



PHILIPPINES 2022 ELECTIONS: 8-POINT HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA FOR CANDIDATES

Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and individual donations. We believe that acting in solidarity and compassion with people everywhere can change our societies for the better.

© Amnesty International 2022

Except where otherwise noted, content in this document is licensed under a Creative Commons (attribution, non-commercial, no derivatives, international 4.0) licence.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>

For more information please visit the permissions page on our website: www.amnesty.org

Where material is attributed to a copyright owner other than Amnesty International this material is not subject to the Creative Commons licence.

First published in 2022

by Amnesty International Ltd

Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street

London WC1X 0DW, UK

Index: ASA 35/5446/2022

Original language: English

amnesty.org

Cover image: © Amnesty International

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



CONTENTS

1. END HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE WAR ON DRUGS, PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORM DRUG POLICIES IN LINE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS	4
2. END THE KILLINGS AND HARRASSMENT OF POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, GOVERNMENT CRITICS AND OTHER TARGETED GROUPS	6
3. RESTORE MEDIA FREEDOM AND PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION	7
4. RESPECT AND PROTECT PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO HEALTH, AS WELL AS OTHER RIGHTS, DURING AND AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	8
5. ENHANCE LABOUR RIGHTS AND SOCIAL SECURITY	9
6. PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF MARGINALISED GROUPS (INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, LGBTI)	10
7. GUARANTEE THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION	11
8. PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE FACE OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY	12

Through this eight-point agenda, Amnesty International urges the candidates running in the May 2022 Philippine elections to ensure that the protection and promotion of human rights is a core part of their plans for the country. In this agenda, Amnesty International puts forward key human rights issues and offers recommendations so that the Philippines may meet its obligations under international human rights law.

Amnesty International calls upon all election candidates to commit to putting human rights at the centre of their plans, including by pledging to uphold the recommendations below and addressing human rights explicitly in their campaigns. Commitment to human rights must be visible in the candidates' plans of action so Filipinos are aware of candidates' stance on this issue before they cast their vote.

1. END HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE “WAR ON DRUGS”, PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORM DRUG POLICIES IN LINE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

Extrajudicial executions have been an endemic problem in the Philippines for many years,¹ with successive administrations employing increasingly violent strategies to address the insurgency in the country. Authorities have also consistently failed to improve a weak justice system that has thus far failed to investigate, prosecute and sanction those responsible for committing or ordering extrajudicial executions.

Extrajudicial executions increased dramatically in 2016, when President Rodrigo Duterte took office and promised to wipe out crime within six months through a policy that would target those using and selling drugs. Over the past six years, thousands of people suspected of using or selling illegal drugs have been killed by the police or unknown individuals, many of whom may have links to the police. Amnesty International believes that the unspeakable violence perpetrated in the context of the government's “war on drugs” amounts to crimes against humanity.

A climate of impunity persists, fuelled by incitement by President Duterte and other high level authorities. There is an almost complete lack of accountability for all those responsible, including the police and unidentified individuals, many of whom are believed to be linked to the police. Amnesty International is aware of only one case that resulted in convictions – the murder of 17 year old Kian delos Santos, which sparked international outcry. While some administrative cases also appear to have been brought against police officers, the outcomes of these are unclear. It is inadequate to impose solely administrative penalties on people responsible of committing or ordering such grave human rights violations, including of the right to life.

Families of victims face insurmountable difficulties to obtain justice for their loved ones. It is almost impossible for them to initiate cases against perpetrators, owing to fabricated police reports, the lack of autopsy reports, and the threats of reprisal that these families and possible witnesses face.

While drugs can certainly pose risks to individuals and societies, it is precisely because of these risks that governments need to shift away from policies based on prohibition and criminalization in favour of evidence-based alternatives that protect public health and the human rights of people who use drugs and other affected communities. The “war on drugs” has failed to decrease the use and availability of drugs over the years, and has instead undermined the rights of millions, exacerbated the risks and harms of using drugs, and intensified the violence associated with illicit markets. Thus, the organization calls on the next administration to end the punitive approach to their anti-drug strategy and address drug-related problems by adopting a health-based approach to drugs which has at its core the respect for human rights.

