

[OP ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 249, December 10, 2008]

**FURTHER STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT POLICIES, PLANS,
AND PROGRAMS FOR THE EFFECTIVE PROMOTION AND
PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE
60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF
HUMAN RIGHTS**

WHEREAS, the 10th of December 2008 marks the 60th anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), with the Philippines as among its first signatories, and joining the community of nations at the forefront in the promotion and protection of human rights all over the world;

WHEREAS, the Philippine government, as one of the first elected members of the United Nations Human Rights Council, recognizes the significance of this occasion as an inspiring symbol spurring the government's overall effort to promote and protect human rights;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Government deems it fit to mark this event by further strengthening its existing policies, plans and programs in accordance with the specific principles, rights, and freedoms specifically identified in the UDHR as a manifestation of its commitment to fully comply and abide by the tenets of the Declaration;

WHEREAS, the Philippine government renews its commitment to the general principles of the UDHR that specifies that humans, being born free and equal and in brotherhood with one another, are equal before the law, are entitled to all the human rights, and, as such, shall not be deprived of these rights;

WHEREAS, the 1987 Constitution comprehensively addresses and even enhances the principles, freedoms and rights embodied in the UDHR, thus defining the country's lasting contributions to the Declaration;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, do hereby order as follows:

SECTION 1. All concerned departments, agencies, bodies and instrumentalities of the Executive branch of government, including local government units, are directed to strengthen and to ensure compliance to their existing policies, plans and programs as they would enhance government's overall effort in the promotion and protection of human rights, taking into account the specific applicable rights and freedoms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), as follows:

a. Department of Justice to exhaust all legal means for the swift and just resolution of cases of alleged human rights violations against political and media personalities, and leaders in the labor, urban poor, and agricultural sectors, and to ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable before the law.

b. Department of Justice to implement an updated comprehensive legal education campaign that will further inform and educate the general public on their basic rights under the Philippine justice system; and, in partnership with the Department of Budget and Management and in cooperation with Congress, to strengthen the capability of the Public Attorneys Office and the Public Prosecutors Office, specifically by hiring more lawyers to better attend to the legal needs of indigents in conflict with the law, with the corresponding fund support for additional lawyers and legal officers, and for the increase in the salaries of and the grant of special allowances for prosecutors and PAO lawyers;

c. Department of National Defense and Department of Interior and Local Government to enhance their respective human rights training programs for military and police officers and personnel to ensure that rights of civilians, communities, internally displaced persons, as well as detained persons, are promoted and protected during peace and order and internal security operations, underscoring, among others, the importance of command responsibility and accountability;

d. Department of Interior and Local Government to spearhead capability-building on human rights for local government units in partnership with national human rights institutions, sectoral groups, and civil society organizations, and to ensure the accountability of LGUs in the effective information dissemination of human rights in their communities;

e. Department of Education to assess the current implementation of its human rights education exemplars and to move towards the creation of centers for human rights education in public schools in partnership with human rights institutions, sectoral groups, and civil society organizations to build a constituency of human rights advocates among students and the youth;

f. Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority to spearhead the implementation of the Philippine Main Education Highway Program as contained in the proposal of the Presidential Task Force on Education for the improvement of basic education, increased student retention rate, and actual completion of higher education;