



ASIAN LEGAL RESOURCE CENTRE

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HRC section: Item 6 – Universal Periodic Review of the Philippines

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

An Oral Statement to the 8th Session of the UN Human Rights Council from the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

PHILIPPINES: Universal Periodic Review urges results concerning killings

Thank you Mr. President,

We welcome the importance in the report of the Working Group given to the need for the government of the Philippines to provide evidence of concrete results concerning its promises to address extra-judicial killings and forced disappearances.

In particular, we note that while various measures taken by the government - such as the setting up of a string of committees, commissions and offices - have been acknowledged, the report highlights the need for the government to go further and provide evidence that these are actually functioning to effectively address abuses. The interest shown by some concerning the human rights office within the armed forces, as with other such efforts, is misguided. Its chief admitted late last year to the ALRC that he and his staff have never gone to the field to investigate allegations of killings, but that they rely on reports from the very same field officers against whose men the allegations have been made. This is evidently flawed.

All such efforts by the government, lauded by some in the report, may look good on paper, but they are failing to achieve concrete results in challenging impunity on a case by case basis in reality, as shown by the tragic lack of resolved cases of killings. We therefore welcome the fact that the report of the Working Group also clearly underlines that there is a need for evidence concerning successful resolution of cases. We have seen no evidence of this to date, but hope that the government will heed these outcomes, including calls for the government to provide information on its implementation of the recommendations made by the Melo Commission and the Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial killings.

We appreciate the recommendation for the reform of the judiciary and the armed forces. Independent investigations and fair trials that must include forensic, physical evidence, in addition to testimony from witnesses that are afforded effective protection, are the only way to keep up real momentum in addressing these killings and other related serious abuses.

We also welcome the fact that the outcomes include repeated requests for the need for ratification of the Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture. Such ratifications are only a starting point, and need to lead to verifiable implementation and regular government reporting, as requested by the outcomes.

