STATEMENT ON THE ARREST OF MA. SALOME "SALLY" CRISOSTOMO-UJANO
15 November 2021

Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia) strongly denounces the arrest of the well-respected child rights and women's rights leader Ma. Salome “Sally” Crisostomo-Ujano on the 14th of November in Bulacan, Philippines for the alleged charge of rebellion filed in 2005. Sally has been serving as the National Coordinator of the Philippines Against Child Trafficking (PACT) since 2008. PACT is a member organization of the Civil Society Coalition on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC Coalition), a member network of CRC Asia.

Contrary to the claims of the Philippine National Police Regional Office 3\(^1\) that she has been hiding for more than 15 years, Sally has always been in the public eye in the last three decades for her non-profit work on protecting the rights of women and children. From 1990 to 2007, at the time when the alleged charge of rebellion was filed, she was serving as the Executive Director of the Women's Crisis Center, providing assistance and counseling to survivors of violence against women. While doing so, she worked closely with the Philippine National Police Women and Child Protection Units and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, now known as the Philippine Commission on Women.

As National Coordinator of PACT, Sally strengthened the collaboration between civil society and government to protect children against child trafficking. She actively engaged with the Department of Justice-led Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) by, among others, developing child rights-based standards and conducting education sessions and training for young people, barangay leaders, law enforcers, government service providers, health workers, social workers, and other stakeholders. In the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Consideration of reports submitted by the Philippine Government for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the partnership of IACAT with non-government organizations, including PACT, was noted by the Committee as “examples of good practices where it is possible for government, NGOs and other civil society organizations (CSOs), national and local government [to] coordina[t]e and collabora[t]e around common issues of children.”\(^2\) Aside from working closely with the government, PACT also partners with international stakeholders, including the United States Embassy in Manila.\(^3\)

Sally's years-long work as a human rights defender has been crucial to uplifting the lives of women and children. Her arrest is an affront to civil society organizations that legitimately and proactively pursue constructive and healthy engagements and partnerships with the government to uphold the rights of all women and children.

We call for the immediate release of Sally and an end to the harassment and persecution of human rights defenders in the Philippines and in the Asian region.

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\(^1\) [https://www.facebook.com/PoliceRegionalOffice3/posts/1516736132044112](https://www.facebook.com/PoliceRegionalOffice3/posts/1516736132044112)
\(^2\) [https://undocs.org/en/CRC/C/OPSC/PHL/1 , para. 18](https://undocs.org/en/CRC/C/OPSC/PHL/1 , para. 18)