

After failing to respond to widespread violations in the Philippines, the United Nations risks being complicit in the unfolding human rights crisis

LONDON-MANILA. 7 October 2020. Today, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a resolution that encourages technical assistance on human rights matters to the government of the Philippines, while ignoring calls for an international investigation into the nation's 'war on drugs'. In a Joint Statement issued immediately afterwards, global and Filipino drug policy experts warned that the resolution fails to recognise the extent of the human rights violations in the Philippines, and adds insult to injury for thousands of victims of President Duterte's war on drugs, and for the human rights defenders who risk their lives daily to seek accountability.

In spite of the [repeated calls](#) to establish an international investigative mechanism on the situation in the Philippines by UN human rights experts, human rights defenders, and local and international civil society, as well as a recent UN [report](#) exposing at least 8,663 killings due to the so-called 'anti-drugs' campaign, today the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that merely encourages the UN system to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to the Philippines.

Ann Fordham, Executive Director at the International Drug Policy Consortium, said: "The Human Rights Council assumes that technical cooperation will be enough to end human rights violations in the Philippines. By taking this decision just as President Duterte is still [inciting to violence](#) against people who use or are engaged with drugs and calling for the [death penalty for drug offences](#), and while the number of extrajudicial killings continues to [rise](#), the UN risks being complicit in very serious human rights abuses.'

Naomi Burke-Shyne, Executive Director at Harm Reduction International, said: 'The resolution adopted today mandates UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to report back on the Philippines within a year. We urge the High Commissioner to seize this crucial responsibility to document the ongoing violations in their full extent, to assess the effectiveness and impartiality of domestic accountability mechanisms, and to evaluate the impact of UN assistance.'

With regards to the technical assistance provided to the government of the Philippines, NoBox Philippines said: 'The UN must ensure that survivors, families, and witnesses are not put at danger by domestic processes. Civil society organizations must be actively and meaningfully engaged by both the United Nations and government agencies, and their safety must be equally ensured.'

Judy Chang, Executive Director at the International Network of People who Use Drugs, said: 'We will continue to monitor closely the situation in the Philippines, as well as the technical assistance provided by the UN to President Duterte. If cooperation does not deliver a clear and significant improvement soon, the Human Rights Council will need to follow up with the establishment of an international, impartial, and credible investigation on the human rights violations'.



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