

NEWS RELEASE
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**De Lima backs global calls for independent probe
on killings, rights abuses in PH**

Opposition Senator Leila M. de Lima has stressed the urgent need for a United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)-led investigation into human rights violations in the Philippines amid the unabated killings in the country which continue to happen amid a global health crisis.

In her message for the Global Day of Action on the Philippines today (Sept. 14), De Lima expressed support to local and international civil society groups who also called for an expedited proceedings in the International Criminal Court (ICC).

“Given the magnitude and relentlessness of the killings and other gross human rights violations, the High Commissioner, the CHR, a number of UN Special Rapporteurs, and many civil society organizations have been urging the UNHRC to establish an on-the-ground independent and impartial investigation into human rights abuses in the country,” she said.

“I join the call for an UNHRC-led investigation, and for expedited ICC process,” added De Lima, who maintained that “the catastrophe that has been always been with us since Day 1 when Rodrigo Duterte took power as President is the human rights calamity.”

In a letter to the UNHRC dated Aug. 27, 62 local and international civil society groups have called on the rights council to launch an independent international investigative mechanism to investigate the killings and other human rights violations committed in the Philippines since 2016, when Mr. Duterte assumed presidency.

The groups, which include Amnesty International, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch, among others, urged the delegation to ensure that the UNHRC “responds robustly” to the June report of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on the “widespread and systematic” killings in the government's war on drugs.

In Bachelet's June 2020 report to the UNHRC, De Lima recalled that the former found that these killings were indeed widespread and systematic, as at least 8,663 mostly poor Filipinos had been killed, with other estimates, including that from the Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR), of more than triple that number.

“Under this climate of impunity, attacks against human rights defenders and critics of the government – activists, journalists, members of groups associated with the political

left, and leaders of the opposition, the churches, trade unions, indigenous peoples and peasant groups – have been frequent and rampant, as well,” De Lima shared.

In her message, De Lima likewise appealed to different governments across the globe to immediately impose targeted sanctions, such as those provided by the Global Magnitsky Act and similar penalties, against abusive and corrupt Philippine government officials, and come to the aid of the Filipino people who have long been abused by Duterte and his cohorts.

“In the absence of domestic accountability, I pray that global instruments of justice will commence the task of exacting criminal and moral responsibilities, ensuring redress for the victims and their families, and signaling a definite end to the mass atrocities,” she said.

“In the face of a disabled national government, I hope for an ever growing and unstoppable network of individuals, groups and peoples in the Philippines and abroad who are bound by solidarity and a collective struggle for common humanity and the dignity of the Filipino,” she added.

Even in her unjust and illegal detention for trumped-up charges filed by the administration, De Lima, a known human rights defender here and abroad, has remained vocal against the unabated spate of extrajudicial killings and human rights abuses in the country. (30)

(Watch livestream of the event here: <https://bit.ly/32tJS1f>)

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