¹ See for example, UN Human Rights Council, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#), Mission to Philippines, Philip Alston, 16 April 2008, A/HRC/8/3/Add.2

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Urgently put an end to extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and other human rights violations targeting people suspected of using or selling illicit drugs.
- End harmful rhetoric, incitement and any form of justification to commit violence against people suspected of using or selling illicit drugs.
- Comply strictly with the Philippine National Police Operational Procedures as well as international law principles for law enforcement officials, including the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials; the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials; and the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment. Ensure all police officers are fully trained on these and on human rights standards
- Empower an independent body to conduct prompt, impartial, and effective investigations into law enforcement officials suspected of involvement in crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, and links to unknown armed persons committing them.
- Ensure adequate investigations of all authorities, regardless of rank, where there is reasonable suspicion that they have direct and/or command or superior responsibility for crimes under international law and other serious violations of human rights.
- Ensure prosecution in all cases where investigations uncover sufficient evidence of criminal responsibility for human rights violations and abuses.
- Provide adequate assistance for families of victims of drug-related killings, including financial aid, legal support, and psychological services.
- Allow immediate and unhindered access to international human rights monitoring and investigative mechanisms, including UN experts and investigators of the International Criminal Court.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of all drug laws and policies and bring them in line with international human rights law.
- Promote a clear understanding of the complexity of drug dependence and advocate for a drug policy based on the protection of health and human rights. Work to formulate a public health approach to replace the current emphasis on prohibition and punishment.
- Implement a drug control policy that puts the protection of people's health and rights at the centre, in compliance with international human rights law and standards.
- Tackle the disproportionate impact and discriminatory implementation of drug control policies on the poorest and most marginalised communities.
- Increase access to health and social services to reduce the risks and harms associated with drug use, including by ensuring that drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes affiliated to health facilities are available, acceptable, of good quality and easily accessible to everyone without discrimination.
- Guarantee that any treatment provided to people who use drugs is voluntary, meets medical standards, based on scientific evidence and safeguarded by free and informed consent.
- Prohibit the practice of mandatory drug testing and ensure it is only conducted after informed consent has been given, and carried out in a non-discriminatory, transparent and inclusive way.

2. END THE KILLINGS AND HARASSMENT OF “RED TAGGED” POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, AND OTHER GOVERNMENT CRITICS AND TARGETED GROUPS

Human rights defenders and political activists, especially those accused by the government of supporting the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People’s Army (NPA), have long been the subject of attacks from the government over the years. Under the Duterte administration, there has been an alarming rise in the number of killings and other attacks, threats and harassment of human rights defenders, political activists, journalists, Indigenous peoples, judges, lawyers and other government critics. In 2017, following the breakdown of peace talks between the government and the CPP/NPA, threats and attacks became more acute. Government authorities increasingly subjected political activists, human rights defenders, journalists, and lawyers to “red-tagging”. The government’s counter-insurgency strategy against the CPP/NPA increasingly focused on discrediting and dismantling civil society organizations that are purported to be “CPP front groups”.

In March 2021, security forces killed nine people – including environmental activists and urban poor community leaders – and arrested six others in simultaneous raids against “red-tagged” groups in Southern Tagalog. Since late 2021, the Department of Justice has recommended charges against dozens of police officers for the death of three people during those raids, but there have been no credible investigations into the deaths of many other human rights defenders and political activists.

The Anti-Terrorism Act, which granted the government broad powers to detain perceived enemies of the state, remains deeply flawed and open to abuse. In December 2021, the Supreme Court struck down two provisions of the law, including on the definition of terrorism that the Court said is “overbroad and violative of the freedom of expression”. The Court, however, declared the rest of the law as constitutional. Despite the Supreme Court’s decision, the law continues to pose a threat to those wrongly accused of terrorism, by granting the government excessive and unchecked powers and being susceptible to arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement.

