's (PNP)² refusal to cooperate. The lack of access to police reports,³ especially in cases of drug-related and extrajudicial killings, significantly hampers the CHR's investigative work. It also prevents families from obtaining information about the circumstances surrounding their relatives' deaths. The PNP typically justifies its approach by citing a 2016 inventory of exceptions to the right to access to information (Executive Order No. 2),⁴ under which government agencies may refuse access to case files and withhold information that could potentially affect national security.

In 2024, the CHR highlighted these challenges during an investigation conducted jointly by four committees of the House of Representatives. In these “quad comm” hearings, lawmakers examined possible links between the illegal drug trade, Philippine offshore gaming operators, extrajudicial killings (EJKs), and human rights violations under the government of former President Rodrigo Duterte.⁵ Two years on, however, the situation remains unchanged. According to local human rights organizations, the Department of Justice has shown no serious commitment to holding alleged perpetrators accountable, instead prioritizing cases with a “particularly strong” evidentiary basis and rejecting others, even when victims and their families are willing to cooperate. Moreover, fear of reprisals by perpetrators remains widespread among victims and their families. The protection and support measures offered by authorities for witnesses, victims, and their families are often inadequate.

Investigations by the Philippine news organization Rappler in 2024 showed that not one of the 52 drug-related killings referred by the PNP to the Department of Justice for investigation had resulted in criminal charges being filed.⁶ Since 2016, only five of nine police officers have been convicted in four cases of EJKs linked to state anti-drug operations.^v Four of these convictions took place under the current administration of President Marcos Jr.

A TRUTH COMMISSION IS NEEDED

Alongside justice, those affected by the “war on drugs” are also calling for truth, public remembrance, and state compensation. Truth-seeking, the opportunity to give testimony, and public recognition of the atrocities committed are of crucial importance to survivors, victims, and their families. Individual representatives of the church, human rights organizations,⁷ and members of Congress have repeatedly called for the establishment of a truth commission as part of the reappraisal of the “war on drugs.” However, the Philippine government has so far failed to take such action. On May 27, 2026, representatives of the Catholic Church, led by Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David, established a civilian-led truth commission tasked with documenting human rights violations committed during the “war on drugs,” establishing the truth, formally recognizing those affected as victims, and providing support for trauma recovery and social healing. The commission also investigates crimes that fall outside the International Criminal Court's period of investigation and is intended to support the prosecution of perpetrators before national courts.⁸ The truth commission offers affected individuals – especially those unable to participate in the ICC proceedings – a prospect of justice.

The “Quad Comm” investigation,⁹ launched in May 2024, was the first official opportunity for victims to contribute to the search for truth and the pursuit of justice. During the hearings, victims and their families, as well as government officials and former President Rodrigo Duterte, gave testimony. Based on statements from senior police officials and Duterte himself, the investigation concluded in December 2024 that systematic killings had taken place and institutional impunity had prevailed.¹⁰ In its report, the commission recommended the adoption of an anti-extrajudicial killing bill (House Bill No. 10986)¹¹ to establish a legal definition of EJKs and enable their criminal prosecution.¹² The government has so far failed to act on the lawmakers' recommendation to file charges against Rodrigo Duterte and Senators Ronald Dela Rosa and Christopher Go for crimes against humanity. In January 2025, the “Quad-Comm” investigations¹³ were temporarily suspended due to impeachment proceedings against Vice President

^v In 2018, three police officers were convicted of the murder of Kian delos Santos. One police officer was convicted in 2022 and 2023, respectively, for the torture and murder of Carl Angelo Arnaiz and Reynaldo de Guzman. Four police officers were convicted in 2024 of killing Luis and Gabriel Bonifacio, and one police officer was convicted in 2025 for the murder of Ryan Dave Almora.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. holds a press conference at Malacañang Palace on July 27, 2022, to mark the aftermath of an earthquake in the north of the island of Luzon.



Sara Duterte,^{vi} Rodrigo Duterte’s daughter, as well as the mid-term elections in May 2025.^{vii}

INTERNATIONAL COURT PROCEEDINGS OFFER HOPE

The prospect of justice in a system defined by impunity remained limited in 2025 and 2026. This was why many people affected by the “war on drugs” placed their hopes in the ICC’s international investigation and charges against Rodrigo Duterte for crimes against humanity.^{viii} Although President Marcos Jr. repeatedly refused to cooperate with the ICC in the investigations against Rodrigo Duterte, most recently in March 2025, his government ultimately supported the implementation of an ICC arrest warrant through Interpol. Duterte was arrested in Manila on March 11, 2025, and transferred to The Hague.

^{vi} The impeachment proceedings against Sara Duterte followed a complaint accusing her, among other things, of betrayal of public trust and crimes related to a death threat against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., his wife Liza Araneta Marcos, and then House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez in 2024. The complaint also included allegations of bribery and corruption linked to the misuse of funds from the Department of Education and the Office of the Vice President. On February 5, 2025, the Philippine House of Representatives voted to initiate impeachment proceedings against Sara Duterte. However, the Senate voted against proceeding with the case on August 6, 2025, after the Supreme Court had declared the complaint invalid on July 25, 2025. The proceedings were subsequently discontinued. In January 2026, further complaints were filed against Sara Duterte in an effort to initiate a new impeachment process. On May 11, 2026, the House of Representatives again voted to impeach Sara Duterte.

