

PATAS AT MAKATARUNGANG PAHAYAGAN
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Parañaque City- Pormal na nanumpa kay Associate Justice Diosdado M. Peralta bilang pangalawang termino sa pagka alkalde si Hon. Mayor Edwin Olivares, kasama ang kanyang pamilya. Nito lamang nakaraang linggo. (Julius Julian)

MANILA-- The Philippine government has reiterated its zero tolerance policy for abuses and human rights violations by state actors, including those related in the illegal drug trade.

This, following the statements delivered by Australia, Iceland, the United Kingdom, and Belgium during the 41st Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC).

In the country's right of reply, Presidential Human Rights Committee Secretariat Undersecretary Severo Catura said Iceland has specifically referred to a recent news release by some special rapporteurs on the human rights situation in the Philippines.

"We do not understand why the sweeping, biased and rhetorical generalizations in that press release should be a basis for discussion today," Catura said, referring to the HRC meeting on Tuesday.

"There is nothing new in those statements and the argu-

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ments do not justify the call for a so-called 'international probe on the human rights violations' in the Philippines. It is one of the many recent actions of Special Procedures and questions their working methods, that is subject to current discussions among the delegations," he added.

The said news release is centered on the 11 independent experts, including UN rapporteur Agnes Callamard, who accused the Philippine government of "sustained attack on people and institutions defending human rights" and called for the HRC to establish an independent inquiry.

Citing official figures as of April 30, 2019, Catura said 75 uniformed personnel have been arrested, along with 306 government employees and 274 elected officials.

On the anti-drug operations where drug personalities have died, he noted that the Philippine National Police (PNP) has conducted 4,583 motu proprio or automatic investigations.

Of this number, 3,619 have been elevated to summary hearing procedures while 352 are undergoing pre-charge investigation and 588 have been dropped and closed.

Meanwhile, a total of 7,867 police personnel were dismissed, suspended and demoted as a result of the investigations in the anti-illegal drugs campaign.

He also presented official data from the PNP, citing at least 14,724 cases filed against erring PNP officers/ personnel.

"The Philippines has fully functioning accountability mechanisms and domestic processes, including in the law enforcement sectors, and inter-agency mecha-

nisms, such as the AO (administrative order) 35 Inter-Agency Committee on Extra-legal Killings, Enforced Disappearances, Torture and Other Grave Violations of the Right to Life, Liberty, and Security of Persons, and the Presidential Task Force on Media Security (PTFoMS)," he said.

The official said a total of 363 cases/incidents have been deliberated upon and discussed in detail by the A.O. 35 Inter-Agency Committee as of May 31, 2019: 248 cases of extra-legal killings, 28 cases of enforced disappearances, 80 cases of torture, and seven cases of other grave human rights violations.

With regard to reports of media killings under the current administration, records show that there are only 17 reported cases of media worker killings, he said.

"Of these, only four were established, upon investigation, to be work-related," he pointed out.

In concluding the Philippine government's Right of Reply, Catura assured the international body that Manila actively cooperates with bilateral partners and international organizations such as the European Union, Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the British Council, the Council of Europe and others to promote accountability and fight impunity for major human rights violations.

"We highly encourage the concerned delegations to support and cooperate with the Philippines by respecting and encouraging the use of national accountability mechanisms that are well in place," he said. (PNA)

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and He will flee from you.” – James 4:7