

December 8, 2025

Sent via email

His Excellency Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

President

Malacanang Palace

San Miguel, Manila

Republic of the Philippines

Dear President Marcos Jr.,

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent, nonprofit press freedom organization, writes to request your urgent attention to the matter of journalists imprisoned in the Philippines ahead of International Human Rights Day on December 10.

Your government holds one journalist behind bars, according to data compiled by CPJ, contributing to the country's long-standing reputation as one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist.

Frenchie Mae Cumpio was arrested in February 2020 and has been [held in detention](#) for nearly six years without conviction. She faces up to 40 years in prison for illegal possession of firearms and financing terrorism, trumped up charges used to silence her Eastern Vista news publication's critical reporting on Philippine military operations against communist rebels and alleged associated human rights abuses.

In June, CPJ [delivered](#) a handwritten letter by Cumpio addressed to U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Opinion Irene Khan, who read it out at the U.N. headquarters in Geneva and referred to the journalist's prolonged detention as a "travesty of justice."

In the letter, Cumpio said "what happened to us still happens to several others," adding she feared that "we still won't be safe even when we're out of this facility."

We welcome a Philippine court's decision to [quash](#) the murder charges against Cumpio in November, and a separate court ruling in the same month which found no evidence that she is a terrorist.

However, Cumpio's prolonged detention is out of step with your various public statements professing a commitment to press freedom and protecting

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Committee to Protect Journalists

journalists. On April 16, 2024, in a speech to the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines, you said the press “must have the untrammelled freedom to do its work, not just to arm the citizenry with the truth, but also to deepen discernment in this age of mass disinformation.”

In the same speech, you said, “The President’s role is to defend press freedom, and not lead in destroying it or demeaning its practitioners...I am of the opinion that national interest is better served by a press that is critical rather than a press that is cooperative.”

To put those inspirational words into action, and as the Philippines assumes chairmanship of ASEAN in 2026, we urge you to mark International Human Rights Day by using your executive power to drop the charges against Cumpio and free her from prison immediately. Doing so would send the strongest signal yet that Philippine press freedom is on the mend after years of intimidation and harassment under your predecessor, and that journalists are truly able to report without fear of reprisal under your democratic leadership.

We would also like to remind you that the Philippines is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and it is incumbent upon your government to uphold its international and domestic human rights obligations.

Our advocacy is supported by more than 1,500 journalists, representing over 100 countries, who joined CPJ in a [solidarity action](#) at this year’s Global Investigative Journalism Conference in Malaysia to call on governments around the world to free imprisoned journalists and end impunity for those who attack the press.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your reply and welcome any continued dialogue with the relevant offices of the Philippine government.

Sincerely,

Beh Lih Yi
Asia-Pacific Director
Committee to Protect Journalists



Committee to Protect Journalists

CC:

Atty. Jesus Crispin C. Remulla

Secretary, Department of Justice

Undersecretary Joe Torres Jr.

Executive Director, Presidential Task Force on Media Security