^{vii} In the mid-term elections on May 12, 2025, 12 of the 24 Senate seats were up for election. Of the newly elected senators, five are associated with the Duterte faction, five with the Marcos faction, and two with the opposition (Paolo Benigno “Bam” Aquino IV and Francisco “Kiko” Pangilinan). Two allies of Rodrigo Duterte (Christopher “Bong” Go and Ronald “Bato” Dela Rosa) also finished among the top five candidates. Despite favorable polling forecasts, candidates aligned with the Marcos camp fell short of expectations in the Senate. In the House of Representatives, candidates from the alliance of political parties supporting Marcos Jr. continued to hold the majority. In the simultaneous local elections, Rodrigo Duterte was elected mayor of Davao City, while his son Sebastian was elected vice mayor.

^{viii} Rodrigo Duterte began his “war on drugs” in the 1990s during his tenure as mayor of Davao City, under the pretext of combating crime. He promoted a narrative according to which drug users could be killed as criminals in cases of “self-defense.” The majority of victims of this “war on drugs” were people from marginalized communities who had the least access to legal remedies. The atrocities committed in Davao City provided the blueprint for the impunity that spread across the country after Duterte assumed the presidency in 2016. After the ICC initiated a preliminary examination into numerous killings linked to the “war on drugs” in 2018, the Philippines withdrew from the ICC the following year. As a result, the ICC proceedings only cover crimes committed during the period in which the Philippines was a member of the ICC, between 2011 and 2019.

Although numerous attempts by Duterte’s defense team to prevent a confirmation-of-charges hearing and secure his release delayed the proceedings, they ultimately proved unsuccessful. Between February 23 and 27, 2026, the first hearings were held to assess the evidence supporting the prosecution’s case.^{ix} Duterte formally waived his right to attend the hearings, citing, among other reasons, his refusal to recognize the jurisdiction of the ICC. On April 23, 2026, the ICC’s Pre-Trial Chamber announced it would open the trial against Rodrigo Duterte in late 2026. On May 11, 2026, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Senator Ronald “Bato” Dela Rosa on charges of crimes against humanity. As Duterte’s former Chief of Police, Dela Rosa was instrumental in implementing the “war on drugs.” He has since resisted attempts by the National Bureau of Investigation to execute the arrest warrant and remains in hiding.

The international proceedings do not bring an end to impunity in the Philippines. However, they could shed light on what was done to the victims and their families and show that those allegedly responsible for the systematic killings must face criminal prosecution.

NO GUARANTEE IMPUNITY WILL BE BROUGHT TO AN END

Since President Marcos Jr. took office, the University of the Philippines’ Dahas Project has recorded 1,254 cases of drug-related killings (as of May 23, 2026).¹⁴ These findings contradict the President’s claims that the campaign against illegal drugs has been conducted without human rights violations. Brutal police violence and impunity persist, and without judicial reform and a genuine commitment to the rule of law, state security forces will continue to act with impunity. Meanwhile, the Marcos Jr. administration still denies that the killings are linked to the campaign against illegal drugs.

Measures taken by the Philippine government so far, including the establishment of the Special Committee on Human Rights Coordination and the adoption of a new national human rights plan (the 4th Philippine Human Rights Plan) in 2024, have failed to improve the critical situation of impunity. On the other hand, the establishment of the National Forensic Institute (NFI) at the University of the Philippines in June 2025, backed by the Australian government, could strengthen the country’s forensic capacity for investigating unlawful and preventable deaths.¹⁵ There are currently only two forensic pathologists in the country, and legal safeguards guaranteeing the NFI’s institutional independence and funding have yet to be established. Moreover, autopsies are not legally required, even in cases of violent or suspected unnatural deaths.¹⁶

^{ix} The ICC has charged Rodrigo Duterte with three counts of crimes against humanity: (1) the murder of 19 people in Davao City between 2013 and 2016 in connection with his “Davao Death Squad”; (2) the murder of 14 “high-profile targets” during his presidency from 2016 to 2017; and (3) the murder and attempted murder of 45 people (three of whom survived) during operations at the community or “barangay” level between 2016 and 2018.

SPOTLIGHT II – HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS BECOME ENEMIES OF THE STATE

Frenchie Mae Cumpio and Marielle Domequil on their way to the hearing in Tacloban City in January 2026.



The narrative that human rights work constitutes a “terrorist idea”¹⁷ has persisted under President Marcos Jr. Human rights defenders continue to face political persecution, increasingly through fabricated charges of terrorism financing since 2024.

The conviction of journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio and her co-defendant Marielle Domequil for violations of the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act (Republic Act No. 10168)¹⁸ could set a dangerous precedent for journalism and human rights work in the Philippines. Cumpio was arrested on January 7, 2020, and initially detained on charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives.¹⁹ In October 2021, she was also charged with terrorism financing. On January 22, 2026, after six years behind bars, a regional court in Tacloban City acquitted Cumpio of the charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives but convicted her of terrorism financing.

