



## Ending Human Rights Violations in the Philippines

*“When all the prisoners of the land are crushed under foot, when justice is perverted in the presence of the Most High, when one’s case is subverted—does the Lord not see it?”  
(Lamentations 3:34-36)*

- (1) The 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia expresses grave concern over reports from our siblings in Christ in the Philippine churches regarding the unabated human rights violations (HRVs) under a worsening climate of impunity in their country.
- (2) The extrajudicial killings related to the war on illegal drugs that claimed thousands of lives during the term of Pres. Rodrigo Duterte continues under his successor, Pres. Ferdinand Marcos Jr. The University of the Philippines’ Third World Studies reported more than 300 drug-related killings during the first year of the Marcos Jr. administration, which began on 30 June 2022. It has also refused to cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- (3) Since the 2017 termination of peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), red-tagging<sup>1</sup> and other HRVs in relation to the counter-insurgency programme also increased.
- (4) The US-based Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) reported that the Armed Forces of the Philippines’ counter-insurgency campaign has been accompanied by acts of violence targeting civilians, particularly in the context of red-tagging. Nearly 50 violent events<sup>2</sup> related to the red-tagging of civilians have been recorded between 2020 and 30 June 2023, and 13 of these events took place after Pres. Marcos Jr. took power.
- (5) Moreover, the Marcos Jr. administration is using the Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL) and the Anti-Terrorism Financing Act (ATFA) against human rights defenders across sectors, including churches and faith-based groups that have historically worked for social justice as an expression of their faith. Two pastors from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) and a lay leader from the Iglesia Filipina Independiente are currently detained; while two pastors, one from UCCP and one from the United Methodist Church, are facing trumped-up charges on violations of the ATL. Several faith-based organizations also face charges based on alleged violations of the ATFA.
- (6) These rampant rights violations have contributed to the shrinking of civic space in the country. It is in this context that the Christian Conference of Asia calls on its member churches and councils to express their solidarity with our Christian siblings and the Filipino people:
  - by calling on the Philippine government to stop the killings related to the “war against drugs,” re-accede to the Rome Statute of the ICC and cooperate with its investigation;
  - in appeals to scrap the counter-insurgency program that targets human rights defenders, including church people; and resume the Peace Negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines; and
  - through solidarity visits to the Philippines, where they can learn for themselves the impacts of the human rights violations and the work churches and Christians do in response.

<sup>1</sup> Red-tagging is the act of labelling, branding, naming, and accusing individuals and/or organisations of being left-leaning, subversives, communists, or terrorists (used as) a strategy ... by State agents, particularly law enforcement agencies and the military, against those perceived to be ‘threats’ or ‘enemies of the State’.

<sup>2</sup> These events include those where a person is physically harmed or killed.