

Menardo I. Guevarra
Secretary, Department of Justice
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Dear Secretary Guevarra:

I am writing to express my dismay at the arrest, yet again, of Maria Ressa, executive editor of news outlet Rappler, over alleged violations of the Philippine's Anti-Dummy Law. This comes only about a month and a half after her previous arrest on politically-motivated cyber-libel charges. Both prosecutions seem to be part of a continuing and broader campaign to silence critics of the Philippine government.

Rappler has been a consistent critic of President Rodrigo Duterte and his administration, publishing detailed investigations into some of the thousands of extrajudicial executions committed by police and armed vigilantes during drug-related operations. The arrest of Maria Ressa on 29 March 2019, for the alleged violation of the country's Anti-Dummy Law, is the latest attack against her and Rappler. It comes close on the heels of her previous arrest on 13 February 2019, on what appear to be politically-motivated charges of cyber-libel. Tax evasion charges were also brought in December 2018 against Maria Ressa and her company, Rappler Holdings Corp. – charges that are still pending in court. Amnesty International believes these, too, are trumped-up charges that were designed to stifle criticism of the President and his 'war on drugs.'

Rappler has consistently drawn attention to the deadly reality of the 'war on drugs,' and the thousands of unlawful killings of poor and marginalized people perpetrated in its name. Its persistence in documenting these abuses has attracted the wrath of the Philippine authorities.

I urge your office to act swiftly to uphold and protect the freedom of the press. Specifically, I urge you to:

- Drop the charges against Maria Ressa and Rappler, which appear to be solely motivated by political interests;
- End the harassment of the media, journalists, and critics of the Duterte administration, and take measures to guarantee their right to freedom of expression and assembly.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,