Since 2024, AMP has observed numerous fabricated charges against non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and HRDs for alleged violations of Republic Act No. 10168. These NGOs include the Community Empowerment Resource Network (CERNET; see page 18), Katinulong Daguiti Umili iti Amianan (KADUAMI), Paghidaet sa Kauswagan Development Group (PDG), and the Leyte Center for Development (LCDe; see page 19). Some of these charges were later dropped, or did not proceed to trial, usually due to formal irregularities in the indictments. For example, on March 14, 2025, a regional court dismissed the fabricated charges against PDG staff members as unfounded. The prosecution’s request for a review of the decision was rejected on April 22, 2025.²⁰ Jazmin Jerusalem, the main defendant in the case against LCDe, was also acquitted, on February 27, 2026, of the charge of terrorism financing (see page 19).²¹

Charges of terrorism financing typically follow a pattern. A single statement from an alleged former member of the rebel group, the New People's Army (NPA), is usually sufficient to bring charges and, in the case of Cumpio and Domequil, even to secure a conviction. Some prosecution witnesses have even testified in multiple cases. The accused are alleged to be members of, and to have provided financial support to, an armed insurgent group which has been designated as a "terrorist" organization (a practice commonly referred to as so-called "*red-tagging*"). Court proceedings in the Philippines' deeply dysfunctional justice system often drag on for years. Defendants are forced to devote considerable time and financial resources to their defense, while facing defamation and threats, making it difficult, if not impossible, to continue their human rights work.

According to the AMP's observations, terrorism financing charges against HRDs and NGOs increased significantly in 2024, shortly before the Philippines underwent a review by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).^{xi} The FATF assesses whether countries comply with international standards to combat terrorist financing and money laundering. In February 2025, after four years, the Philippines was removed from the FATF's list of jurisdictions under increased surveillance, commonly known as the "grey list." Local human rights organizations expressed concern that, in an effort to demonstrate compliance with the FATF assessment, the Philippine government had deliberately brought charges of terrorism financing against NGOs. However, even after the FATF assessment, further terrorism financing charges were brought against NGOs and their staff.

Fabricated criminal charges, in which falsified evidence is used to accuse individuals of crimes they did not commit, are a particularly insidious way of criminalizing HRDs in the Philippines. Common charges include murder, arson, and the illegal possession of firearms and explosives. In such cases, release on bail is possible only under exceptional circumstances, leaving defendants in detention until the conclusion of their trial. The court proceedings themselves typically drag on for years due to overburdened courts, slow bureaucratic procedures, and corruption within the justice system. Despite spurious evidence, often based solely on the statements of alleged witnesses, prosecutors file charges and judges allow cases to proceed without considering exonerative evidence. This violates Article 14 of the United Nations Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors, which provides that prosecutors "shall not initiate or continue prosecution, or shall make every effort to stay proceedings, when an impartial investigation shows the charge to be unfounded."²² These fabricated charges are intended to discredit and imprison HRDs. The lack of forensic expertise in the Philippines is also exploited, forcing investigators to rely heavily on witness testimony.

Accusing HRDs of terrorism also means declaring them enemies of the state. The use of counterterrorism and anti-money laundering laws to prosecute HRDs is a dangerous trend. Two laws are used to do this: the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act (Republic Act No. 10168) of 2012 and the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (ATA), both of which allow the freezing of bank accounts. Although the accused may be eligible for bail and can therefore avoid pretrial detention, the required bail is set at the prohibitively high sum of 200,000 Philippine Pesos (approximately 2,800 Euro) per charge. Such amounts are often beyond the means of individuals affected and their organizations, especially when their bank accounts have been frozen.

Fabricated charges are often accompanied by smear campaigns involving *red-tagging*, intimidation, and unlawful surveillance. In numerous cases, the practice of *red-tagging* has also led to further harassment, enforced disappearances, and even killings. Since 2016, AMP has documented 315 killings of HRDs and journalists. Although these crimes have declined significantly compared with previous years, with ten killings recorded

x According to the Philippine Supreme Court (*Deduro v. Vinoya*, G.R. No. 254753, 2023), "*red-tagging*" refers to the public labelling, vilification, or association of individuals, groups, or organizations as communists, terrorists, or subversives without factual evidence, thereby exposing them to threats, surveillance, or violations of their rights.

xi The FATF was established in 1989 by the G7 countries, including Germany, to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. Member states identified as having so-called "strategic deficiencies" are publicly listed. FATF Recommendation 8 calls on states to protect nonprofit organizations (NPOs) from being misused for money laundering and terrorist financing. However, implementation of the recommendation has often resulted in the overregulation of the NPO sector, undermining the legitimate charitable activities of these organizations (see bit.ly/4dNgR7a).

Demonstration for the protection of environmental and human rights on the occasion of Earth Day on April 22, 2026, in Manila.



between July 1, 2024, and March 30, 2026, (see table on page 27) and 16 since Marcos Jr. took office, Global Witness still identified the Philippines as Asia's deadliest country for environmental defenders in 2024.²³ None of the perpetrators of the killings recorded by AMP have been identified to date and therefore cannot be held accountable. This also includes the cases documented by AMP involving Zara Alvarez and Benjamin Ramos, who were killed by unidentified perpetrators in 2020 and 2018, respectively. The only exception is the murder of radio broadcaster Percival "Percy Lapid" Mabasa on October 3, 2022; the confessed gunman, Joel Escorial, was sentenced on May 6, 2024, to a maximum prison sentence of 16 years. The alleged mastermind behind the contract killing, former Bureau of Corrections chief Gerald Bantag, however, remains at large.²⁴ The Mabasa murder highlights the fact that the relevant government authorities often have little interest in pursuing criminal accountability through national courts, especially when the alleged perpetrators are prominent figures and government officials.

