

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 249

**FURTHER STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT POLICIES, PLANS,
AND PROGRAMS FOR THE EFFECTIVE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION
OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

WHEREAS, the 10th of December 2008 marks the 60th anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), with the Philippines as among its first signatories, and joining the community of nations at the forefront in the promotion and protection of human rights all over the world;

WHEREAS, the Philippine government, as one of the first elected members of the United Nations Human Rights Council, recognizes the significance of this occasion as an inspiring symbol spurring the government's overall effort to promote and protect human rights;

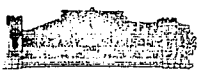
WHEREAS, the Philippine Government deems it fit to mark this event by further strengthening its existing policies, plans and programs in accordance with the specific principles, rights, and freedoms specifically identified in the UDHR as a manifestation of its commitment to fully comply and abide by the tenets of the Declaration;

WHEREAS, the Philippine government renews its commitment to the general principles of the UDHR that specifies that humans, being born free and equal and in brotherhood with one another, are equal before the law, are entitled to all the human rights, and, as such, shall not be deprived of these rights;

WHEREAS, the 1987 Constitution comprehensively addresses and even enhances the principles, freedoms and rights embodied in the UDHR, thus defining the country's lasting contributions to the Declaration;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, do hereby order as follows:

SECTION 1. All concerned departments, agencies, bodies, and instrumentalities of the Executive branch of government, including local government units, are directed to strengthen and to ensure compliance to their existing policies, plans and programs as they would enhance government's overall effort in the promotion and protection of human rights, taking into account the specific applicable rights and freedoms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), as follows:



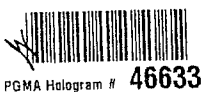
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- a. Department of Justice to exhaust all legal means for the swift and just resolution of cases of alleged human rights violations against political and media personalities, and leaders in the labor, urban poor, and agricultural sectors, and to ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable before the law.
- b. Department of Justice to implement an updated comprehensive legal education campaign that will further inform and educate the general public on their basic rights under the Philippine justice system; and, in partnership with the Department of Budget and Management and in cooperation with Congress, to strengthen the capability of the Public Attorneys Office and the Public Prosecutors Office, specifically by hiring more lawyers to better attend to the legal needs of indigents in conflict with the law, with the corresponding fund support for additional lawyers and legal officers, and for the increase in the salaries of and the grant of special allowances for prosecutors and PAO lawyers;
- c. Department of National Defense and Department of Interior and Local Government to enhance their respective human rights training programs for military and police officers and personnel to ensure that rights of civilians, communities, internally displaced persons, as well as detained persons, are promoted and protected during peace and order and internal security operations, underscoring, among others, the importance of command responsibility and accountability;
- d. Department of Interior and Local Government to spearhead capability-building on human rights for local government units in partnership with national human rights institutions, sectoral groups, and civil society organizations, and to ensure the accountability of LGUs in the effective information dissemination of human rights in their communities;
- e. Department of Education to assess the current implementation of its human rights education exemplars and to move towards the creation of centers for human rights education in public schools in partnership with human rights institutions, sectoral groups, and civil society organizations to build a constituency of human rights advocates among students and the youth;
- f. Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority to spearhead the implementation of the Philippine Main Education Highway Program as contained in the proposal of the Presidential Task Force on Education for the improvement of basic education, increased student retention rate, and actual completion of higher education;
- g. Department of Social Welfare and Development to ensure that the implementation of the National Social Welfare Program that seeks to protect the poor and the vulnerable sectors of society, including the informal sectors,



and allows them equal and broader access to public service, are made attuned to the rights-based-approach in the extension of its programs;

- h. Department of Labor and Employment to enhance programs for reintegration of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW), such as improving the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NCRO) to address the needs of returning OFWs and members of their families, such as entrepreneurship training, livelihood projects, etc;
- i. National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women to lead a gender-sensitive information campaign for the provision of gender-sensitive public services by local government units, and other frontline government agencies, such as the Department of National Defense – Armed Forces of the Philippines; Department of Interior and Local Government-Philippine National Police, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and Department of Justice, including others involved in addressing violence against women;
- j. National Commission on Indigenous Peoples to undertake programs that will further promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples in the country in consonance with the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act, taking into account their significant contributions to the economic, social and cultural life of the Filipino nation;
- k. National Anti-Poverty Commission to aggressively ensure the rationalization of all efforts of agencies concerned that bear on the reduction of poverty in the country, focusing on the role of basic sectors and their contribution to poverty alleviation;
- l. National Economic Development Authority to ensure that the principles of the rights-based-approach are integrated, reflected and defined in the formulation of the country's development policies, plans, and programs;
- m. Council for the Welfare of Children, in partnership with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, to advance and implement a more effective framework that will further guarantee the protection of children in situations of armed conflict and, in partnership with the Department of Justice, to ensure the proper treatment of children in conflict with the law;
- n. Local government units, on guidance from the Department of Interior and Local Government, to integrate the pertinent principles and rights in the UDHR into their respective development plans and programs, starting with, in partnership with the Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor, the institution of effective local ordinances and rules and regulations in the implementation of the Urban Development and Housing Act, specifically in the proper relocation of informal settlers and for other assistance



SECTION 2. All departments, agencies, offices, bodies, and instrumentalities are to comply with these directives cognizant that sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person must, at all times, be upheld, respected, and protected.

SECTION 3. Proper compliance to this order by the concerned Executive departments, offices, agencies, bodies, and instrumentalities, including local government units, shall be further rationalized, coordinated, supervised, and monitored by the Presidential Human Rights Committee. Year-end performance reports to the President shall be required by the PHRC from the concerned offices.

SECTION 4. This Administrative Order shall take effect immediately.

DONE in the City of Manila, this 10th day of December the year of our Lord, Two Thousand and Eight.

Gloria M. Arroyo



By the President:

Eduardo R. Ermita
EDUARDO R. ERMITA
Executive Secretary

