



Human Rights Commissioner Kofler on the still unresolved killing of Jory Porquia and other extra-judicial killings as well as on the discussions surrounding the reintroduction of the death penalty in the Philippines

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Bärbel Kofler, Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy, issued the following statement today (14 September) regarding the still unresolved murders of several Filipino human rights activists in recent months as well as the discussions surrounding the reintroduction of the death penalty in the Philippines:

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I am following the devastating development of the human rights situation in the Philippines, where the number of murders of human rights defenders has multiplied under the Duterte administration, with great concern. This development has been exacerbated by pernicious rhetoric, also on the part of the Government. At the same time, thousands of murders have gone unpunished in recent years.

I am appalled by the targeted murder of human rights defenders such as Jory Porquia, who was shot dead in April 2020. His case has not yet even been investigated by the Philippine authorities. Unfortunately, the murder of Jory Porquia is not an isolated incident. Randall Echanis and Zara Alvarez were murdered in quick succession in August. Independent and transparent investigations under the rule of law must be launched immediately in all of these cases of extra-judicial, arbitrary executions. I therefore urge the Philippine Government to ensure that the principles of the rule

of law guaranteed in its constitution are observed to the letter, that criminals are held to account, human rights are respected, and that human rights activists are protected. This is especially important during the current COVID-19 pandemic, which is an existential challenge for vulnerable population groups in particular.

I am following the discussions that have resurfaced in recent weeks about the reintroduction of the death penalty in the Philippines with great concern. I expect the Philippines to continue to fulfil its obligations under the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

Background information:

Jory Porquia, a political activist and former employee of the Panay Fair Trade Center, was killed after being shot several times in his apartment building on Panay Island on 30 April 2020. Shortly prior to this, he had organised the distribution of relief supplies to people in need who were particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these actions had not been authorised by the authorities due to lockdown measures.

In the months that followed, there were further killings of prominent human rights activists. On 10 August, Randall Echanis, who worked for Philippine human rights organisations and defended the rights of farmers, was murdered at his home in Quezon City and it was reported that his body bore evidence of having been tortured. One week later, on 17 August, human rights activist Zara Alvarez, who also cooperated closely with German NGOs, was shot dead on the way to her home on Negros Island.

The death penalty was abolished in the Philippines in 2006. In the same year, the Philippine Government also signed the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

Since the beginning of the “war on drugs” proclaimed by Rodrigo Duterte, at least 8000 people have been murdered, according to official figures. NGOs believe that this number is actually many times higher.