



PRESS STATEMENT

Walden Bello's Arrest, a continuation of a restrictive space for free expression in the Philippines.

August 9, 2022 Seoul, Korea - The Asia Democracy Network denounces the arrest of former congressman, former vice presidential candidate, and rights activist Walden Bello on 8 August 2022 on two counts of cyber libel charges.

The charges and arrest is emblematic of the difficult situation for freedom of expression and dissent in the country which has remained unresolved for the longest time. These types of restrictive tactics should have no space in a democracy. Laws like the cyberlibel continue to be a tool abused as a political weapon to silence and oppress political opposition, and expressions of dissent to power. We are gravely concerned about the continuation of such a culture of persecution, harassment and intimidation in the Philippines.

Freedom of expression is to be guaranteed and protected in a democracy. The arrest of Walden Bello is a sad indication of the Marcos-Duterte administration's willingness to compromise on democratic values for political conveniences. The civil society of Asia calls on the Philippine Government to drop the case against Walden Bello, and work on addressing the fundamental problems causing hindrance to the full realization of freedom of expression in the Philippines.

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