

April 14, 2025

The Honorable Brian Mast  
Chair  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gregory Meeks  
Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Risch  
Chair  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Mast, Ranking Member Meeks, Chairman Risch, and Ranking Member Shaheen,

The undersigned faith organizations write to urge you to support accountability and peace in the Philippines. On March 11, former president of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte was arrested on an International Criminal Court (ICC) warrant charging him with crimes against humanity related to the war on drugs in the Philippines. While we welcome this step toward justice, we urge you to address crimes across the board, including war crimes that continue under the current Marcos Jr. administration.

President Duterte is the first Philippine president to face trial before the ICC. Duterte's crimes include [extrajudicial killings](#) in the context of the "war on drugs" under his presidential administration as well as [killings in Davao City](#) by the Davao Death Squad while he was Mayor of Davao from 2011 to 2016. Under the Duterte regime, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) was established, which is responsible for "red-tagging" and violently targeting human rights defenders, faith leaders, journalists, and other civilians, including Americans.

The NTF-ELCAC continues under the administration of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. While this ICC indictment and arrest makes it seem that the crimes are in the past, in fact the Marcos Jr. administration continues the same war crimes against the Filipino people. The U.S. State Department's own country [report](#) on the Philippines from 2023 notes, "Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; forced disappearance; torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by and on behalf of the government..." More recently, the Philippines-based human rights alliance Karapatan has documented "119 extrajudicial killings, 76 frustrated extrajudicial killings, 14 enforced disappearances, 762 political prisoners and 3,706,431 cases of threats, harassment and intimidation as of the end of 2024," (Karapatan, 2024 Report).

The United States has allowed the counterinsurgency operation and crimes of both Duterte and Marcos Jr. to continue despite documented abuses.. In 2017-2019, President Trump supported the crimes of Duterte, [praising](#) his "unbelievable job on the drug problem." Currently, the U.S.

provides military aid to the Philippines under Marcos Jr. enabling the targeting of human rights defenders. This [includes](#) faith leaders, such as Rev. Julius Neri Camannong and Romeo Russel of the United Methodist Church, who have received subpoenas from the Department of Justice, after the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) filed a complaint for terrorist financing against them, (Karapatan, 2024 Report).

Despite the crimes and human rights violations that have continued under the current President, Marcos Jr., the U.S. continues to provide foreign military assistance in the form of military aid, training, and logistical support. In February of this year, the Trump administration [exempted \\$336 million](#) from the freeze on international aid for the Philippines military. Additionally, just this past week on April 2 the administration announced a [weapons sale valued at \\$5.58 billion](#) which includes 20 F-16 fighter jets with additional missile systems, bombs, among other high-powered weapons. This sale is especially alarming in the context of a deep economic crisis in the Philippines in addition to the human rights violations and rampant corruption.

While some have argued that U.S. aid is needed to defend against China, U.S. military assistance to the army and police does not serve to defend the Philippines against the Chinese intrusions in the West Philippine Sea under Philippine jurisdiction. Instead, it is being turned against the most vulnerable and marginalized among the country's population. It is in the national interests of the United States to support justice and ensure the U.S. is not funding the targeting of innocent civilians.

We urge you to support accountability for both Duterte and Marcos Jr. and join us in advocating for the rights of the most exploited and oppressed in the Philippines. This includes considering re-introducing the Philippines Human Rights Act, a bill in the 118th Congress that imposed limitations on providing assistance to the police or military of the Philippines until the Philippines government comes into compliance with human rights standards.

Our faith calls upon us to work for peace, justice, and human rights. We hope that you will consider our request to pursue accountability and true security. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Signed,

Members of the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines — US Faith Working Group

Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ

Central Pacific Conference United Church of Christ

The United Methodist Church — General Board of Church and Society

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

California-Nevada Philippines Solidarity Task Force

Ecumenical Advocacy Network for the Philippines