

International group urges UN body to probe Philippine's human rights situation

Wednesday 6 October 2021, by [UMIL Anne Marxze](#) (Date first published: 1 October 2021).

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MANILA - An international rights group called on the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to establish an investigation mechanism that would help address rights violations in the Philippines.

A newly released country research brief by CIVICUS Monitor showed that "serious civic freedoms violations continue to occur, creating a chilling effect within civil society" a year after the [UNHRC adopted the resolution](#) extending technical assistance and capacity-building to the Philippine government.

The group described the resolution as "profoundly weak" as attacks on human rights in the Philippines are unabated amid the pandemic.

CIVICUS UN Advocacy Officer Lisa Majumdar said that civil society groups are at the forefront of monitoring rights violations perpetrated by authorities.

"Despite the threats and litany of attacks against them, they have refused to be silenced. The international community owes them support and protection," Majumdar said.

For CIVICUS, "the current actions by the UN Human Rights Council have failed to deter the criminalization and attacks against activists and journalists, which has continued over the year, with impunity."

Majumdar added that the new joint programme of the UN and the Philippine government "seems to be just more window dressing by the Duterte regime to evade accountability."

"It is time for the international community to listen to civil society voices and establish an independent investigation to hold the perpetrators to account," she said.

CIVICUS is one of the several international organizations calling on the UN to take concrete action on the intensifying human rights violations in the Philippines.

Investigate PH, an international body that looked into rights violations in the Philippines, also stressed in their third and last report that the UN needs to come up with a mechanism that will investigate rights violations in the country.

In its country research, CIVICUS noted the continuing attacks on human rights activists including the judicial persecution, vilification, and the continued killings of activists and lawyers, as well as the

harassments and attacks on media, the freezing of accounts of civil society organizations and the recent [cyber attack against Karapatan's website](#).

The group noted the freezing of bank accounts of organizations such as the women peasant organization Amihan, and church-based groups Rural Missionaries of the Philippines and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines-Haran Center in Davao City. All groups are accused by the government as front organizations of the underground communist groups.

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Some of CIVICUS's recommendation to the Philippine government includes the immediate dismissal of trumped up charges against rights defenders and activists who have been "arbitrarily detained for their activism."

They also called on the government to reform or repeal the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 "to bring it inline with the international law and recommendations of UN Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, and ensure it does not negatively impact civil society and human rights defenders."

They added that the Philippine government should "take measures to foster a safe and enabling environment for civil society, including by removing all undue restrictions on the ability of the CSOs (civil society organizations) to receive international and domestic funding, in line with the international law and standards; refrain from acts leading to the closure of the CSOs or the suspension of their peaceful activities..."

CIVICUS also called on the UN to "continue to exert pressure on the Philippine government to take concrete action to end the human rights crisis in the country and to take real steps towards accountability."

They also asked the UN to call on the Philippine government to fully cooperate with the International Criminal Court Prosecutor's office, ensuring that "evidence is preserved and the Court must ensure the protection of those who may assist the investigation."

In December last year in its [People Power Under Attack report](#) which looked into the civic freedom around the globe, the CIVICUS Monitor downgraded the Philippines from obstructed to repressed.

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