Senator Leila de Lima, a prisoner of conscience singled out by the Duterte administration after she sought to investigate drug-related and other killings, remains arbitrarily detained on politically-motivated charges after five years. Statements made under oath by prosecution witnesses – including several government officials – have revealed no evidence of the crimes she is accused of.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- End the practice of “red-tagging” and ensure that no one is targeted for exercising their right to freedom of expression including their critical opinions of the authorities.
- Cease threats and attacks against civil society organizations, human rights defenders and political activists, and expressly condemn and end any harmful or threatening rhetoric, including “red-tagging”, against them; provide effective protection for those who have been red-tagged and bring those responsible for threats and attacks to justice in fair trials.
- Institute measures to build trust in law enforcement and security agencies, thereby enabling civil society groups and the public at large to engage with such government agencies tasked with investigating allegations of human rights violations, without fear of reprisal.
- Avoid the use of counter-insurgency and counterterrorism to justify human rights violations by reviewing the government’s counter-insurgency policies and agencies, including the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), and ending policies which infringe on human rights and do not comply with international human rights law and standards.
- Publicly instruct officials – including from the NTF-ELCAC or its iteration under the new administration – to end the harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders and political activists and ensure that these groups can carry out their human rights work in a safe and enabling environment.

- Ensure the protection of the rights of all human rights defenders and political activists, including the rights to life, due process, freedom of expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly, as guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which the Philippines is a state party, and ensure that they are able to carry out their work free from harassment, threats, and harm.
- End the political harassment of Senator Leila de Lima; order her immediate and unconditional release; and prosecute anyone found to be responsible for her arbitrary detention and other human rights violations committed against her.
- Disarm and disband all private armies, state-sponsored militias and paramilitary groups, and ensure the full compliance of the military with domestic and international human rights law and standards.
- Ensure that the Anti-Terrorism Act and its implementing rules and regulations are amended and brought in line with international standards, and not used to unduly target those who are critical of the government.
- Ensure that accountability and human rights protections are included in any peace negotiations, including by legislating mutual cooperation on human rights protection and joint investigations on credible allegations of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in the context of armed conflict.
- Ensure the full independence of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in accordance with the Paris Principles, and provide adequate resources to it, including sufficient budget to strengthen its human rights work.
- Institutionalise cooperation and collaboration between the government and the CHR, with a view to facilitating the investigation of killings of activists and human rights defenders, as well as other human rights violations.
- Ratify key treaties on human rights and humanitarian law, such as the Optional Protocol of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Arms Trade Treaty, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances.
- Establish a national preventative mechanism on torture, in line with the Philippines' obligations under the Anti-Torture Act of 2009, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

3. RESTORE MEDIA FREEDOM AND PROTECT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A free media plays an indispensable role in upholding the right to freedom of expression and enabling people to seek and receive information. Amnesty International is concerned that press freedom in the Philippines has been severely eroded and assaulted over the last few years.

ABS-CBN, the country's largest broadcast media network, has been off air since May 2020 when the Philippine Congress – whose members are mostly allies of President Rodrigo Duterte – voted to deny ABS-CBN's franchise renewal application. ABS-CBN produced numerous investigations highlighting extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations committed as part of the government's "war on drugs", as well as other reports critical of the Duterte administration. Amnesty International believes that the closure of ABS-CBN was politically motivated and in violation of the right to freedom of expression, media freedom and the public's right of access to information.

Nobel Peace Prize awardee [Maria Ressa](#) and Rappler, the digital media company she founded, have been a particular target of the authorities due to their consistent criticism of President Duterte and his administration, publishing detailed investigations into extrajudicial executions as part of the "war on drugs" and other exposés. Maria Ressa and Rappler currently face multiple lawsuits and investigations, including for alleged tax violations and violations of the Constitution's foreign equity restrictions in mass media. In June

2020, Maria Ressa was found guilty of “cyber libel” after being convicted under the Philippines’ Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012. For this conviction and if she is found guilty under the numerous other charges she is currently facing, she may be imprisoned for up to sixty years. Amnesty International is among numerous human rights groups around the world that condemned her conviction as an attack on press freedom.

