

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples

Ref.: AL PHL 2/2026
(Please use this reference in your reply)

31 March 2026

Excellency,


We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/4, 54/14, 55/2, 53/4, 52/9 and 60/4.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the alleged enforced disappearance and subsequent death in 2021 of Elena Tijamo and the alleged enforced disappearances in 2023 and 2024 of Dexter Capuyan, Gene Roz Jamil de Jesus, and Felix Balonzo Salaveria Jr.**

Ms. **Elena Tijamo** was a woman human rights defender who worked as a program coordinator for the NGO Sustainable Agriculture Program of Farmers Development Center (FARDEC), an organization that provides legal aid and agriculture education to farmers. She was also a community journalist, radio broadcaster and station manager at "Radyo Sugbuanon" in Cebu Province.

At the time of his disappearance, Mr. **Dexter Capuyan**, was known for his activism in defence of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

At the time of his disappearance, Mr. **Gene Roz Jamil de Jesús** was a staff member of the Philippine Task Force on Indigenous Peoples Rights (TFIP), a network of NGOs advocating for Indigenous Peoples' rights to their ancestral land, in the Philippines. While a student, he was the regional coordinator of the National Union of Students of the Philippines in Cordillera.


Mr. **Felix Salaveria Jr.** is known for advocating for eco-waste management, promoting proper waste disposal, and coordinating with groups in Tabaco, Albay. He is a founding member of two groups advocating for Indigenous People's rights – Tunay na Alyansa ng Bayan Alay sa mga Katutubo (Tabak) and Kabataan para sa Tribung

Pilipino (Katribu) – and previously worked at the now defunct Ethnic Studies and Development Center’s Minority Rights Advocacy Program.

Grave concerns as to enforced disappearances of human rights defenders, activists and others, alongside other serious human rights violations perpetrated against them in retaliation for their work, were previously communicated to your Excellency’s Government by multiple Special Procedures mandate holders in communication AL [PHL 5/2024](#), dated 27 September 2024, in a communication which specifically raised the cases of Mr. de Jesús, Mr. Capuyan and Ms. Tijamo. We thank your Excellency’s Government for its [reply](#), dated 11 April 2025. However, we remain extremely concerned at what appears to be a pattern of grave human rights violations committed by the State, and express our disappointment that the reply did not address the content of our communication and the Government did not provide any information on Ms. Tijamo’s case in its reply.

According to the information received:

The case of Elena Tijamo

On 5 November 2019, in a congressional hearing, FARDEC was subjected to “red-tagging” by agents of the Armed Forces and the Department of National Defense (DND), who included the NGO in a list of organizations which they labelled as “communist terrorist front organizations”. Ms. Tijamo was also personally subjected to “red-tagging” in 2019.

In 2020, less than a month before her abduction and subsequent enforced disappearance, Ms. Tijamo reported that a man claiming to conduct a survey for elderly beneficiaries of COVID-19 financial assistance visited her home, asking questions about her personal details and that were not related to any assistance programme. Reportedly, no other inhabitants of her administrative district (*barangay*) appear to have received questions for such a survey. Further, local reports indicate that police officers were asking neighbours of the *barangay* about Ms. Tijamo’s family.

On 13 June 2020, Ms. Tijamo was abducted from her home in Bantayan Island by suspected members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Ms. Tijamo’s enforced disappearance had been reported to the Commission on Human Rights, the Central Visayas Police Regional Office, the Cebu City Police Office, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Central Command Headquarters (CENTCOM), the National Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

On 1 September 2021, a bit more than a year after her abduction, Ms. Tijamo was found dead in a hospital in the Manila metropolitan region, at a time when, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, measures to restrict freedom of movement within the country were in force except for Government-approved personnel.

Reportedly, no effective investigation has been conducted up to date into the enforced disappearance and death of Ms. Tijamo.

The case of Messrs. Gene Roz Jamil de Jesús and Dexter Capuyan

On 28 April 2023, Messrs. de Jesús and Capuyan forcibly disappeared in Taytay town, Rizal province. According to witnesses, the two human rights defenders were abducted by men who reportedly introduced themselves as operatives of the Philippine National Police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG).