NO JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

The political persecution of HRDs in the Philippines remains deeply troubling, not least due to the alarming number of enforced disappearances under Marcos Jr.'s administration. Between July 1, 2022, and March 30, 2026, the AMP documented the enforced disappearance of 13 HRDs, seven of whom remain missing (see the cases of Gene Roz Jamil "Bazoo" De Jesus and Dexter Capuyan on page 16, as well as Felix Salaveria Jr. on page 17).^{xii} The AMP documented the most recent case in August 2024. However, criminal accountability for cases documented by human rights organizations remains inadequate, despite solid evidence of the involvement

xii The AMP's documentation of 13 cases of enforced disappearance of HRDs includes both individuals who have reappeared and persons still missing. The AMP's documentation may differ from other statistics, as the network exclusively records cases of disappeared HRDs. The classification of the term "human rights defender" is based on the definition provided by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

of state security forces (see the case of Gene Roz Jamil “Bazoo” De Jesus and Dexter Capuyan on page 16). This is particularly sobering and distressing for the families of those still missing. In the case of Dyan Gumanao and Armand Dayoha (see AMP Human Rights Report 2024), who were abducted and interrogated for several days in January 2023 by alleged members of state security forces, the CHR was able to conclusively confirm, in 2025, the involvement of a soldier from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Gumanao and Dayoha plan to file a civil lawsuit against the soldier.

The Philippines has yet to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Although the national Anti-Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance Act of 2012 criminalizes the practice of enforced disappearance, it has never once been applied. One reason is the frequent lack of evidence to support criminal prosecution, a problem compounded by the inadequate cooperation of the police with the CHR and victims’ families. At the same time, government authorities continue to deny that these cases constitute enforced disappearances.

The adoption of the national Human Rights Defenders Protection Act (HRDP Act) is necessary to help end the extreme intimidation, criminalization, killings, and enforced disappearances of HRDs in the Philippines. In the House of Representatives^{xiii} of the 20th Congress of the Philippines, which convened on July 28, 2025, several legislative proposals on this matter were already submitted. The bills are based on the United Nations (UN) Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and would oblige the government to respect the rights of HRDs and to criminally prosecute the arbitrary restriction of their rights, for example through *red-tagging*. Local ordinances protecting Human Rights Defenders, already adopted in several cities, including Quezon City²⁵, Baguio City, and Puerto Princesa, offer a model for such legislation. A bill aimed at broadly criminalizing the practice of *red-tagging*, also known as the “Anti-Red-Tagging Act,” was submitted for consideration in the House of Representatives²⁶ in July 2025, and in the Senate²⁷ in January 2026. However, it faces intense opposition from numerous influential members of Congress who support the

practice, particularly in the context of the government’s campaign against the armed communist insurgency.

Both legislative initiatives met with strong opposition from the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC).²⁸ Since it was established in 2018, the NTF-ELCAC has been known for systematically *red-tagging* HRDs. In 2023, the task force had already criticized the overly broad definition of the term “human rights defenders” in an earlier draft of the HRDP bill, and the fact that it could also include terrorists, criminals, and other enemies of the state.²⁹ Despite repeated calls from UN experts³⁰ to abolish the controversial task force, Marcos Jr. has not done so; instead, its budget was increased by 340 percent in 2025.³¹

The following four case studies of HRDs and their organizations illustrate the patterns of human rights violations and political persecution outlined above.

xiii See the House of Representatives’ database for all bills concerning the HRDP Act: bit.ly/3TNQGE1.

CASE: GENE ROZ JAMIL “BAZOO” DE JESUS AND DEXTER CAPUYAN^{xiv}



Gene Roz Jamil “Bazoo” De Jesus left his home in Malolos, Bulacan, on the morning of April 27, 2023, to apply for the renewal of his passport in Metro Manila and run some errands in nearby Taytay, Rizal.

In the night of April 28, 2023, several men wearing the insignia of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group of the Philippine National Police (CIDG-PNP) abducted De Jesus and his companion Dexter Capuyan while they were travelling by tricycle to the Golden City Subdivision in the municipality of Taytay. Shortly beforehand, De Jesus had messaged a colleague, telling him he was stopping at a supermarket. He and Capuyan have not been seen or heard from since.

De Jesus worked as a media officer for the organization Philippine Task Force for Indigenous Peoples’ Rights (TFIP), while Capuyan was an activist and community representative in the Cordillera region of northern Philippines.

According to the tricycle driver (whose name and testimony only became known to families two years later), two white vans blocked the road shortly before

they reached their destination. Several unknown men, who identified themselves as CIDG-PNP officers to the driver, pulled De Jesus and Capuyan from the tricycle and forced them into separate vehicles. The tricycle driver informed the security guard at the entrance to the residential community of the abduction and also told several fellow tricycle drivers. However, the security guard did not record the incident in her logbook.