The Philippines remains one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist. Amnesty International has monitored with increasing concern the rise in killings and other attacks against journalists, as well as the pervasive impunity for such violations which has contributed to further self-censorship and a chilling effect amongst media workers. According to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, as of end 2021, more than 20 journalists had been killed in the country under the Duterte administration.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure the immediate resumption of the operations of media network ABS-CBN and cease all attempts to restrict press freedom in the country.
- Drop all charges against Maria Ressa, her current and former colleagues at Rappler, and Rappler itself; and end the harassment, intimidation, vilification and other attacks against Maria Ressa, Rappler and other independent media outlets in the Philippines.
- Publicly condemn attacks against journalists in the Philippines. Independently, transparently and effectively investigate the killings of journalists, and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials.
- Repeal or substantially amend all laws unduly restricting the right to freedom of expression, including the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, and bring them in line with international human rights law and standards.

4. RESPECT AND PROTECT PEOPLE’S RIGHT TO HEALTH, AS WELL AS OTHER RIGHTS, DURING AND AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The right to health is a human right enshrined in international law creating obligations that are legally binding on States that have ratified relevant treaties. Hospitals and medical facilities in the Philippines have long been neglected and underfunded by the government, and surges of cases of Covid-19 in the last couple of years brought to fore the severe gaps in the country’s healthcare system. Hospitals, which were already understaffed and unequipped even before the pandemic, became seriously overwhelmed. Healthcare workers, already chronically underpaid and overworked prior to the pandemic, continue to endure difficulties such as unpaid benefits and the lack of medical-grade personal protective equipment (PPE).

Metro Manila and other areas were placed under varying degrees of quarantine measures since the pandemic began in March 2020. Owing to such restrictions, marginalised communities suffered at the hands of police and local officials who often resorted to unnecessary and excessive force in implementing lockdowns. These communities also faced additional obstacles such as loss of income, as they were unable to work during pandemic restrictions, and inability to access healthcare and public transportation.

Allegations of corruption with respect to the handling of pandemic response funds by the Department of Health may have resulted in violations of the right to health. Findings from the Commission on Audit prompted a Senate Committee to investigate the awarding of contracts to procure extraction machines, personal protective equipment and test kits by the Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management (PS-DBM). The Senate Committee recommended, in its partial findings, that perjury charges be filed against senior executives of a pharmaceutical company and several former government aides.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Invest the maximum available resources to strengthen the country's health system to ensure preparedness for future pandemics and continue to deliver other health services. Investments should be made with a goal of building a more robust national health system that can sustainably increase the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of health facilities, goods and services.
- Increase budgetary allocations to the public health sector, and develop a plan to ensure that the public health system is adequately funded and staffed. This should include a detailed assessment of the amount of public health spending necessary to ensure that all persons can enjoy the right to health, and options to finance increased public health spending.
- Ensure full and equitable access to vaccines to all, and especially to low-income and marginalised communities. Ensure that everyone has access to objective, credible and evidence-based information on vaccines to encourage and empower them to make informed decisions on getting vaccinated. Do not impose disproportionately punitive measures – such as restrictions on the use of public transport and access to essential services – to compel immunization.
- Provide those most at-risk of COVID-19 and those from marginalised groups access to adequate healthcare and financial assistance where necessary, as well as protection from abuse by law enforcers during quarantine restrictions.
- Publicly commit to end corruption within government. Ensure transparency and accountability in the management of public finances in health. Investigate and address allegations of corruption and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials.

5. ENHANCE LABOUR RIGHTS

Serious concerns about labour rights in the Philippines persist. Amnesty International's [research](#) on the situation of workers in nickel mining companies in Dinagat Islands revealed numerous examples of workers of mining companies being hired without contracts, having the payment of their wages delayed and not being paid compulsory employee benefits (including social security and health insurance) – all of which constitute violations of Philippines labour laws and international human rights law and standards.

