

## **Statement on the Pre Trial Chamber I Decision to Proceed Investigation of the Philippine Situation**

**Philippine Coalition for the International Criminal Court (PCICC)**

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The decision of the ICC Pre Trial Chamber I to proceed with the investigation of the crimes against humanity in the Philippines is a much awaited decision. It brings light, amidst the darkness of impunity and elusive justice in the country. For the families of the victims of extrajudicial killings who continue to mourn not only the deaths of their relatives but also the weak justice system in the country, this decision is a source of comfort.

We hope the process of investigation will not be too long before charges are filed in the ICC against those most responsible for the killings, those who pulled the trigger and those who encouraged the mass executions. And that the criminal prosecutions will lead to actual justice and reparations.

The decision comes after very strong recommendations for prosecution of the perpetrators of extrajudicial killings in the War on Drugs (WoD) during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Philippines in Geneva, Switzerland where Justice Secretary Remulla spoke about “real justice in real time”. The justice secretary must now give evidence to show that indeed there is real time justice in the country.

The Philippine government should now realize that badmouthing the ICC, diplomatic runs and rhetorics on justice will not stop the International Criminal Court (ICC) from doing its work to investigate crimes within its jurisdiction and deliver justice for serious crimes in international law. Instead of calling the ICC decision an “irritant”, the Justice Secretary should consider it a wake- up call. It is a wake -up call to do more and launch bolder actions to exact accountability for serious crimes from those who pulled the trigger and especially officials or heads of state who emboldened them to kill without fear.

The large numbers of extrajudicial killings and other serious crimes done with impunity have reached a level of international concern which calls for more decisive actions from both the ICC and the Philippine government.

The best option for the Philippines is to cooperate with the International Criminal Court in order to ensure justice for the tens of thousands killed under the Duterte and Marcos administrations.

It is time for President Marcos and Justice Remulla to transform their rhetorics for justice into concrete bold actions to exact accountability. It is time for the Philippines not only to investigate and file criminal cases against low level police but also against officials who have command responsibility, which include officials during the Duterte government.

The Marcos administration must be reminded that it has the obligation to investigate human rights violations and serious crimes in international law and deliver justice not only for the violations during the current government but also of past governments.