

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

18 June 2025 ASA 35/9511/2025

### ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 3: ID with THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHT TO  
FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION  
**HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

UN Human Rights Council  
Fifty-ninth session  
16 June – 11 July 2025

Mr. Vice-President,

Amnesty International welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on her visit to the Philippines **bringing global attention to the situation of freedom of expression in the country, including for activists and human rights defenders, many of whom are children and young people, particularly students.**

Amnesty International has documented how the authorities increasingly use Facebook in red-tagging campaigns targeting young activists, including those who investigate alleged human rights violations by the military, police and other government agencies.

While exercising their freedom of expression and right to protest, these young human rights defenders have repeatedly faced intimidation and harassment from state actors, among them the NTF-ELCAC which continues to operate with undeterred support and resources from the Office of the President. Red-tagging has led to a climate of fear and self-censorship.

Amnesty International agrees with the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur who has called for the Philippine Government to “embark on more significant legal, policy and institutional changes to demonstrate its commitment to freedom of expression”. Reform must include:

- Abolishing the NTF-ELCAC, followed by prompt, independent, impartial and transparent investigations into the practices **of the task force throughout the duration of its operations;**
- Repealing the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act, and a critical review of the provisions of the Cybercrime Act, especially on libel; and
- Passing the Human Rights Defenders Protection Act as a first step towards recognizing the work of human rights defenders and including among its provisions the definition and penalization of red tagging.

Madam Rapporteur,

The Philippine Government has remained adamant in maintaining and supporting the existence and operations of the NTF-ELCAC. How critical is the abolition of this institution in upholding freedom of expression in the country?

I thank you.