

## **Statement at 36<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council**

### **Item 6: Adoption of the UPR Report on the Philippines**

Thank you, Mr. President.

CIVICUS and ISHR welcome the Philippine Government's engagement in the UPR process. However, despite claims of the State party during the May 2017 review, Filipino human rights defenders continue to have serious concerns about the environment for HRDs in the country.

Mr. President, the systematic and targeted killings of HRDs, under the cover of 'counterinsurgency programs', have long been a problem. On average, our partners documented 40 killings per year from 2001 to 2016. In the past year, however, this number has risen to 50 HRDs, many who were leaders of peasant and indigenous communities. This is largely due to President Duterte's 'war on drugs', which has also resulted in thousands more casualties of regular Filipino citizens.

Since the May review, human rights activists have seen no reprieve in the harassment and threats by State security forces. This includes the Secretary General of people's organisation Karapatan, Cristina Palabay.

Duterte's pronouncements endanger the lives of HRDs who speak out against his repressive policies, including the drug war and martial law declarations, as well as for respect of rights, such as to a safe and healthy environment. The filing of trumped-up charges to criminalise HRDs has been normalised by the government, hampering us from doing our work and violating our freedom of association.

Most recently, the ominous signs of a nationwide martial law under President Duterte hover like a sword of Damocles over HRDs and the Filipino people. Our history shows that such a decision will worsen the current state of human rights in the country.

We therefore urge the Council to ensure that the Philippine government respect its pledges and commitments, as stated in the UPR outcome report. We call for a halt to all forms of attacks on human rights defenders, the enactment of a law for their protection, and the acceptance of a full, independent visit to the Philippines by UN Special Rapporteurs, including on the situation of HRDs.

Thank you, Mr. President.