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# Overview of Current Human Rights Challenges in the Philippines and the People's Response

Angie M. Gonzales

*International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines, icchrp@gmail.com*

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# The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy

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**Research Panel:** Popular Movements: A Closer Examination

**Presenter:** Angie M. Gonzales, International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines

**Title:** Overview of Current Human Rights Challenges in the Philippines and the People's Response

**Abstract:**

The Philippines is an agricultural resource-rich country in Southeast Asia but whose economy and society remain dictated by foreign interests and local elite while the majority are steeped in worsening poverty and inequality.

It is thus not surprising that it is host to the longest-running revolution in Asia. The decades-old armed rebellion has been waged among national liberation forces, notably the Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army - National Democratic Front of the Philippines (CPP-NPA-NDFP) and Moro forces — the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Successive Philippine regimes have employed militarist approaches to end rebellion; they have not only failed, but also resulted in extrajudicial killings, displacement of peoples, and other human rights violations.

The overwhelming victory of Rodrigo Roa Duterte in the 2016 presidential elections underscored the Filipino people's strong rejection of the previous regimes and great desire for change. Worsening poverty, corruption, and criminality were key issues during Duterte's campaign.

Events following Duterte's assumption as the 16th president of the Philippines have seen changes that in some areas are encouraging and in others deeply troubling. The president's careless dismissal of human rights and his public presentation of those concerned with human rights issues as enemies have kindled the culture of impunity to which the state security forces have grown so accustomed.

The more positive aspect of the current administration is related to the seriousness with which the president has committed himself to principled negotiations toward peace between his government and the rebels. This is an opportunity for the people to advance concrete proposals on how to address chronic poverty, hunger, labor export, rural deprivation, homelessness, wealth disparity, and environmental deterioration, among other issues affecting them.

**About the presenter:**

Angie M. Gonzales is coordinator of the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines. She practiced community medicine in the rural areas of the country after graduating from the University of the Philippines College of Medicine and earning her license in 1991. She mainly served the Cordillera and

Ilocos regions, providing direct medical services and valuable training to community health workers and volunteers.

In 2006, she and her two children were reunited with her husband, who, after falling victim to enforced disappearance, torture, and continuous harassment for almost three years, sought political asylum in the Netherlands in 2003. She continued to be an activist for the Philippines, heading the International Coordinating Secretariat for the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on the Philippines, held in the Hague, Netherlands, in March 2007. She also organized the International Coordinating Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines (ICCHRP) in 2010. The ICCHRP was formalized into the International Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines in 2013. She has been the coordinator of the coalition since then.