The disappearance of Messrs. de Jesús and Capuyan was reported to the Commission on Human Rights and to local authorities, and incident reports were filed with the concerned police officials in Taytay, Rizal, Taytay Police Station, and the PNP-Rizal Office. Further, inquiries about the two human rights defenders were conducted in the subsequent units or facilities: Rizal Police Provincial Office, Taytay Municipal Police Station, Rizal Provincial Jail, Camp General Mateo Capinpin, Laguna Police Provincial Office, Calamba City Police Station, PNP's Camp General Vicente Lim, PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group Region IV-A, PNP's Camp Crame, Armed Forces' Camp Aguinaldo, National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, Armed Forces' Camp Allen; and Police Regional Office in Camp Dangwa. These inquiries did not reveal any information.

In the course of the search for Messrs. de Jesús and Capuyan, various witnesses reported that on the evening of their disappearance, at least two vehicles blocked a tricycle carrying two persons matching their descriptions in the vicinity of SM City Mall in Taytay, Rizal province. The two passengers were reportedly forced into separate vehicles by men who introduced themselves as agents of the Criminal Detection and Investigation Group of the Philippine National Police.

On 5 July 2023, the families of Messrs. de Jesús and Capuyan filed petitions for a Writ of Habeas Corpus before the Twelfth Division of the Court of Appeals. On 10 July 2023, the Court found the petition sufficient in form and substance and ordered the respondents from the Armed Forces and the Philippines National Police to appear before the Court and "produce and bring the bodies and persons" of Mr. Capuyan and Mr. de Jesús as well as to "show cause why the subject persons should remain in their custody." The same day, persons associated with Mr. de Jesus and Mr. Capuyan visited the Rizal Provincial Jail without receiving any information about their fate and whereabouts.

On 18 July 2023, the respondents filed a consolidated Return of the Writ denying having Messrs. de Jesús or Capuyan in custody.

On 13 September 2023, the Court denied the Writ of Habeas Corpus on the grounds of absence of evidence establishing the identities of the two individuals, citing that the appropriate remedy would be that of the Writ of Amparo.

In November 2024, the issuance of the Writs of Amparo and Habeas Data was granted by the Supreme Court in favor of the two human rights defenders.

The hearings before the Court of Appeals to decide on the granting of privileges to the writs took place in May 2025, and in August 2025, the Court of Appeals granted the privilege of the Writ of Amparo to the two individuals, recognizing them as victims of enforced disappearance and stating that the actions of the police and military officials, represented by the Office of the Solicitor General were “grossly inadequate both in terms of effectiveness and depth”.

The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances transmitted the cases of Mr. Gene Roz Jamil de Jesús and Dexter Capuyan to Your Excellency’s Government through its urgent procedure on 27 July 2023. Their fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

The case of [REDACTED] Mr. Felix Salaveria J.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

On 28 August 2024, at approximately 11 a.m., Mr. Salaveria Jr was abducted as he was walking to his rented home in the Cobo neighbourhood of Tabaco, in the province of Albay. A white Toyota van stopped beside him as he walked, and two unidentified men jumped out and forced him inside the vehicle. The kidnapping was recorded on CCTV cameras, and the footage is publicly accessible. In its aftermath, Mr. Salaveria Jr’s family and national human rights organisations sought information on his fate and whereabouts. However, this was to no avail.

On 4 September 2024, they made inquiries in Tabaco, and the police issued a certified statement that there was no one by the name of Mr. Salaveria Jr in their detention cell.

On 1 October 2024, the family went to Camp Aguinaldo, home of the Intelligence Service of the Philippine Military, the Philippine National Police Headquarters (Camp Crame), and the Land Transportation Office, seeking information on Mr. Salaveria Jr and the van that was used to abduct him, as recorded in the CCTV footage. However, no concrete information was provided to them. The family continued to request information on Mr. Salaveria Jr.’s fate and whereabouts from different police offices, receiving certified statements on each occasion testifying that Mr. Salaveria Jr. was not in their custody.

On 14 November 2024, the family of Mr. Salaveria Jr. filed a petition for the Writs of Amparo and Habeas Data with the Supreme Court.

