

## **Philippines needs urgent action to reverse spiraling rights violations, UN experts say**

GENEVA (31 July 2017) – The Government of the Philippines must urgently address growing reports of human rights violations, including murder, threats against indigenous peoples and the summary execution of children, a group of United Nations experts\* has said.

“Attacks are spiraling against many groups in society and we are making an urgent appeal for Government action,” the experts said in a joint call for action.

“We are witnessing severe, multiple human rights violations, especially against indigenous peoples and human rights defenders,” they stressed. “Children are not being spared and continue to be at high risk in a climate of prevailing violence”.

“We are shocked by the increasing levels of violence, killings, intimidation and harassment being suffered by human rights defenders – including those protecting indigenous peoples - trade union organizers, farmers and their family members.”

The experts added: “Allegations of summary executions, including of children, are also on the rise. All these cases must be investigated thoroughly and perpetrators should be brought to justice.”

They also highlighted that some of those being attacked were defending the rights of Lumad indigenous peoples, who are reported to have suffered particularly severe threats on the island of Mindanao, often with the acquiescence or direct support of the security forces, while defending their ancestral land against businesses.

Numerous killings and extra-judicial executions of villagers, farmers and human rights defenders working with them have been reliably reported, the experts noted.

Last week, the Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, speaking in a televised news conference on 24 July, threatened to bomb Lumad schools on Mindanao.

“We urge the Government to ensure effective protection of individuals and groups who may be subject to extra-legal, arbitrary or summary executions, or those who received death threats,” the experts said.

“The Government must also prevent incitement to violence or killings against indigenous communities, human rights defenders and farmers,” they concluded.

The group of UN human rights experts has been in contact with the Government of the Philippines regarding these concerns.

**(\*) The experts: Ms. Agnes Callamard**, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; **Mr. Michel Forst**, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; and **Ms. Maud de Boer-Buquicchio**, Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children.

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