

## **#FreeFrenchieMaeCumpio: International NGO Coalition Urges Journalist's Release on Philippines' National Press Freedom Day**

August 29, 2025 – Ahead of the Philippines' National Press Freedom Day, a coalition of international and local press freedom organizations is urging President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. to immediately and unconditionally release community journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio. Detained for over five years without conviction, Cumpio's case [raises](#) serious concerns over prolonged pretrial detention and [allegations](#) that authorities planted the weapons that led to her arrest. The 26-year-old journalist has been [behind bars](#) since she was [arrested](#) in February 2020, [along with](#) four human rights defenders. As executive director of the Eastern Vista news website and a radio news anchor, Cumpio [frequently covered](#) alleged police and military abuses as well as community welfare issues prior to [her arrest](#).

Cumpio's trial is nearing its conclusion, with the next court date scheduled for September 29, 2025. She faces a maximum sentence of 40 years in prison.

The coalition, including the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines and AlterMidya in Manila, along with global press freedom organizations Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and Free Press Unlimited (FPU), has repeatedly raised concerns about Cumpio's physical condition and [violations](#) of her legal rights. She could also face another case accusing her of participating in an ambush that killed two soldiers; these new claims are as flimsy as an [investigation](#) has shown.

The groups have been monitoring Cumpio's trial since she began testifying in November 2024 - nearly [half a decade](#) after she was first arrested. In June 2025, a coalition travelled to Tacloban to meet with Cumpio, but was denied access to prison. Following the [advocacy efforts](#) and [meetings with authorities](#), international visitors, including [NGOs](#) and [diplomatic missions](#) have been allowed to visit Cumpio since July. The Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR) in July issued a statement expressing its concerns about the alleged mistreatment and abuse of Cumpio in detention, and referred the case to CHR Regional Office VIII for investigation, five years after the groups started its advocacy.

In June, Irene Khan, the U.N. special rapporteur on freedom of expression and opinion, called for Cumpio's release in her report to the UNHRC. In May, Frenchie Mae Cumpio's case was included in the 2025 world's '[10 Most Urgent](#)' list, according to One Free Press Coalition.

*“National Press Freedom Day should be a time to proudly celebrate the work of journalists in the Philippines. Yet with one journalist still detained simply for doing her job, it serves as a sobering reminder of the challenges reporters continue to face. Press freedom is about defending the integrity of journalism and upholding the democratic principles the Philippines claims to champion. We call on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the Secretary of Justice to immediately release her, drop all charges, and finally bring an end to this injustice.” - #FreeFrenchieMacCumpio Coalition*

Spokespeople are available for interviews in English/Filipino:

National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (Manila): Jonathan De Santos, [secretariat@nujp.org](mailto:secretariat@nujp.org)

AlterMidya (People’s Alternative Media Network, Manila): Rhea Padilla, [rhea@altermidya.net](mailto:rhea@altermidya.net)

Reporters Without Borders (Taipei/Paris): Aleksandra Bielakowska, [abielakowska@rsf.org](mailto:abielakowska@rsf.org)

Committee to Protect Journalists (Frankfurt/New York): Beh Lih Yi, [lbeh@cpj.org](mailto:lbeh@cpj.org); [press@cpj.org](mailto:press@cpj.org)

Free Press Unlimited (Amsterdam): Jos Bartman [bartman@freepressunlimited.org](mailto:bartman@freepressunlimited.org)

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