Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Video Intervention: Check against delivery

Organization: Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
Item: Item 3: Interactive Dialogue, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions
Date: 9 July 2020
Speaker: Catherine Morris

Oral Statement to the 44th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), NGO in special consultative status

Mme. President,

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada thanks the Special Rapporteur for her reports and statements over the past year.

All extrajudicial killings are abhorrent violations of the right to life. Impunity for extrajudicial killings of lawyers and judges additionally undermines the rule of law by impairing access to legal representation and remedies for rights violations.

The lack of independent, impartial, and effective investigations and prosecutions in cases of extrajudicial killings is evident in too many States. In Myanmar, one suspect in the 2017 murder of lawyer U Ko Ni remains at large.[1] In South Sudan, the murder of lawyer Dong Samuel Luak remains uninvestigated.[2] The Philippines continues its pattern of impunity for extrajudicial killings despite Council resolution 41/L.20 adopted at the 41st session. Fifty-nine (59) lawyers, judges and legal workers are among the thousands murdered with impunity in the Philippines since 2016.[3]

LRWC joins with the Special Rapporteur in the statement of 31 Special Procedures mandate holders on 25 June 2020 urging the establishment of an on-the-ground, international, independent investigation into the human rights situation in the Philippines, together with the strengthening of the OHCHR mandate for reporting on violations in the Philippines.[4]

We also ask the Council to urge the Philippines, as a member of the Council, to fulfill its obligations to cooperate with the Council pursuant to GA Resolution 60/251.[5]

LRWC also asks that the Council urge the Philippines to:

▪ immediately confirm dates for a country visit by the Special Rapporteur pursuant to the request issued in 2016.
▪ issue a standing invitation for country visits of the Special Procedures of the Council;
▪ abide by the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and to adopt and implement the Bill on Human Rights Defenders Protection passed by the Philippines House of Representatives in June 2019.

Thank you Mme. President.

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[1] See footnotes at LRWC's oral statement, "Call to End the Repression and Persecution of Lawyers | Oral Statement to the 42nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council, 25 September 2019, available at: https://www.lrwc.org/sudan-call-to-end-the-repression-and-persecution-of-lawyers-oral-statement-to-the-42nd-session-of-the-un-human-rights-council/.

[2] Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Mission 15-23 January 2020, End of Mission Statement, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25490&LangID=E

[3] Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) and Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), endorsed by the International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL), "Acceleration of extra-judicial killings of jurists in the Philippines." Joint written statement submitted by Asian Legal Resource Centre, non-governmental organization in general consultative status, and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada, non-governmental organization in special consultative status, A/HRC/44/NGO/8, 16/06/2020, available at: http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/HRC/44/NGO/8&Lang=E

[4] Philippines: UN human rights experts renew call for an on-the-ground independent, impartial investigation, UN OHCHR, 25 June 2020, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25999&LangID=E.

[5] UN General Assembly, *Human Rights Council : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, 3 April 2006, A/RES/60/251, available at: https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/A.RES.60.251_En.pdf