

# Philippine Human Rights Act

One-Pager

## ON CHINA

**Military aid intended to deter China is used against civilians in the Philippines.**

[A proposed \\$2 billion arms sale](#) to the AFP contains attack helicopters, various munitions, and air-to-surface missiles. Due to the confrontations between China and the Philippines taking place in the South China Sea, very little, if any, of the proposed security aid will be useful in a naval setting. It can only be assumed that the weapons will be used against perceived domestic threats.

The Philippines military has a track record of using US provided weapons against civilians, particularly in the form of [indiscriminate aerial bombings in the southern region of Mindanao](#).

**The biggest critics of China in the Philippines are Duterte's political opposition.**

Despite receiving a record breaking amount of security aid from the United States, [Duterte has increasingly turned towards China](#) and distanced the Philippines from the US.

In contrast, it is Duterte's opposition, primarily the progressive and liberal parties, [that have spoken out about Chinese incursions](#) into Philippines' maritime territory.

China-Philippines joint infrastructure projects [have also become a point of contention](#) between Duterte and critics.

**Current US foreign policy approaches in the region are perceived as a threat to the sovereignty of both the Philippines & China**

In the Philippines, many view the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) as a remnant of the US' colonial relationship with the Philippines. This was particularly demonstrated in the case of [Lance Cpl. Pemberton's murder of Jennifer Laude](#) and his subsequent conviction, incarceration, and eventual pardon by the Duterte administration. This impunity for US forces present in the Philippines and financial support to the Duterte regime for the purposes of maintaining US interests in the region is one of the root causes of growing anti-US sentiment.

For China, US [involvement in Hong Kong](#) and the [Strait of Taiwan](#) are seen as direct threats to China's territorial integrity. As a response to what is viewed as US military aggression, China responds in a tit-for-tat way by expanding further into the South China Sea to emphasize its rights to territorial integrity and sovereignty.

## Why We Need the PHRA

Adoption of the PHRA can help stabilize US foreign policy in the region and rehabilitate the US' image internationally.

As military buildup naturally escalates tensions in the Indo-Pacific, temporarily pausing one of the largest streams of US military aid to the region will relieve pressure. It will also call China's potential bluff that its aggression in the region is only in response to US actions.

The Biden administration has stated that human rights are now a top priority when determining US foreign policy. While the US has criticized other countries for human rights violations, the criticisms are often rebuffed by pointing to the US' own history of supporting dictators and providing materials that are used to commit human rights abuses. By making long-term and equitable investments in the Philippines for its people instead of short-term military investments in Duterte and security forces solely to counter China, the US may be viewed less as an international bully and more as a potential global partner.