



**Statement on the UPR Pre-session on the Philippines
of the Center for Environmental Concerns - Philippines and the
Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment**

30 August 2022, Geneva

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This statement is delivered on behalf of the Center for Environmental Concerns - Philippines and the Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, two non-government organizations in the Philippines that seeks to uphold the people's right to a safe, balanced and healthy environment.

Consultations were conducted by both organizations with its partners, networks and members in the development of the submission and participated in the consultations of the Philippine Commission of Human Rights.

The submission focuses on addressing climate change and the attacks on environmental human rights defenders.

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ISSUE 1: CLIMATE CHANGE

Algeria recommended for the Philippine government to *"Pursue steps made with the aim of addressing the effects of climate change on the population."*

However, the dismal preparation of the Philippine government in light of climate change-induced disasters has led to great damage and deaths. Typhoon Ulysses alone affected 3.67 million Filipinos and caused P10 billion in damages with 73 dead, 24 injured, and 19 missing in November 2022.¹

Deforestation in many critical watersheds due to large-scale mining, large dams and other infrastructure development have increased the vulnerability of many communities to the impacts of climate change. As of now 130 of the 142 critical watersheds in the country are already degraded².

¹ Philippine National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2020/11/20/2058156/ulysses-toll-35-million-displaced-10-billion-agriculture-infrastructure-damaged>

² Department of Environment and Natural Resources, <https://pia.gov.ph/press-releases/2021/07/12/cimatu-leads-launch-of-watershed-conservation-campaign>

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Therefore, we recommended that the Philippine government:

- a. Impose an emergency moratorium on climate risk projects such as coal power plants that will destroy vital ecosystems and displace vulnerable communities due to climate change.
- b. Hold mining, quarrying, and logging companies in protected watersheds and the government units that allowed them to operate accountable. Ban large-scale mining and logging in flood- and landslide-prone and watershed areas.

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ISSUE 2 - ENVIRONMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

More than 20 countries made recommendations on human rights defenders in general. This includes:

- *Creating, guaranteeing and promoting an adequately safe and enabling environment for the work of human rights defenders.*
- *Ending extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, illegal arrests and detention, torture, harassment and other human rights violations and taking all necessary measures to prevent them.*
- *Ending impunity.*
- *Stopping counter-insurgency programmes that target human rights defenders and civilians.*

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Despite these recommendations, at least 19,498 EHRDs were subjected to a wide range of human rights violations under the previous administration.³ A total of 186 environmental and land defenders have been killed from July 1, 2016 to December 30, 2020.⁴ Similarly in 2018 the Philippines was declared as the world's deadliest country for land and environmental defenders in the 2019 annual report of international watchdog Global Witness.⁵

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This year alone, Kalikasan PNE noted that there is a five-fold increase in attacks on EHRDs.

Moreover, the previous administration continued to pass laws with grave impacts on environmental defenders. Since the issuance of the Executive Order No. 70 creating the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) in 2018 and the Anti-Terrorism

³ Page 28, https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/policy_matters_22_1sept-webpart1.pdf

⁴ Based on continuous monitoring and first-hand reports of member-EHRD of Kalikasan PNE

⁵ https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/19766/Enemies_of_the_State.pdf

Act of 2020, EHRDs saw increased red-tagging and harassment coming from government officials and military agents.

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Considering the above situation, we recommended the Philippine government to:

- a. Abandon the “whole of nation” approach in counterinsurgency programs, abolish the NTF-ELCAC, and terminate policies that militarize many parts of the country. Repeal the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020.
- b. Pass the Human Rights Defenders’ Bill and the Environment Defense Bill to ensure the rights and strengthen the protection and security of human rights, environment, and land defenders in the country.

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- c. Stop red-tagging and harassment on environmental and land defenders.
- d. End extrajudicial killings and measures that allow state security forces to violate human rights with impunity. For the Department of Justice (DOJ) to resolve all pending cases of killings of environmental defenders and dismiss trumped-up charges against them.

We hope the mentioned recommendations will be adopted and implemented in accordance with the Philippine Government’s mandate to uphold the rights of the Filipino people.

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