

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
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Thousands of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines: “A pattern of gross and systematic violations of human rights,” say seven legal organisations to the UN

For immediate release

9 September 2019 – Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) was joined by six other legal organizations in a [statement](#) to the upcoming September session of the UN Human Rights Council calling for a halt to tens of thousands of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines.

Among the dead are 46 lawyers, prosecutors and judges and at least 134 human rights defenders assassinated between August 2016 and 5 September 2019 in the Philippines. The statement highlights the killings as part of a “pattern of gross and systematic violations of human rights” by the Philippines in its “war on drugs” that has led to the extrajudicial killing of up to 27,000 people with impunity since President Duterte took office on 30 June 2016.

The statement, written by LRWC, is joined by Lawyers for Lawyers (L4L), Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), International Association of People’s Lawyers (IAPL), Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) and the Philippines National Union of Peoples’ Lawyers (NUPL). The statement links to a [list of 45 jurists who had been murdered](#) at the time of submission of the statement. A 46th jurist, a lawyer, was murdered on 5 September.

UN bodies and experts have consistently raised concern over the extrajudicial killings in the Philippines, including the adoption in July by the UN Human Rights Council of [Resolution 41/L.20](#) tasking the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a “comprehensive written report on the situation of human rights in the Philippines” for the June 2020 session of the Human Rights Council. The resolution also urges the Philippines “to take all necessary measures to prevent extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, to carry out impartial investigations and to hold perpetrators accountable,” and to cooperate with the UNHCHR and Council mechanisms by “facilitating country visits and preventing and refraining from all acts of intimidation or retaliation.” Thirty-five countries, led by [Iceland](#), endorsed the Human Rights Council resolution.

As a member of the UN Human Rights Council, the Philippines has a special obligation to “uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights,” and to “fully cooperate with the Council.” However, as the joint submission highlights, the Philippines has either ignored or impeded dozens of attempts by UN experts to address these concerns.

The submission states, in part:

The Philippines has persistently disregarded recommendations of UN Treaty Bodies, Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) and Special Procedures. The Philippines has failed to respond to communications or requests for visits from Special Procedures concerned with civil and political rights, vilified the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings, and conducted reprisals against the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Philippines threatened the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor with arrest after she opened a preliminary examination of alleged crimes against humanity in the context of the “war on drugs.”

The joint submission makes several requests of the Human Rights Council, including that it “insist and ensure” that the

fully cooperate with the UNHCHR and Council mechanisms, including Resolution 41/L.20, by facilitating country visits, providing unrestricted access to all areas and witnesses, and preventing interference, intimidation or reprisals against UN monitors or other individuals and groups seeking to cooperate with the UN on human rights...

The UN Human Rights Council is to hold its [42nd session](#) from 9 to 26 September 2019.

Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) is a committee of Canadian lawyers and other human rights defenders who promote human rights and the rule of law through advocacy, education and research. LRWC is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN).

Ends

To view the statement please go to: <https://www.lrwc.org/philippines-extrajudicial-killing-of-jurists-written-statement-to-the-hrc/>.

To learn more about LRWC please visit www.lrwc.org.

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