The families of the two victims, together with several human rights organizations, immediately launched a search effort and filed reports with the relevant barangay authorities,^{xv} the Taytay police, and the Rizal Police Provincial Office. The CHR Regional Office IV conducted an investigation, but closed the case in September 2023, citing insufficient evidence. It was only through a Taytay police investigation report from November 2024, which the families did not receive until 2025, that the tricycle driver’s testimony confirming the two men’s disappearance came to light. Despite the new evidence, the CHR has still not re-opened its investigation.

^{xiv} Details about the cases of political persecution of HRDs presented in this report are based primarily on information and data supplied to the AMP by its civil society partners in the Philippines.

^{xv} The “barangay” is the lowest political administrative division in the Philippines

In November 2024, the Supreme Court granted De Jesus and Capuyan two special court orders: a writ of amparo and a writ of habeas data.^{xvi} In August

^{xvi} The writ of amparo is a legal remedy and a form of protection available to any person whose right to life, liberty, or security has been violated or is under threat. The writ of habeas data protects an individual's right to privacy against the unlawful collection, storage, or use of personal data.

2025, the Court of Appeals upheld their entitlement to protection under the writ of amparo. The court recognized both men as victims of enforced disappearance, finding that the measures taken by the police and military to find them had been “completely inadequate in terms of both effectiveness and thoroughness.” De Jesus and Capuyan remain missing to this day.

CASE: FELIX SALAVERIA JR.



Felix Salaveria Jr. was abducted on August 28, 2024, at around 11am, while walking to his house in the district Cobo in Tabaco, Albay.

Salaveria studied sociology in Metro Manila in the early 1980s where he was involved in student activism against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. Since then, Salaveria has been particularly dedicated to the cause of Indigenous Peoples and co-founded the organizations Tunay na Alyansa ng Bayan Alay sa mga Katutubo (TABAK) and Kabataan para sa Tribung Pilipino (KATRIBU). As a keen cyclist, Salaveria co-founded the group Cycling Advocates (CYCAD) in the mid-1990s. In 2023, he suffered a stroke that left the left side of his body paralyzed.

As Salaveria was walking home from a nearby cafeteria, a silver Toyota van pulled up beside him and two unknown individuals suddenly jumped out of it. They grabbed Salaveria and forced him into the vehicle, which immediately left the scene. The entire incident was recorded by the surveillance camera of the Barangay town hall. Five days earlier, Salaveria had reported the disappearance of his friend James Jazmines, who had celebrated his 66th birthday with him on August 23, 2024, at a restaurant in Tabaco and had last been seen there.

In September 2024, several human rights organizations launched search and documentation campaigns, during which they approached various local authorities and church representatives to request assistance in the search for Salaveria.

On February 6, 2025, the Supreme Court granted a petition filed by the family of Felix Salaveria for a writ of amparo and a writ of habeas data. The Court of Appeals upheld the granting of the appeals on July 30, 2025, and highlighted in its ruling the failure of the relevant authorities to conduct a thorough investigation. Both Salaveria and Jazmines remain missing.

CASE: CERNET 27



In May 2023, a criminal complaint was filed against the NGO Community Empowerment Resource Network (CERNET) and 27 individuals (collectively referred to as “CERNET 27”) for violating Section 8 (ii) and Section 9 of Republic Act No. 10168. Among the defendants are former and active development workers and HRDs who were or are still associated with CERNET.

Since its founding in 2001, CERNET has worked with grassroots organizations to improve the socio-economic situation in their communities. Despite its recognized work, CERNET has been the target of *red-tagging* for years.

CERNET’s bank account has been frozen since October 2023, forcing the organization to suspend its projects in the Visayas. On May 8, 2024, all 27 individuals, along with CERNET, were indicted by the Cebu City Regional Court. Three individuals had already passed away by the time of the indictment (three more died in early 2026).^{xvii} All defendants were able to post bail shortly after receiving the arrest warrants.

^{xvii} On June 26, 2024, a court in Cebu City dismissed the charges against two of the defendants who had already passed away; no death certificate could be located for the third deceased person. Between January and April 2026, three additional defendants died: Cristina Muñoz, Teresa Claire Alicaba, and Rebecca Seines.

In late April 2024, during a press conference in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, Philippine security forces, particularly General Joey Escanillas, accused CERNET and its members of supporting the armed rebel group NPA. On May 18, 2024, the Cebu City Police posted a photo of one of the accused, Estrella Catarata, on their Facebook page, identifying her as the “No. 1 most wanted person in the Central Visayas region.” Photos of two other defendants were also posted on the same Facebook page, while images of five additional defendants were posted on a separate page. All seven were identified as “wanted persons.”

According to CERNET, the main witness in the case, former CERNET employee Bernabe Nieves, claimed in September 2012 to have paid 135,000 Philippine Pesos (approximately 1,900 Euro) to the NPA in Negros Oriental Province through another witness, the alleged former rebel Hermosila Apao Villamor. Nieves was employed by CERNET from 2006 until his dismissal in November 2012.