The COVID-19 pandemic [exposed](#) how contract workers in the health sector faced low protection and delays in their benefits. In 2021, thousands of health workers experienced delays in receiving their legally mandated allowances, such as a special risk allowance and hazard pay, as well as allowances for food, transportation and accommodation, and other benefits. There have also been concerns about the lack of healthcare workers, as nurses and nurse aides are placed under unmanageable pressures. COVID-19 should be a reminder to the Philippine government to not only update and maintain healthcare systems, but also ensure that health workers work under acceptable conditions that conform with labour rights.

Remittances from overseas Filipino workers continue to form a large part of the country's economy. Despite this, many still suffer from wide-ranging labour abuses, including illegal recruitment practices such as the collection of illegal or exorbitant fees and contract substitution, as well as wage theft and physical abuse at the hands of their employers in destination countries. A newly created department, the Department of Migrant Workers, is expected to start its operations in 2023, which, according to the government, aims to expand services for migrant workers and bring together agencies working for their protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Strengthen government institutions responsible for enforcing labour standards (including the Department of Labor and Employment, and the National Labor Relations Commission) so they are better resourced and have greater capacity to, among other things, monitor and inspect business activities, ensure the fair and timely resolution of worker disputes with their employers, and more effectively collaborate and coordinate with other parts of government.

- Give local government units a greater role in the enforcement of labour standards, by harmonizing relevant legislation and related orders, rules and regulations to clarify and strengthen the mandates of government institutions. Ensure all relevant legislation is consistent with the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' General Comment No. 23 on the right to just and favourable conditions of work.
- Invest resources and build institutional capacity to ensure that only registered contractors and contractors which are otherwise compliant with the Labor Code of the Philippines (including contractors not engaging in labour-only contracting) are used by companies.
- Recruit and train health workers, and ensure that they work under conditions that protect their health, safety and well-being and are in line with international human rights standards.
- Ensure that all health workers and essential workers are paid fair wages, which reflect the impact of their work on their health, safety and personal life, as well as the specific hardships related to their work, in line with international human rights law and standards. Where the circumstances of the pandemic affect any of the factors listed above – such as, where hardships or the impact of the work on the health of the worker is significantly increased – the government should consider revising their wages, or supplementing them even if temporarily, to reflect these changed circumstances.
- Collect and publish data by occupation, including categories of health and other essential workers who have been infected by COVID-19, and how many have died as a result, in order to ensure effective protection in the future. This data should be disaggregated on the basis of prohibited grounds of discrimination, including but not limited to gender, caste, ethnicity, and nationality wherever possible, as well as place of work.
- Strengthen efforts to protect overseas Filipino workers, including by monitoring, investigating and prosecuting unfair and illegal practices of recruitment agencies and by working with destination countries toward the inclusion of these workers in domestic labour protection laws.

6. PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS (INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, LGBTI)

Over the past six years, killings and other violent attacks have escalated against leaders and members of Indigenous communities who have been red-tagged by government security forces.

On 30 December 2020, police and military officers reportedly forcibly entered the houses of targeted members of the Tumandok community in Panay Island, central Philippines, at four in the morning, supposedly to serve arrest warrants for illegal possession of firearms and explosives, a non-bailable charge that has repeatedly been used by the government to detain activists and human rights defenders indefinitely. Nine individuals were killed, who police maintained resisted arrest and fought back – a narrative used to justify killings during police operations, despite evidence of unlawful killing. At least 16 others were arrested. The police vowed to look into possible lapses committed during the raid, but nothing has to date been made public about this investigation. Others who are members of or supporting Indigenous communities in the country have been subject to killings, violent attacks and intimidation. The situation of Indigenous peoples remains concerning, despite the Philippine government voting to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007 and the Duterte administration reaffirming in 2017 its commitment to implement the Declaration.

