

# URGENT ACTION

## JOURNALIST AND COMMUNITY WORKER CONVICTED

On 22 January, journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio and community worker Marielle Domequil were convicted on trumped-up terrorism financing charges and sentenced from 12 to 18 years in prison. They have been detained for over five years, since 7 February 2020, following government raids on their offices in Tacloban City, Philippines. As they appeal their conviction, their bail application was denied on 16 February. Frenchie Mae Cumpio and Marielle Domequil are part of the “Tacloban 5”, along with three others arrested in simultaneous raids. Human rights defender Alexander Philip “Chakoy” Abinguna has also been detained since 2020 and his case is still pending. Marissa Cabaljao and Mira Legion were granted bail in 2020. We call on the Philippine authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Alexander Philip “Chakoy” Abinguna, Frenchie Mae Cumpio and Marielle Domequil and immediately end the persecution of the “Tacloban 5”.

### TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*His Excellency Ferdinand Marcos Jr.  
President, Republic of the Philippines  
Malacañang Palace, JP Laurel Street  
Manila, Republic of the Philippines*

*Dear President Marcos,*

*I am writing to you concerning the continued and prolonged arbitrary detention of journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio, community worker Marielle Domequil and human rights defender Alexander Philip “Chakoy” Abinguna. Part of the so-called “Tacloban 5” arrested in allegedly illegal raids of their offices in Tacloban City in February 2020, Alexander Philip “Chakoy” Abinguna, Frenchie Mae Cumpio and Marielle Domequil have been detained ever since. On 22 January, Frenchie Mae Cumpio and Marielle Domequil were convicted on trumped-up terrorism financing charges and sentenced from 12 to 18 years in prison but were acquitted in the charge of illegal possession of firearms and explosives. Pending their appeal of their conviction, the two applied for bail but this was denied on 16 February. There has not been any significant progress in the case against Alexander Philip “Chakoy” Abinguna concerning charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives.*

*Six years in arbitrary detention is a travesty of justice, but the “Tacloban 5” should not have been jailed in the first place. There were allegations of irregularities during the 2020 police raids that resulted in their arrest, including the absence of witnesses when their rooms were searched and the planting of evidence such as firearms and explosives against them. There have not been any effective investigations into these allegations that I am aware of.*

*Moreover, in nullifying the forfeiture case against Frenchie Mae Cumpio and Marielle Domequil in November 2025, the Philippine Court of Appeals said there is insufficient evidence that they are members of the armed group New People’s Army, as the police had alleged as part of their dangerous “red-tagging” practice. The court even described the case as a “hasty labelling of human rights advocates as terrorists”.*

***I therefore urge you, as the President of the Philippines, and your government to:***

- ***End the persecution of the “Tacloban 5” by immediately dropping the charges against the Tacloban 5 and ensuring that Abinguna, Cumpio and Domequil are immediately and unconditionally released***
- ***End the dangerous and at times deadly practice of “red-tagging” and ensure a safe and enabling environment for journalists, activists, and humanitarian and human rights workers to carry out their important work without fear of harassment, intimidation and criminalization.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Community journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio, community worker Mariel Domequil from the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, People Surge Network Spokesperson Marissa Cabaljai, Mira Legion from Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-Eastern Visayas, and Karapatan National Council member Alexander Philip “Chakoy” Abinguna were arrested on 7 February 2020 in simultaneous raids in Tacloban City. They have been collectively referred to as the “Tacloban 5”.

Allegations of irregularities were raised around the circumstances of the raids in 2020. Police and military officers raided their offices at around 1 am on 7 February 2020. It was reported that the raiding team pointed their firearms at the five, before asking them to leave their rooms to then conduct the search without any witness. The five also alleged that the raiding team planted evidence, including firearms and explosives allegedly found on their beds, a practice by security forces that has been widely documented in the Philippines to arrest activists on non-bailable charges and hinder their activities.

Since 2016, under former President Rodrigo Duterte and until now under the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, human rights defenders and political activists have been increasingly subjected to repeated harassment, threats and attacks, including unlawful killings. Many of these defenders and activists belong to organizations that the government or unknown individuals have “red-tagged” or accused of being fronts for communist groups, an accusation that they have repeatedly denied. In a 2020 report, the UN Human Rights Council stated that “human rights defenders have been subject to verbal and physical attacks, threats and legal harassment for nearly 20 years.” It also noted the phenomenon of “red-tagging” that has “posed a serious threat to civil society and the right to freedom of expression.”

Red-tagging has continued under the Marcos administration, despite repeated calls from UN member states to end the practice during a review of the Philippines’ human rights record in November 2022. In various school forums attended by members of security forces, for example, students were warned against joining youth organizations that security forces had accused of being “front organizations” of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People’s Army. Other targeted groups and individuals – including journalists, development workers, lawyers, activists and Indigenous Peoples – also continued to be red-tagged or prosecuted using the twin laws of the Anti-Terrorism Act and the Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English.

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 26 August 2026

Please check with the Amnesty International office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Frenchie Mae Cumpio (she/her), Marielle Domequil (she/her), Alexander Philip “Chakoy” Abinguna (he/him)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA35/2618/2020/en/>