In August 2024, various UN Special Rapporteurs expressed grave concern in a joint communiqué about “the potential consequences of the asset freezing measures [on] vital humanitarian and human rights services” provided by CERNET.

Charges were filed in September 2024, and hearings were held in February, May, and July 2025. Even the testimony of an employee of the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) during one of the hearings provided no evidence of the alleged money transfer from CERNET to the NPA. Representatives from various embassies in Manila – including those of Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, and the EU – observed the CERNET hearings.

On April 23, 2025, Estrella Catarata filed a civil complaint against General Escanillas seeking two million Philippine Pesos (approximately 27,800 Euro)

for moral damages due to defamation and the *red-tagging* attack against CERNET 27. On July 30, 2025, CERNET filed criminal and administrative complaints against the Public Prosecutor's Office with the Ombudsman's Office in Cebu City, accusing it of violating criminal prosecution regulations and arbitrariness in bringing charges against CERNET.

Due to the absence of the presiding judge, the next court hearing was postponed twice. On May 15, 2026, prior to the next hearing, the Regional Trial Court in Cebu City dismissed the charges against the CERNET 27 for alleged terrorism financing. The court ruled that "the alleged acts did not constitute a crime under the law at the time they were committed."

CASE: LEYTE CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT



On May 2, 2024, the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC), acting under Republic Act No. 10168, ordered the freezing of the three operational bank accounts of the Leyte Center for Development (LCDe), as well as the personal bank accounts of LCDe Executive Director Jazmin Jerusalem, her son, three of her staff members, and three local suppliers of humanitarian relief goods working with LCDe. The individuals affected were not notified of the order; they only learned their accounts had been frozen when their banks informed them.

LCDe has been at the forefront of development work in Leyte and Samar since 1988, providing socio-economic services and delivering community-based disaster relief. Jazmin Jerusalem has received several national and international awards for her humanitarian

work, including the UN Women in Disaster Risk Reduction (WIN DRR) Leadership Award in 2021.

The Court of Appeals initially rejected numerous applications to lift the freeze orders on procedural grounds. The prolonged freezing of the accounts significantly hampered LCDe's operations.

On November 7, 2024, six months after the freezing order was issued, Jerusalem, a former LCDe employee, and a third person unknown to them were summoned by the CIDG-PNP. During the meeting, they were accused of violating Sections 8 and 9 of Republic Act No. 10168. According to the statements of four purported former members of the NPA, who were actively cooperating with the military, the accused were alleged to have provided the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA (CPP-NPA) with financial resources and supplies on three occasions between 2013 and 2016. However, on December 19, 2024, the regional court in Tacloban dismissed the case for lack of evidence linking the accused to the alleged recipients of the funds.

In January 2025, the case was refiled with the same three charges, however this time against Jazmin Jerusalem alone. The same evidence was presented, and the same witnesses were summoned. After Jerusalem was informed of the new charges and the arrest warrant issued against her in February 2025, she posted bail of 600,000 Philippine Pesos (approximately 8,400 Euro).

A pretrial hearing took place in March 2025, and several further hearings followed. Mary Lawlor, the then UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, repeatedly expressed solidarity with Jerusalem in social media posts. In November 2025, the AMLC filed a petition for the civil forfeiture of assets against Jerusalem, LCDe, and five other individuals whose accounts had also been frozen the previous year.

On February 20, 2026, the regional court in Manila ruled that the asset-freezing and forfeiture orders issued by the AMLC should be lifted, finding no sufficient grounds to justify the continued freezing of the assets. However, the banks were unable to release the funds because the AMLC had filed a motion for a review of the decision. A further hearing scheduled for April 16, 2026, was postponed to June 19, 2026, due to the absence of the prosecution. On February 27, 2026, the regional court in Tacloban dismissed the

terrorism financing charges against Jerusalem and, on April 15, 2026, upheld its decision in response to the prosecution's notice of appeal. In its reasoning, the court held that, under the Philippine Rules on Evidence, the testimony of "co-conspirators" cannot, without corroboration, serve as the sole basis for criminal charges. The court further found that, at the time of the alleged offences, the CPP-NPA had not been validly designated as a terrorist organization under Philippine law, and held that a foreign or supranational designation has no legal validity in the Philippines unless it has been officially published in accordance with Republic Act No. 10168.

The LCDe and Jazmin Jerusalem hope the bank accounts will soon be released so that they can resume their work with marginalized communities.

SPOTLIGHT III – INTERNATIONAL TRADE THREATENS THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



Demonstration against offshore mining on April 2, 2026.

In 2017, the EU suspended negotiations with the Philippines on a free trade agreement (FTA) due to the human rights crisis under the government of Rodrigo Duterte. Despite the lack of significant improvements in the human rights situation, the EU decided in 2024 to resume free trade talks with the Philippines. Both sides expect the agreement to be concluded in 2026.

For years, the Philippine network Trade Justice Pilipinas (TJP) has warned of the potential human rights risks associated with an EU–Philippines FTA, particularly for communities affected by critical mineral mining and workers facing labor exploitation.³² The agreement could exacerbate conflicts and human rights violations in the mining sector, since increased demand from the EU could lead to a massive expansion of mining activities, at the expense of local communities.