LGBTI people continue to face discrimination and live in constant fear of harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and remain vulnerable to violence and persecution based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. Amnesty International expressed serious concern about attacks against LGBTI groups in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in September 2021. On 18 September 2021, for example, an improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated by still unknown individuals during a volleyball game in Datu Piang, Maguindanao, injuring eight LGBTI people, one of whom later died. Most of the victims were LGBTI individuals, who reportedly received death threats in the past because of their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. A day later, the Bangsamoro

Parliament said another LGBTI individual was killed in her own home by an unidentified assailant. To date, no one has been arrested or charged for these attacks.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, LGBTI people were reported to have been subjected to abuse and harassment following alleged violations of lockdown measures. In April 2020, three LGBTI people were stopped and detained in Pandacaqui, Pampanga, and were publicly humiliated by being ordered to kiss, dance, and do push-ups on live video broadcast on social media, where they were identified by name.

The Philippines continues to have the quickest growing HIV epidemic in the Asia-Pacific region, with the HIV prevalence rate among men who have sex with men the second-highest (5%) after people injecting drugs (29%).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure the comprehensive implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA), and monitor and address, in full consultation with affected communities, challenges preventing the proper functioning of the law.
- End violence, arrests and harassment against Indigenous individuals; launch prompt and impartial investigations into attacks; and prosecute and bring to justice those found responsible.
- Ensure the protection, security and well-being of all Indigenous peoples, including those risking their lives to call attention to human rights violations in their communities and fight for Indigenous peoples' rights.
- Take appropriate steps to protect the rights and safety of LGBTI people, and to prevent threats or attacks against them. Such attacks must be investigated and those responsible held to account.
- Pass legislation, such as the Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Bill and the SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression) Equality Bill, that provides LGBTI people and different marginalized and vulnerable groups protection against violence, harassment, discrimination and other forms of attacks.
- Address HIV-related discrimination of LGBTI people, and ensure that testing and treatment are readily and easily available to people living with HIV.

7. GUARANTEE THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The government has the obligation to ensure that education, as a right, is accessible to all, inclusive and non-discriminatory, and of good quality. For many decades, however, there has not been sufficient investment by the government in the public education system. Public schools have faced perennial problems such as lack of rooms, facilities, equipment and school buildings especially in remote areas. Public school teachers are overworked and underpaid, and many are forced to use their own funds to purchase supplies and other materials they need.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of children experienced devastating impacts on their education due to the closure of schools and the resulting shift to remote or online classes to which students and their teachers were not equipped to adapt, such as the use of computers and other gadgets with Internet connectivity. According to UNICEF Philippines, the delays and obstacles to schooling will have long-term effects on students, including a loss of learning, mental health issues, heightened risk of drop out, child labour and child marriage.

Indigenous children face specific challenges, including the threat of red-tagging of their communities by the government. In February 2021, security forces raided a school in Cebu City where students from Indigenous communities displaced by armed conflict were living. Seven people, including students, teachers and a community elder, were arrested without warrants and charged with kidnapping and human trafficking. They were accused of training child soldiers for the communist rebel movement and detained for three months before the charges against them were dismissed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Strengthen efforts to guarantee the right to education in the aftermath of lockdown measures and school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, including by facilitating the return of students to schools as part of the safe resumption of in-person classes. Where classes in physical spaces have yet to resume, both students and teachers must receive adequate support to ensure continued learning, such as the provision of gadgets and other resources required for online or remote classes.
- Increase budgetary allocation for public education, while ensuring that public school teachers are sufficiently trained and paid fair wages and other benefits commensurate to their work.
- Enhance measures to ensure universal access to quality education. Alternative learning systems, such as those initiated by community-based organizations for students from Indigenous communities, must not be closed down and threatened, and must instead be given government support, with a view to making education accessible to all.
- Continue efforts to increase the enrolment of children in schools. Address the root causes of lack of education, including poverty, a lack of school buildings especially in remote areas, and insufficient funding, especially for early childhood education.

8. PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE FACE OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Climate change threatens the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of present and future generations of Filipinos. The Philippines is already witnessing the devastating impact of climate change, such as severe heatwaves and typhoons of high intensity. These events, together with the onset of other impacts of climate change such as sea-level rise, severely threaten the enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to life, water, food, housing, health, sanitation, adequate standard of living, and work in the country.

The government has failed to protect human rights in the context of increasing climate change-related disasters. Eight years after typhoon Yolanda, in 2021, the Philippine National Housing Authority (NHA) reported that low completion rate, low occupancy, lack of basic utilities, and the distance from sources of income remain foremost issues in the government's Yolanda housing program in affected areas. Lack of basic services such as water and electricity, accessibility to sources of livelihood, and construction errors were likewise cited by the Philippine Commission on Audit (COA) in housing projects for Yolanda victims. The COA also criticized the government for its poor use of donated funds and charges were recommended by the Presidential Anti-Corruption Commission against government officials.

In response to a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in February 2022, climate change adaptation experts in the country, including from Greenpeace, called on the Philippine government to strengthen its strategies to adapt to the impacts of climate change, including supporting the conservation and expansion of mangrove and beach forests, protecting watersheds and restoring forest cover, and building the capacities of communities to adapt by understanding their needs and rights. Climate change action must also be embedded in national and local plans and budgets.

The authorities have the obligation to adopt all necessary measures to protect the human rights of people affected by disasters and to assist people to adequately prepare ahead of severe weather and climate events and adapt to the foreseeable and unavoidable effects of climate change, in order to minimize impact on their human rights. If the Philippines is unable to take sufficient measures on adaptation, disaster risk preparedness and response in a manner that would ensure continued enjoyment and progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights for its population, the government must seek international cooperation and assistance to do so and ensure funds received are used to protect and fulfil human rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Take steps to put in place human rights-consistent legislation, policies and services relating to disaster preparedness and response, and ensure that the rights of people living in vulnerable communities – such as the rights to life, livelihood, water, housing – are respected and upheld especially in times of disasters.
- Ensure access to food, safe water, adequate housing, electricity and sanitation facilities without discrimination to victims of typhoon Yolanda and all those affected by severe weather events, while ensuring that people are not forced to live in conditions that blight their health and impact their livelihoods.
- Adopt and implement human rights-consistent adaptation measures that adequately protect people from the foreseeable and unavoidable impacts of the climate crisis.
- Take into account the needs and requirements of different groups in the design and implementation of climate change adaptation and disaster-risk reduction strategies. This requires identifying and addressing the factors, including marginalization and discrimination, that increase the risks of harm from climate impacts and allocating adequate resources to the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights of all persons, with priority to those facing the greatest risks.
- Ensure adaptation measures give priority to the most marginalized groups, communities and individuals, including by seeking to address gender imbalances and be informed by the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and other local communities.
- Identify the Philippines' exact needs in terms of technology transfer and financial resources needed from wealthier countries to complement its adaptation efforts and for loss and damage in a manner that fully protects human rights in the face of the climate crisis.
- Ensure that funds received through international cooperation and assistance are used to protect and fulfil human rights and are accessible to people who need it most, especially those marginalised.

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.
WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS
TO ONE PERSON, IT
MATTERS TO US ALL.**

CONTACT US



info@amnesty.org



+44 (0)20 7413 5500

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



www.facebook.com/AmnestyGlobal



[@Amnesty](https://twitter.com/Amnesty)

PHILIPPINES 2022 ELECTIONS: 8- POINT HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA FOR CANDIDATES

Since the last Presidential elections in 2016, human rights in the Philippines have been under attack. In particular, extrajudicial executions and impunity for serious human rights violations have surged. This 8 point human rights agenda highlights key concerns and recommendations for election candidates including the urgent need to restore respect for the right to life, the right to due process and fair trial, and the prohibition on torture and inhuman and degrading punishment. The agenda also highlights the need to guarantee the right to health, the right to education, the rights of marginalised people, climate justice, and labour rights. Amnesty International calls upon all election candidates to address the human rights situation in the Philippines explicitly in their campaigns and should they win, prioritise these pressing concerns and recommendations.