

A Plea for Justice

**Statement of the Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court (PCICC),
Amnesty International Philippines and the Children's Legal Rights and
Development Center (CLRDC)**

General Debate at the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) December 7, 2023

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am Aurora Parong, Co Chairperson of the Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court . I am also speaking on behalf of Amnesty International Philippines and the Children's Legal Rights and Development Center.

We come from a small country so far away from the International Criminal Court in The Hague and the UN in New York.

One city mayor who became President in our country thinks that some people have to be killed for humanity's sake. The Philippine situation is under investigation by the ICC for crimes against humanity in the context of the war on drugs. About 30,000 people, including children, were killed in police and other operations, which are deemed led or instigated by law enforcement agents and high officials. To date, the killings continue, despite the change in government last year.

The Philippines withdrew from the Rome Statute in 2019 after a preliminary examination was started and publicly attacked officials of the ICC and vowed non – cooperation with the Court, while there is no credible investigations of high government officials who made the massive killings possible and no prosecution of serious international crimes. The Philippines has withdrawn from the Rome Statute and very few government officials support cooperation with the ICC. The new government is still studying possible cooperation with ICC.

Madame President, Excellencies, there is impunity for serious international crimes in the Philippines. Only 4 policemen have been convicted for the killing of 3 teen agers, despite the tens of thousands killed.

The families of victims of killings by Davao Death Squads as well as those killed in the nationwide rampage against rights and the rule of law under the previous government, are grieving and suffering. The emotional turmoil is aggravated by the stagnation of the domestic criminal investigations and prosecution on killings in the bloody war on drugs. Yet, they continue to wait for the wheels of justice to tilt in their favor, pinning high hopes on the ICC as a court of last resort to deliver justice, which is so elusive in our part of the world. The victims and their families continue to hold on to that small light of hope that elusive justice will be found at the International Criminal Court.

We recognize that so many peoples around the world are also hoping for justice through the ICC. We note with concern that the ICC has been under funded with a very significant and long-standing gap between the Court's workload and the resources available to it in its regular budget. We are anxious that there may be hibernation or delays in investigations and decisions at the ICC due to inadequate resources.

Madam President, Excellencies, We highly welcome the continued support of the ASP for the ICC as a court of last resort, but this must be matched with corresponding resources.

No stones should be left unturned to deliver justice which may help deter future atrocities. The reparations for victims must be efficient and sustainable to help them pursue the enjoyment of basic rights.

We appeal to the Assembly of States Parties to provide the political support as well as adequate resources that the International Criminal Court needs in order to efficiently and effectively deliver justice. Justice is a birth right for everyone. No one should be left behind.

Thank you.