

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 24, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are deeply troubled by the June 15<sup>th</sup> conviction of Philippine journalists Maria Ressa and Reynaldo Santos Jr. on “cyber libel” charges. This politically motivated verdict highlights our longstanding concerns regarding the erosion of democratic norms under the Duterte administration. We urge you to raise these concerns with your counterpart and to make every effort to encourage Manilla’s recommitment to democratic principles, including judicial independence.

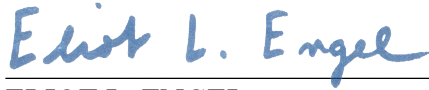
The U.S.-Philippine alliance is crucial for stability in the Indo-Pacific and U.S. interests in the region. The alliance is also rooted in a shared history, deep people-to-people ties, and a mutual commitment to democratic values, including media freedoms and human rights.

Unfortunately, the Duterte administration has systematically worked to silence criticism by political opponents and the independent media, in contravention of the Philippine tradition of a vibrant civil society. This is especially true regarding criticism of President Duterte’s antidrug war and its attendant thousands of indefensible, well-documented extrajudicial killings. The conviction of Ms. Ressa, an internationally acclaimed reporter and a U.S. citizen, sends yet another chilling message to journalists in the Philippines.

We appreciate the State Department’s statement of concern for the future of freedom of expression in the Philippines after the court’s verdict in Ms. Ressa’s case. It is critical that the Department continue and strengthen its efforts on this front. We ask that you raise these concerns with senior officials in Manilla at every opportunity and ensure that human rights and strengthening democratic institutions are at the forefront of U.S. policy toward the Philippines. It is critical that the United States work to stem the democratic regression in the Philippines.

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Sincerely,



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ELIOT L. ENGEL  
Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee



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AMI BERA  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific,  
and Nonproliferation



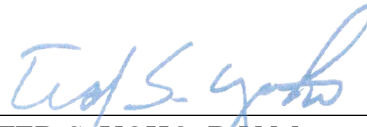
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ADAM B. SCHIFF  
Co-Chair  
Congressional Freedom of the Press Caucus



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BRAD SHERMAN  
Chairman Emeritus  
Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific,  
and Nonproliferation



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TED S. YOHO, D.V.M.  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific,  
and Nonproliferation



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STEVE CHABOT  
Co-Chair  
Congressional Freedom of the Press  
Caucus