

JOINT STATEMENT

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Philippines: House of Representatives must uphold international law obligations ahead of first death penalty vote

Ahead of the first vote on the proposed legislative amendments to reintroduce the death penalty in the Philippines, the undersigned organizations are calling on the country's lawmakers to uphold its international law obligations and vote against the measure. The move would set the Philippines against its positive achievements in this area and the global trend towards abolition of the death penalty.

On 20 February the House of Representatives of the Philippines is expected to vote on a Bill to reintroduce the death penalty for a wide range of offences. The move would violate the country's intended obligations under international law. In 2007 the Philippines ratified the Second Optional Protocol of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights that categorically prohibits executions and commits the country to the abolition of this punishment. These obligations cannot be withdrawn at any time.

We remain concerned at the "U turn" that the present administration is proposing for the country on the issue of the death penalty. Since its abolition of the death penalty – for the second time – in 2006, the Philippines has been a strong advocate of the abolition of the death penalty and has championed several initiatives to this aim in international forums. It has also worked to commute the death sentences imposed on Filipino nationals abroad, such as overseas workers. The legal assistance and political pressure that the authorities of the Philippines have provided to those facing this punishment in other countries has undoubtedly contributed to the protection of their rights, including the right to a fair trial, and could become ineffective if moves were made to re-introduce this penalty back home.

As of today, 141 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice; several governments are taking steps to repeal this punishment from national law.

The reasons countries abolish the death penalty are many and include the fact that there is no evidence that killing by the state deters crime, and much evidence to the contrary; that the death penalty invariably discriminates against the poor and disadvantaged, and that society and the state are seriously harmed and brutalised by descending to the act of killing prisoners.

A move to reintroduce this punishment would set the Philippines starkly against the global trend towards abolition. We oppose the death penalty in all cases and under any circumstances as a violation of the right to life, recognized by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; and as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

We renew our call on the members of the House of Representatives of the Philippines to ensure its international commitments are respected and the Bill to reintroduce the death penalty is rejected.

This statement is signed by:

ACAT-Philippines

ADPAN-Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network

Amnesty International

Death Penalty Focus

ECPM-Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort

FIACAT-Federation of Actions of Christians for the Abolition of Torture

FIDH-International Federation for Human Rights

MADPET-Malaysians Against Death Penalty and Torture

Relieve-Australia