On 30 July 2025, the Court of Appeals granted the privileges of the Writs of Habeas Data and Amparo to Mr. Salaveria Jr., finding that there had not been a prompt and thorough official inquiry into his disappearance.

The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances transmitted the cases of Mr. Feliz Salaveria Jr. [REDACTED] through its urgent procedure on 11 June 2025. The Working Group regrets that no information has been received from Your Excellency regarding this case and his fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

Without wishing to prejudge the accuracy of the above-mentioned allegations, we express our extreme concern about the disappearances of Mr. de Jesús, Mr. Capuyan and Mr. Salaveria Jr., which we fear may be directly linked with their work in defence of the right to a healthy environment and other human rights, in particular the rights of indigenous peoples, as well as about the disappearance of [REDACTED]. We also express our severe concern at the death of Ms. Tijamo following her alleged enforced disappearance, which we fear to be directly connected with her legitimate human rights work.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information about the measures adopted to determine the fate and whereabouts of Mr. de Jesús, Mr. Capuyan, [REDACTED] and Mr. Salaveria Jr and, as well as information on any investigation initiated into the allegations of their enforced disappearances and measures taken in order to search for them and to identify and prosecute the persons responsible. If the investigations have provided conclusive results, please provide detailed information about them. If no such investigations or measures have been put in place, please explain the reason for this and how this is compatible with your Excellency's Government obligations under international human rights law (see annex).
3. If Mr. de Jesús, Mr. Capuyan, [REDACTED] and Mr. Salaveria, are in detention, please provide the legal and factual basis for their deprivation of liberty, and explain how these actions comply with your Excellency's Government obligations under international human rights law (see annex).
4. Please indicate the measures taken to investigate promptly, independently, impartially and thoroughly the abduction, enforced disappearance and subsequent death of Ms. Tijamo, guaranteeing full accountability for

those responsible. If no such investigation has been undertaken, please illustrate the reasons.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that the fate and whereabouts of Mr. de Jesús, Mr. Capuyan, [REDACTED] and Mr. Salaveria Jr be disclosed without delay, and that all necessary interim measures be taken to prevent any irreparable harm to their life or personal integrity. With regard to all the cases referred to in the present communication, we urge Your Excellency's Government to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mary Lawlor

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Gabriella Citroni

Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

Astrid Puentes Riaño

Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Morris Tidball-Binz

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Irene Khan

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Albert K. Barume

Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to articles 6, 9, 14 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by the Philippines on 23 October 1986, which guarantee the rights to life, to liberty and security of the person, to freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention, to be promptly informed of the reasons for the arrest and of any charges against him or her, to be brought promptly before a judge and to a fair trial within a reasonable time, and to freedom of expression. These articles shall be read individually and together with article 2.3. of the ICCPR, which provides for the right to an effective remedy for every person whose rights contained in the Covenant have been violated.

With regard to the alleged enforced disappearances, this would amount to violations of articles 6, 7, 9 and 16 of the ICCPR, read alone and in conjunction with article 2(3) with regard to the rights of the disappeared persons, and art. 7 read alone and in conjunction with article 2.3 with respect to their family members. Equally, the right not to be subjected to an enforced disappearance is of a non-derogable nature and the prohibition of this crime and the corresponding obligation to investigate and hold perpetrators accountable have attained the status of *jus cogens*. Furthermore, enforced disappearance constitutes a particularly aggravated form of arbitrary detention and such deprivation of liberty, entailing a refusal to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the persons concerned or to acknowledge their detention, lacks any valid legal basis under any circumstance and is inherently arbitrary, as it places the person outside the protection of the law, in violation of article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We wish to refer your Excellency's Government to article 9 of the ICCPR, which provides for the absolute prohibition of arbitrary detention. We recall that no one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law, that the individual must be informed, at the moment of the arrest, about the reasons for such deprivation of liberty and that information about the charges against the person should be provided without delay. We also recall that an individual has the right to legal assistance, from the moment of arrest. We further wish to underline that arrest and detention as punishment for the legitimate exercise of the rights as guaranteed by the ICCPR, are arbitrary.

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media". This right applies online as well as offline, protects the freedom of the press as one of its core elements and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend. In its [general comment No. 34](#), the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including "political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11).

