

## **#FreeFrenchieMaeCumpio: NGOs renew call for journalist's release as lawyers seek review of unjust conviction**

On 23 March 2026, the judge is scheduled to decide on the defence's motion for reconsideration of Frenchie Mae Cumpio's conviction for the bogus "financing of terrorism," along with a motion to reconsider her bail. A coalition of international and local press freedom organisations reiterates that journalists do not belong in jail and that Frenchie Mae Cumpio should be released without further delay.

During her arrest in 2020, authorities claimed to have found firearms and grenades in her home. Frenchie Mae Cumpio [testified](#) that this evidence was planted by police, explaining that she and her co-accused were forcibly made to turn away during the 2020 raid, preventing them from witnessing the search. These weapons-related charges were eventually dismissed, yet they were used to justify her excessively prolonged pre-trial detention. But despite this legal victory, she was convicted of another trumped-up charge of "financing terrorism" on 22 January 2026 and now faces a prison sentence of 12 to 18 years. In recent years, the "financing of terrorism" charge has increasingly been used to target activists and journalists in the Philippines.

At the time of her arrest, she was the executive director of the Eastern Vista news website and a radio news anchor, reporting extensively on alleged police and military abuses, as well as community welfare issues in Eastern Visayas.

In early March 2026, five UN experts, including Ben Saul, Irene Khan, Gina Romero, Mary Lawlor and Margaret Satterthwaite [decried](#) Frenchie Mae Cumpio's conviction as "deeply troubling" and stated that she and her co-accused should, "at a minimum, be released on bail while they pursue their appeal."

Throughout her unjust detention, Frenchie Mae Cumpio, who has become a symbol of press freedom, received widespread international support. In 2025, [250 journalists worldwide](#), and in 2026, 90 journalists' unions and associations, called on President Marcos to take action to secure her release, underscoring that she embodies the essential role of journalism in exposing abuses and defending democracy. The signatories include seasoned reporters from across the globe, spanning the Philippines, the United States, Brazil, Kenya, Australia, and Mongolia.

Irene Khan, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression and opinion, has called for justice for Cumpio and expressed dismay at the unjustifiably long pre-trial

detention. The U.N. envoy [visited](#) Cumpio in prison in January 2024 during a country visit. In May 2025, her case was included in the 2025 world's '[10 Most Urgent](#)' list, according to One Free Press Coalition.

The coalition, including the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines and AlterMidya in Manila, along with global press freedom organisations Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and Free Press Unlimited (FPU), has closely monitored Cumpio's case and advocated for her release, repeatedly raising concerns about Cumpio's physical condition and violations of her legal rights.

*“The conviction of Frenchie Mae Cumpio is a clear miscarriage of justice, and it is imperative that the Philippines quash this alarming decision. As a coalition of international NGOs that has closely monitored and advocated on her behalf for years, we remain fully committed to securing her release. We call on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to act without delay by freeing Frenchie Mae Cumpio and ending this injustice.” – #FreeFrenchieMaeCumpio Coalition*

Spokespeople are available for interviews in English/Filipino:

National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (Manila): Jonathan De Santos, [secretariat@nujp.org](mailto:secretariat@nujp.org)

AlterMidya (People's Alternative Media Network, Manila): Rhea Padilla, [rhea@altermidya.net](mailto:rhea@altermidya.net)

Reporters Without Borders (Taipei/Paris): Aleksandra Bielakowska, [abielaowska@rsf.org](mailto:abielaowska@rsf.org)

Committee to Protect Journalists (Frankfurt/New York): Beh Lih Yi, [lbeh@cpj.org](mailto:lbeh@cpj.org); [press@cpj.org](mailto:press@cpj.org)

Free Press Unlimited (Amsterdam): Akriti Saraswat, [saraswat@freepressunlimited.org](mailto:saraswat@freepressunlimited.org)

###

