

**Mr Chito Gascon**

Commission on Human Rights Philippines  
Chairperson

via e-mail: [chairgascon.chr@gmail.com](mailto:chairgascon.chr@gmail.com)

Berlin, 11 September 2017



Dear Chairperson Gascon,

I address this letter to you in my capacity as Chairperson of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), which is the United Nations (UN) recognised umbrella body of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). GANHRI represents at an international level over 120 NHRIs from around the globe, including 78 of which enjoy A status accreditation at the UN, testifying to their full compliance with the UN Paris Principles of 1993.

It has been brought to my attention that President Rodrigo Duterte in a press statement following his State of the Nation address on 24 July 2017 has affirmed he would block any investigations by the Commission Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP) into alleged abuses by security forces in the Philippines, and stated that the CHRP would be “better abolished.” Whilst I understand that the statement has later been withdrawn by him, I am concerned that such statements severely put at risk the independence and mandate of the Commission.

These threats against an independent state body that is fulfilling its statutory duties to promote and protect human rights are of grave concern to GANHRI. The CHRP is internationally recognised by the UN as the NHRI of the Philippines and has been accredited with A status by GANHRI since 1999. The CHRP has been recently re-accredited with A status, certifying its full compliance with the Paris Principles. When reviewing the CHRP the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) commended the CHRP for its continuing efforts to promote and protect human rights despite the challenging context in which it operates.

This status is granted to NHRIs following a rigorous accreditation process and testifies to their full compliance with the Paris Principles. The Paris Principles set out the necessary guarantees of independence that are required in order for the NHRI to be regarded as truly independent.

Thus, the Paris Principles state that NHRIs have the mandate to submit to state authorities their opinion on “any situation of violation of human rights which it decides to take up”. NHRIs have the mandate to do so in full independence, free from any political pressure, physical intimidation or harassment.

The CHRP, and in particular yourself, are highly respected among NHRIs and within the international human rights community for your exemplary work and high commitment to uphold human rights standards even in the most difficult circumstances. The CHRP is also a particularly active member of both GANHRI and Asia Pacific Forum of NHRIs (APF), the regional network of NHRIs.

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The Human Rights Council in its resolution 33/15 on National Human Rights Institutions “(e)ncourages NHRIs to continue to play an active role in preventing and combating all violations and abuses of human rights,” and “recognises that NHRIs and their respective members and staff should not face any form of reprisal or intimidation, including political pressure, physical intimidation, harassment or unjustifiable budgetary limitations, as a result of activities undertaken in accordance with their respective mandates, including when taking up individual cases or when reporting on serious or systematic violations in their countries”.

GANHRI and the regional networks of NHRIs, APF, ENNHRI (European Network of NHRIs), NANHRI (Network of African NHRIs) and the Network of NHRIs of the Americas, are greatly concerned by these recent attacks against one of its members and peers. An NHRI should not be pressured, harassed or intimidated publicly to abandon any investigations into alleged human rights violations. The role of NHRIs is precisely to promote and protect human rights and it falls upon their respective governments to create the necessary enabling environment, including by upholding the independence of an NHRI and respecting its mandate.

I can assure you that GANHRI and its members stand in solidarity with the CHRP. In the interim, my office will be sharing our concerns with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with our GANHRI members.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Beate Rudolf', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Professor Dr Beate Rudolf  
Chairperson, GANHRI  
Director, German Institute for Human Rights