

Secretary Jesus Crispin C. Remulla  
Department of Justice  
Padre Faura Street  
Ermita  
Manila 10020  
Republic of the Philippines

Dear Secretary Remulla,

Following the 9 August 2022 dismissal of the bribery complaints against prisoner of conscience and former senator Leila de Lima by the Office of the Ombudsman, I write again to urge your office to impartially and expeditiously review the two remaining charges against her, with a view to dropping these and ensuring her immediate and unconditional release. With the earlier retractions by several witnesses of their allegations against her, this dismissal further strengthens the view that the charges she continues to face are false and politically motivated. I call on you to finally put an end to this gross injustice against Leila.

I welcomed your statement in May 2022 that you were willing to review the drug-related charges against Leila, and that it is “possible” to drop these charges after several witnesses recanted their testimonies. Following these retractions, the Ombudsman has now highlighted inconsistencies in witnesses’ testimonies alleging that she received money from a self-confessed drug trader in exchange for protection. While this dismissal of the bribery charges against her is a positive sign, it is also further proof of concerted efforts to fabricate evidence against Leila and persecute her. The continued detention of Leila clearly violates her right to presumption of innocence and other fair trial guarantees. For over six years, she has been a victim of vicious attacks and political persecution for her human rights work. She should not have been detained in the first place, but her immediate release is the least that the Philippine government could do to correct this grave injustice and demonstrate that it is serious about restoring respect for human rights under the new administration.

I therefore call on your office to:

1. Drop all charges against Leila now and ensure her immediate and unconditional release;
2. Conduct thorough, independent and impartial investigations into those responsible for her arbitrary detention and ensure full accountability for the years of human rights violations she has had to endure; and
3. Promptly and thoroughly investigate allegations by witnesses that they were coerced by senior officials to commit perjury, while ensuring their safety and security in light of the gravity of such allegations and the possible involvement of high-level officials.

Yours sincerely,