



Republika ng Pilipinas  
**KAGAWARAN NG KATARUNGAN**  
*Department of Justice*  
*Manila*

**032**

**DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR NO.** \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBJECT :** ESTABLISHMENT OF A DOJ HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE  
(HRO)

**DATE :** JUL 14 2023

---

WHEREAS, Section 11, Article II of the 1987 Constitution declares as a policy of the State to value the dignity of every human person and guarantee full respect for human rights;

WHEREAS, the Philippines is a contributor and signatory to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and has always been steadfast in upholding, protecting, and promoting human rights at the national and international levels, as shown by its vibrant democracy “anchored on the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life”;<sup>1</sup>

WHEREAS, the Philippines is a Party to various United Nations (UN) human rights treaties and conventions;

WHEREAS, the Philippines formally joined in May 2023 the Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules, an international organization under the auspices of the United Nations to create awareness and promote the practical application of the United Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, otherwise known as the Mandela Rules;

WHEREAS, Administrative Order (AO) No. 163, series of 2006, appointed the Secretary of Justice as Vice-Chairperson of the Presidential Human Rights Committee (PHRC), the primary advisory body to the President on all human rights concerns/issues, and designated the Department of Justice (DOJ) as Lead Agency for the Working Group on International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as member of the various Working Groups on other international human rights treaties and conventions;

WHEREAS, AO No. 01, s. 2016, created the Presidential Task Force on Violence against Media Workers mandated to ensure a safe environment for Media Workers, and whereby the Secretary of Justice is appointed as Chairperson;

WHEREAS, the DOJ, as the government’s principal law agency responsible for the effective, efficient, and equitable administration of justice, is one with the

---

<sup>1</sup> Statement of Dr. Alberto G. Romulo as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, during the High Level Segment of the United Nations Human Rights Council’s 7<sup>th</sup> Session in Geneva, Switzerland, March 2008.

Philippine government agencies at the forefront of upholding, protecting, and promoting human rights through reforms and initiatives in the country's justice and law enforcement sectors;<sup>2</sup>

WHEREFORE, in the interest of the service and pursuant to the provisions of existing laws, including AO No. 163, s. 2006, AO No. 01, s. 2016, and consistent with the Department's commitment to deliver real justice in real time, as well as to foster a more humane justice system and provide sustainable mechanisms to address human rights concerns, the **DOJ Human Rights Office (HRO)** is hereby established to perform the following duties and functions, to wit:

1. Formulate and recommend the Department's Human Rights Action Plan in accordance with the Department's mandate and existing laws, and in compliance with the commitments and obligations to international human rights treaties;
2. Serve as the Department's central coordinating office for all matters and concerns relating to human rights and to act as the Department's contact point to all human rights-related activities of local and foreign government and non-government agencies, inter-government bodies, organizations, and institutions;
3. Ensure and monitor the Department's compliance with its rights-based commitments and obligations, including but not limited to the following:
  - a. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);
  - b. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
  - c. Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT);
  - d. Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;
  - e. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
  - f. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD);
  - g. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR);
  - h. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;
  - i. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
  - j. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;
  - k. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
  - l. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);
  - m. Presidential Task Force on Violence against Media Workers;
  - n. Group of Friends of the Nelson Mandela Rules; and
  - o. United Nations Joint Programme on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Philippines.

---

<sup>2</sup> As stated by the Secretary of Justice during the 51<sup>st</sup> United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on 05 October 2022 and the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle Universal Periodic Review of the Philippines by the UN HRC on 14 November 2022.



4. Liaise with relevant government agencies or offices, such as the Presidential Human Rights Committee Secretariat, among others, in the preparation and consolidation of necessary reports, positions, or statements in relation to said commitments/obligations;
5. Coordinate with the Department's specialized units and committees for groups in need of special protection (e.g., women, children, differently-abled persons, migrants, LGBTI,<sup>3</sup> senior citizens, indigenous peoples, and such other marginalized sectors or vulnerable groups), to ensure that their programs, activities, and projects are aligned with the State's human rights policies and commitments;
6. Assess and monitor the human rights mechanism standards in the Department and its attached agencies, and recommend policies, including legislative measures, to effectively implement human rights laws, rules, and regulations;
7. Keep and maintain a repository of records and data relating to human rights programs, activities and projects of the Department and its attached agencies;
8. Develop and publish relevant data analytics and advocacy materials on human rights;
9. Implement and extend relevant capacity building activities and technical assistance necessary for the attainment of work plan and commitments; and
10. Perform such other functions and duties as may be directed by the Secretary of Justice.

The operations of the DOJ-HRO shall be administered by a Program Director, to be assisted by technical officers consisting of prosecutors, state counsels, lawyers, statisticians, and ICT Officers, as well as administrative staff, under the supervision of the Undersecretary and/or Assistant Secretary for Legal Services and Liaison Cluster.

Henceforth, in the efficient implementation and discharge of its duties and functions, the DOJ-HRO shall be allocated with necessary budgetary appropriations and provided with office space, equipment, and fixtures.

All concerned units, committees, offices, programs, and services in the Department and its attached agencies with existing and ongoing human rights-related programs are hereby directed to work closely and coordinate with the said Office, and provide needed assistance and information or relevant data to enable the same to fulfill its mandates.

---

<sup>3</sup> Stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons. Accessed from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-health/non-discrimination-groups-vulnerable-situations>

This Circular shall take effect immediately.

For strict and immediate compliance.

**JESUS CRISPIN C. REMULLA**  
*Secretary*

Department of Justice  
CN: O202307042



Copy furnished:  
All concerned