

PRESS RELEASE

Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court (PCICC)

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RETROGRESSIVE ACTIONS on HUMAN RIGHTS by PHILIPPINE OFFICIALS HIT by COALITION FOR JUSTICE

The Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court (PCICC) scored the Philippine government for retrogressive statements and actions on human rights and justice, on International Justice Day.

“First we withdrew from the International Criminal Court ICC) just 4 months ago, after being part of a group of nations for universal justice. Now the Philippine government is seriously considering withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), neglecting the fact that families of human rights defenders killed and victims of extrajudicial killings in the “war on drugs” welcome and support an independent probe into the human rights situation in our country,” lamented Dr. Aurora Corazon Parong, Co -Chairperson of the Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court.

17 July every year is observed globally to recognize the need to continually strengthen international justice. The Philippines became a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 2011 after the ICC was established in July 1, 2002. The Philippines pulled out from the ICC on March 17, 2019 when a preliminary examination was started by the ICC prosecutor, after receiving communications about possible crime against humanity due to the extrajudicial killings in the government’s war on drugs. The pull-out from the ICC deprives Filipinos of a court of last resort for serious violations of international humanitarian laws. But the PCICC is still hoping that the cases brought to the court when it was still a State Party to the ICC will proceed in its halls of justice in due course.

Parong added, “The UNHRC resolution to probe the Philippines is a response of countries to uphold and defend human rights when domestic institutions are reportedly violating instead of respecting and protecting the human rights of their citizens. Careless statements lambasting Iceland and the other countries which supported the resolution to look into the human rights situation is a knee jerk reaction by government officials who want to protect their backs. They do not want to provide venues for truth and justice for the victims of abuses.”

The PCICC noted with concern several other careless, retrogressive statements and actions of Philippine officials in relation to international human rights and justice concerns. Senator Sotto put forward possibility of leaving the United Nations after the UNHRC resolution for Bachelet to make a report on the human rights situation in the Philippines was approved. Senator Marcos also proposed an immediate cutting of diplomatic ties with Iceland. Last week, the Philippines signed a letter along with 37 other countries supporting China’s treatment of ethnic Uighurs and

other minorities despite reports that about a million people, mostly Muslim Uighurs, are reportedly in internment camps which are described as “concentration camps”. European and Asia Pacific countries have denounced China’s conduct in Xinjiang. Last year, the Philippines voted against a UNHRC resolution extending the mandate of the special rapporteur on the human rights situation in order to ensure the monitoring of human rights in Myanmar.

Parong said, “Filipinos have excellent defining moments regarding the United Nations and human rights. We were part of the early signatories to the United Nations Declaration, the basis of the current United Nations Charter after the horrific World War II. Carlos P. Romulo signed in behalf of the Philippines the UN Declaration and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to highlight the importance of human rights safeguards to protect the people from atrocities and abuses. Even before we became an independent country, President Quezon welcomed Jewish refugees escaping from Hitler’s Nazi holocaust. We note that President Duterte welcomes Rohingya refugees to the Philippines, but this a ripple in the wide ocean. ”

The Coalition stated that in various parts of the world today, justice remains elusive for peoples in their own countries. In Asia, crimes against humanity and other grave violations of international humanitarian law and human rights are shattering lives of families including women and children. PCICC recognized that Filipinos and peoples in neighboring countries in the Asia Pacific region need the help of other states to defend human rights and the rule of law.

“The killings of human rights defenders and those suspect to be involved in drugs must end and justice must be delivered. Other human rights violations making the lives of peoples miserable have to end. We are tired of insults, careless jokes and statements, human rights violations and inconsiderate policies and actions. Let us make the positive, caring and respectful aspects of Filipinos dominate Philippine actions within the country and in our relations with other countries. The Philippine officials must uphold human rights and make the human rights standards their guide now. They must reject abuses, selfishness and impunity. Citizens of the Philippines and other countries must not be deprived of processes and venues for truth, human rights and justice when their domestic courts and institutions fail them.” Parong concluded.

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