

Philippines: UN experts urge Government to address spiralling rights violations

31 July 2017 – A group of United Nations experts has urged the Government of the Philippines to immediately address reported human rights violations, including murder, threats against indigenous peoples and the summary execution of children.

“Attacks are spiralling against many groups in society and we are making an urgent appeal for Government action,” said a joint statement issued by Agnes Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; and Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children.

They said attacks target indigenous peoples and human rights defenders, including children.

The experts noted that a number of villagers, farmers and human rights defenders seeking to protect the ancestral land of Lumad indigenous peoples against businesses have been reportedly killed, or executed outside the ordinary legal proceedings.

Last week, President Rodrigo Duterte, speaking in a televised news conference on 24 July, threatened to bomb Lumad schools on Mindanao.

“We urge the Government to ensure effective protection of individuals and groups who may be subject to extra-legal, arbitrary or summary executions, or those who received death threats,” the experts said.

“The Government must also prevent incitement to violence or killings against indigenous communities, human rights defenders and farmers,” they concluded.

The group of UN human rights experts has been in contact with the Government of the Philippines regarding these concerns.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.