



**44th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council
Item 2: Enhanced Interactive Dialog on the comprehensive report of the High
Commissioner on the situation of human rights in the Philippines**

30 June 2020

Recorded statement by Fr Angel Cortez OFM

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Madam President,

This is a joint statement of Franciscans International, Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund, Task Force Detainees of the Philippines and Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines. We welcome the High Commissioner Report on the human rights situation in the Philippines and support its recommendations.

Since the adoption of the Council's resolution last year, the human rights situation in the Philippines has not improved. The unlawful killings and vilification of dissent still continue. In addition, the response of the government during the COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened the existing structural poverty and inequalities in the country.

We also would like to draw the Council's attention on the current process for the adoption of Anti-Terrorism Bill that seeks to amend the Human Security Act of 2007.

The bill has a broad and vague definition of terrorism and terrorist, and other problematic provisions for human rights and the rule of law. In particular, the broad definition can be used to stifle dissent and curtail the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

Finally, we urge the Council to adopt the High Commissioner's recommendation on accountability, by establishing a Commission of Inquiry, due to the failure of the domestic accountability mechanisms to address the on-going human rights violations in the Philippines.

I thank you.