With the world's fourth-largest copper and cobalt reserves and fifth-largest nickel reserves, the Philippines is considered a strategically important partner for the EU. The country could contribute significantly to the implementation of the EU Green Deal and the diversification of imports of critical raw materials. In 2023, President Marcos Jr. simplified procedures for issuing mining permits in order to increase foreign investment (Executive Order No. 18),³³ following his predecessor's lifting of a 2021 moratorium on the issuance of new mining permits and the ban on open-pit mining.

Around two-thirds of mineral reserves are located in the territories of Indigenous Peoples. Many of these areas are already impacted by concessions for the exploration or extraction of natural resources. According to the local network Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM), many mining pro-

jects cause irreversible damage, including loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, contamination of watersheds, displacement of communities, health problems, and human rights violations.³⁴ The razing of forests and mangroves for mining activities further exacerbates the impacts of extreme weather events.

Mining activities on Indigenous Peoples' territories generally proceed without "Free, Prior, and Informed Consent" (FPIC). Local communities are often consulted only to a limited extent, if at all, and important information regarding the environmental and human rights impacts of mining on communities is not adequately addressed. Corruption also undermines transparency about planned mining projects.³⁵ The Philippine Mining Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 7942) also grants mining companies extensive rights to free timber extraction and water use, contributing to the excessive exploitation of natural resources. This violates the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, as enshrined in the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, and threatens their livelihoods. Representatives of Indigenous Peoples have therefore long called for a revision of the Mining Act.³⁶

Opposition to mining activities comes not only from defenders of Indigenous Peoples' rights and environmental activists, but also from local governments that have adopted local ordinances banning further mining. Critical activists are frequently threatened, criminalized, subjected to *red-tagging*, harassed, and even killed.

A Sustainability Impact Assessment conducted by the EU in 2019 illustrated potential negative impacts of the FTA on human rights, particularly for Indigenous Peoples, women, and children.³⁷ However, the socio-economic situation in the country has changed significantly since then as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and geopolitical challenges. Nevertheless, in 2025, the European Commission rejected a proposal by a Member of the European Parliament to conduct a separate human rights impact assessment.³⁸

Despite a human rights clause and commitments in the sustainability chapter to implement the International Labor Organization's core labor standards and multi-

lateral environmental agreements, the FTA provides limited scope for responding to human rights violations. The EU is pushing for international free trade at almost any cost. Yet, in a country where the state politically persecutes its own citizens and fails to comply with international human rights standards, an FTA is highly likely to contribute to an increase in human rights violations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Union and its Member States, as well as UN Member States, should urge the Philippine government to implement the following recommendations:

ENDING IMPUNITY

- » End impunity for extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture, especially those involving HRDs and victims of the Philippine government's anti-drug campaign, by conducting thorough and impartial investigations into all such cases, particularly when the perpetrators are members of state security forces.
- » Guarantee that all persons are equal before the courts and that there is a fair hearing by a competent, independent, and impartial tribunal, in accordance with Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- » Prioritize a public health- and human rights-based approach in the national anti-drug campaign, in line with international human rights standards and the recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). In addition, legislation on extrajudicial killings (an Anti-EJK Act) should be adopted to establish a legal definition of EJKs and enable criminal prosecution.
- » Repeal Command Memorandum Circular 16-2016 of the Philippine National Police (also known as "Project Double Barrel"), which forms the basis for the controversial practice of "Oplan Tokhang" ("knock" and "plead").^{xviii}
- » Support the civilian-led truth commission on human rights violations committed in the context of the government's anti-drug campaign as part of efforts to address the "war on drugs."

PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

- » Immediately halt politically motivated intimidation, threats, criminalization of and violence against HRDs by state security forces, public officials, and government authorities. In particular, steps must be taken to ensure that the Philippine Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) and the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act (Republic Act No. 10168) are not misused to defame and criminalize HRDs. The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) should also be abolished.
- » Enforce in national law the protection of HRDs against harassment, defamation, violence, and murder in accordance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, especially with regard to existing legislation, such as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA), as well as legislative proposals, such as the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act, the Anti-Red-Tagging Act, and the proposed Charter of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR Charter), which would strengthen the mandate of the CHR.
- » Amend the Anti-Terrorism Act to ensure its compliance with international human rights standards and, specifically, its alignment with the democratic principles of the rule of law, including the presumption of innocence, under Article III, Section 14(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines.
- » Ensure that prosecutors and judges do not initiate prosecution against HRDs in cases where charges are manifestly fabricated and exculpatory evidence has been presented, in accordance with Article 14 of the United Nations Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors. In this context, the independence of the judiciary should be guaranteed, in accordance with Article 14(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

^{xviii} As part of the "Double Barrel" project, the government compiled "watch lists" of drug users and drug dealers who were visited by the local police or municipal authorities and forced to make a confession. "Tok-hang" translates to "knock and plead" and refers to these house visits.

- » Review all defamation laws, including those set out in Articles 353 to 355 and 358 to 362 of the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines and Section 4(c)(4) of the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, and, where necessary, align them to Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and UN General Comment 34, in order to eliminate any risk of abuse and the unjustified political persecution of HRDs and journalists.
- » Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and translate its provisions into national law. This should ensure that the national legislation on enforced disappearance (the Anti-Enforced Disappearance Act) complies with international standards and is also systematically implemented.

COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

- » Re-ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Full cooperation should also be guaranteed with the ICC's independent investigators, international human rights mechanisms, and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
- » Fully cooperate with all UN Special Rapporteurs holding thematic mandates and working groups of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and extend a standing invitation for country visits.

In addition, the European Union and its Member States should promote the following recommendations:

- » Use the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) as leverage to significantly improve the human rights situation, specifically with regard to the rule of law.
- » Use the annual EU Human Rights Dialogues to consistently remind the Philippine government of its obligations to uphold international human rights standards under the joint partnership and cooperation agreement. The possible consequences for this cooperation, of not adopting adequate measures to end impunity and serious human rights abuses in the Philippines, should also be discussed.
- » Establish or expand the role of human rights officers at the embassies of EU Member States in Manila, following the example set by the German embassy.

Only in this way can the human rights perspective be strengthened within the respective foreign ministries or the foreign office, and engagement with affected persons and civil society be intensified. Programs to protect HRDs should be continued and expanded.

- » Prioritize human rights issues in bilateral and multi-lateral dialogs with the Philippine government despite geopolitical challenges in the Indo-Pacific region and competing economic interests.
- » Apply the EU Global Human Rights Sanction Regime to crimes against humanity that the ICC has determined were committed in the context of the anti-drug campaign under former president Rodrigo Duterte, and impose sanctions against those responsible, such as asset freezes and travel bans.

Other international actors should promote the following recommendations:

- » There is an urgent need to establish an international mechanism under the auspices of the Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to investigate human rights violations in the Philippines. This should be called for unequivocally.
- » Diplomats in the Philippines should monitor trials against criminalized HRDs, check compliance with minimum fair trial standards, and, where necessary, demand adherence to these standards.

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LIST OF KILLED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND JOURNALISTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

July 1, 2024, to March 31, 2026

Name	Date	Place	Conflict Background	Affiliation	Alleged Perpetrators
Alberto Ortula Cuartero, Ronde Arpilleda Asis (bystander)	Sept. 22, 2024	Madrid, Surigao del Sur	Indigenous rights, mining	Cuartero was a critic of mining, an environmental and human rights activist, and the Barangay chairman of Puyat, Carmen, and Surigao del Sur.	Unknown
Juan “Johnny” Dayang	Apr. 29, 2025	Kalibo, Aklan	Freedom of opinion	Retired journalist; former president of the Publishers Association of the Philippines Incorporated (PAPI); publisher of Philippine Graphics; former president of the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC); and director and board secretary of the National Press Club (NPC).	Unknown; BB Boy Kim Wency Antonio (suspect)
Ali Jejhon Macalintal	Jun. 23, 2025	General Santos City	LGBTIQ+ rights, indigenous rights, freedom of opinion	Transgender activist who worked as a radio commentator; deputy secretary-general of Karapatan in General Santos City until 2018.	Unknown
Erwin “Boy Pana” Segovia	Jul. 21, 2025	Bislig City, Surigao del Sur	Freedom of opinion	Radio broadcaster; discussed the situation of public elementary schools and local tricycle drivers.	Unknown
Rudolph Dela Cruz Espe, Rico Gonzaga Malubay	Jul. 26, 2025	Banaybanay, Davao Oriental	Indigenous rights, peasants' rights, mining	Grassroots paralegals; community leaders; Espe was a critic of laterite mining.	Unknown
Noel Bellen Samar	Oct. 21, 2025	Guinobatan, Albay	Freedom of opinion	Radio broadcaster and journalist at the local radio stations DWIZ News FM and Kadunong ITV (shot on October 20, 2025; died in hospital the following day).	Unknown
Warlita Jimenez	Dec. 23, 2025	Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental	Peasants' rights, workers' rights	Member of the National Federation of Sugar Workers and of Pammaca, an association of small farmers and advocates for agrarian reform in Barangay Camansi.	Unknown
Julito “Jaz” Diamante Calo^{xix}	Mar. 3, 2026	La Castellana Town, Negros Occidental	Freedom of opinion	Radio broadcaster or reporter at DNN News FM, based in Himamaylan City.	Unknown

^{xix} It is still unclear whether the murder is related to his work as a journalist (as of April 7, 2026).

Disclaimer:

This list includes nine human rights defenders and journalists, as well as one bystander, who were killed in the Philippines between July 1, 2024, and March 21, 2026. Our classification of “human rights defender” follows the definition of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which defines them as people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights while employing peaceful action. We have only included cases where the victim’s death has been confirmed. This excludes cases of enforced disappearances when the whereabouts of victims remains unknown. Our information is based primarily on publicly available online sources, from local human rights organizations and credible media sources. We have only included killings in which a connection to the victim’s activity is to be assumed. The column “Conflict Background” indicates the issue to which the respective killing is most likely related. In some cases, several possible backgrounds have been indicated. However, since there was no reported conviction in any of these cases, the real motives of the perpetrators cannot be verified. Finally, we have also indicated the alleged perpetrators of the killings based on the allegations made in our sources. A verification of these allegations is again not possible due to the lack of convictions.

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