



SAGOT MO BA AKO 2022: TANGAN MO, KARAPATAN KO

An Open Letter to the (Presidential, Vice-Presidential, and Senatorial) Candidates of the 2022 National Elections:

Dear Candidates,

The campaign period has officially started. Many of you are already on the campaign trail, visiting cities and provinces, sharing platforms, delivering speeches, and convincing voters that you are the best choice for the position.

But the words you speak and the answers you give over these next few weeks do not merely bear your qualifications nor the weight of your experience, they bear the future and well-being of every Filipino for the next 6 years.

The Philippines is a country of resilient people. History is witness to this. It is also a witness as to how colonial and authoritarian structures, repression of freedoms, systemic inequality, and the leadership's lack of perspective on the everyday life of the ordinary citizen has necessitated this resilience. The years of Martial Law and Marcos' regime epitomized this. But the presidents that followed also failed to address these issues and move the country forward.

Still, journalists and activists are getting detained, disappeared, and killed. Still, 26 million Filipinos are struggling to put food on the table. Still, many workers are deprived of benefits and decent wages. Still, millions are unemployed. Still, many children are unable to go to school. Still, there is not enough support given to healthcare. Still, corruption plagues many government agencies. Still, many vulnerable sectors remain discriminated and disenfranchised.

Still, human rights are neglected and violated.

This is what needs to change. This is what we need answered.

To every candidate running in this year's elections--for the Presidency especially; this is a reminder, a call to action, and a challenge: Show us your commitment to human rights. Prove to us that human rights has a place in your action plans, speeches, and intentions.

Here is where you can start: Tell us about your plans for human rights. We especially hope to hear about your plan of action on these five key issues:

- **Government Accountability on the War on Drugs: How will you ensure justice for the victims, and accountability for the perpetrators?)**
- **Facilitating COVID-19 Recovery and Strengthening Healthcare System and Services: What are your plans to facilitate the country's recovery from the pandemic?**
- **Upholding Social Security and Labor Rights: How will you manage the country's increasing debt while ensuring that vulnerable sectors are not left behind?**
- **Accessible, Quality, and Responsive Education: How will you support students, teachers, and staff before, during, and after the opening of schools?**
- **Protection of Journalists, Human Rights Defenders, and Freedom of Expression: How will you protect journalists, human rights defenders, and citizens who are critical of the government?**

We say this again: the words you speak and the answers you give to the Filipino people over these next few weeks in your bid for public office, bears the future and well-being of every Filipino for the next 6 years. Sagot Mo Ba Ako?

This letter is open for signatories—every Filipino citizen, voting or not, is welcome to add their name. We ask the candidates for their commitment to human rights; but each of us too, share the same responsibility. Your signature here could be the start of your own commitment towards a Philippines that respects, protects, and fulfills human rights.

(Note: Prior to the release of this open letter and launch of Sagot Mo Ba Ako?, letters requesting for Human Rights Action Plans and their responses to questions around key human rights issues have been sent out to all Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates. Likewise, a letter requesting for their legislative priorities were sent to select Senatorial candidates.)