



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

18 January 2018

PRESS STATEMENT

**Statement of the Commission on Human Rights
on upholding press freedom in the country**

Freedoms of information, speech, and expression are marks of a healthy, functioning democracy. The media, for its part, has always played a crucial role in enabling these rights, as well as in propagating truthful insights and, when needed, speaking truth to power.

The Commission on Human Rights then stresses the value of these freedoms in upholding the human rights of everyone. And in any context, but especially when there are attempts to curtail it, it is equally important to protect press freedom.

In a previous advisory, the Commission asserted that: “It is the right of every individual, of every human being to express their opinion and to receive information. Both the print and broadcast media have been very effective avenues for such interactions”.

“The Philippines, being a democratic and republican state, subscribes to the thesis that human dignity is best determined when there exists freedom in the exchanges of views. In quintessence, the ideal is to allow the free flow of ideas. Jurisprudence is replete with cases upholding freedom of speech and of expression as more than legal rhetorics enshrined in the Constitution with such strong mandate” (CHR Advisory CHR-A2005-007).

The Philippines, being a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), should ensure that “everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference” and that “everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice” (Article 19, Sections 1 and 2).

In this context, the Commission hopes that the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)’s recent decision to revoke Rappler’s registration is neither an attempt to curtail press freedom nor be followed by subsequent infringements on the right to freedom of expression. If the statement of Rappler is true with regards to its ownership and control, as well as that due process was not observed, then this is indeed something that is deeply concerning in the context of press freedom. However, if the ruling of the SEC is upheld, Rappler must face the consequences as provided by law.

In the end, press freedom can only be attained if media organizations remain free from any political or economic intervention. Media should be allowed to operate in a competitive environment and should be free to exercise liberties crucial in performance of their social mandate. They have been an effective watchdog against abuses and are instrumental in demanding accountability and transparency from public officials and institutions that are found to jeopardize the best interest of the people. In this context, protecting press freedom means protecting the interest of the people.
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