The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para. 23). Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stresses that “all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress” (para. 23).

Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must be compatible with the requirements set out in article 19(3) ICCPR. Under these requirements, restrictions must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be necessary and proportionate for those objectives. The State has the burden of proof to demonstrate that any such restrictions are compatible with the Covenant, and restrictions must always be “the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function” ([CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 34](#)). Article 19(3) may never be invoked to justify the muzzling of any advocacy of democratic tenets and human rights (para. 23). Nor, under any circumstance, can an attack on a person, because of the exercise of their freedom of opinion or expression, including such forms of attack as arbitrary arrest and torture, be compatible with article 19 (para. 23).

Pursuant to article 7 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, no circumstances whatsoever, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked to justify enforced disappearance. We stress that a failure to acknowledge deprivation of liberty by state agents and refusal to acknowledge detention constitute an enforced disappearance. Article 13 of the Declaration sets forth the State’s obligation to investigate promptly, thoroughly and impartially any complaints of enforced disappearance, while article 19 of the Declaration requires that victims of acts of enforced disappearance and their family obtain redress and integral reparation for the harm suffered. The Declaration also proclaims that each State shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent and terminate acts of enforced disappearance under its jurisdiction.

Pursuant to the 2019 Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons, States are under an obligation to search for the disappeared. In particular, the search for a disappeared person should begin without delay (principle 6) and is an obligation of continuing nature (principle 7).

We would like to remind your Excellency’s Government that enforced disappearance has different impact depending on whom it targets, and underline that, according to the Study on enforced or involuntary disappearances and economic, social and cultural rights by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (A/HRC/30/38/Add.5), human rights defenders are also targeted to intimidate and prevent others from claiming and exercising their rights.

The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance's latest report on Enforced disappearance in the context of the defence of land, natural resources and environment¹, notes the so-called practice of "red tagging", which has allegedly been used to target defenders of land, natural resources and the environment, through falsely equating them with combatants, resulting in enforced disappearance. In addition, it highlights that the enforced disappearance of these defenders often occurs in contexts shaped by systemic discrimination, structural violence, colonial legacies, and environmental racism and it is used as a tool of repression to silence intersectionally marginalized populations, deny their right to be heard in decision-making processes, and undermine their efforts to shape sustainable futures.

Finally, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted on 9 December 1998 (also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders). Articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote, and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We further would like to refer to article 12(2) and (3) of the Declaration, which provides that the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation, *de facto* or *de jure* adverse discrimination, pressure, or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of their legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the Declaration. In this connection, everyone is entitled, individually and in association with others, to be protected effectively under national law in reacting against or opposing, through peaceful means, activities and acts, including those by omission, attributable to States that result in violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and acts of violence perpetrated by groups or individuals that affect the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We also wish to refer to Human Rights Council resolution 48/13 of 8 October 2021 and General Assembly resolution 76/300 of 29 July 2022, which recognize the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. These resolutions underscore that all States have a duty to respect, protect, and fulfill this right.

In addition, the International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change of 23 July 2025, in its article 393 clarified that the human right to a healthy environment is a precondition and essential for the enjoyment of all human rights, and therefore fundamental for States in order to fulfill their obligation to guarantee the enjoyment of all human rights.

We would also like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government the Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment as detailed in the 2018 report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment

¹ [A/HRC/60/35/Add.4](#)

(A/HRC/37/59). The Principles state that States should ensure a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment in order to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and further in its principles 4 that States should provide a safe and enabling environment in which individuals, groups and organs of society that work on human rights or environmental issues can operate free from threats, harassment, intimidation and violence.

In a recent report of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment on the overview of the implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (A/79/270) she highlights that that States have the obligation to guarantee safe civic spaces for all environmental, climate and human rights defenders, who must be free from any stigmatization, intimidation, criminalization and violence. Furthermore, States must diligently investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of such acts, while addressing the root causes of environmental and climate-related conflicts. This includes those at high risk as a result of their efforts in protecting their lands, the environment and climate, such as Indigenous Peoples, young people, children, women, journalists and scientists.