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Philippines: Human rights record under scrutiny by UN

The Philippines should commit to concrete action to end impunity for security forces responsible for torturing Darius Evangelista and other grave human rights violations, Amnesty International said ahead of the country's appearance in front of the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva today.

On 15 and 16 October, representatives of the Philippine government will present a report detailing measures taken to comply with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which protects human rights including the right to life and the right not to be tortured.

Ahead of the UN review of the Philippines, Amnesty International made a submission to the Human Rights Committee detailing serious civil and political rights issues in the Philippines. These include torture, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, and the persistence of impunity for these grave violations.

The Philippines should use the opportunity of this UN review to make good on its promises to end impunity for grave human rights violations. The Philippines has put an anti-torture law on the books, and now needs to put this law fully into practice.

Three years after the 2009 Anti-Torture Act was passed, no perpetrator has been convicted of torture, although several cases have been filed in court. The family of Darius Evangelista, whose torture in a Manila police station was caught on a mobile phone video and broadcast on television and the internet, is still waiting for justice. Darius Evangelista is now believed to be dead, although his family is still waiting for the results of a forensic examination of a corpse they believe to be his.

Although the police officer seen in the video beating Evangelista and pulling his genitals was later taken into custody by the Philippine National Police, he has since gone missing. He is now at large along with other police officers seen present in the video, and who had failed to stop the violence.

Activists, local journalists and community leaders continue to be unlawfully killed or forcibly disappeared. Investigation and prosecution in these cases are lacking, allowing perpetrators to escape justice.

Nearly three years after the Maguindanao massacre, which killed 56 individuals including many media workers, families of the victims are still waiting for justice and are at risk of reprisal. At least six witnesses, prospective witnesses and close relatives of witnesses have been killed. Fewer than half of the 197 named suspects have been arrested and charged.