

## **#FreeFrenchieMaeCumpio: NGOs Condemn Journalist's Conviction as blow to press freedom in the Philippines**

January 22, 2026 – A coalition of international and local press freedom organisations strongly condemns the sentencing of Filipino journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio for from 12 to 18 years in prison for her terrorism financing case, denouncing a grave miscarriage of justice.

Lawyers have indicated they will appeal the verdict.

Frenchie has meanwhile been acquitted on the illegal possession of firearms and explosives case against her.

Members of the coalition composed of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, AlterMidya, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and Free Press Unlimited (FPU), were present in court in Tacloban to witness the promulgation of the verdict, alongside representatives of **three** embassies as part of the Media Freedom Coalition (MFC), and **five** others who attended virtually.

Frenchie Mae Cumpio, 26, who will turn 27 tomorrow, has been behind bars since February 2020, when she was arrested alongside four human rights defenders. Her case raises serious concerns about allegations that authorities [planted](#) the weapons used to justify her arrest during a raid. At the time, she was executive director of the *Eastern Vista* news website and a radio news anchor, reporting extensively on alleged police and military abuses as well as community welfare issues in Eastern Visayas.

Throughout her unjust detention, Frenchie, a symbol of press freedom, has received support from around the world. In September 2025, [250 journalists worldwide](#) called on President Marcos to take action to secure her release, underscoring that she embodies the essential role of journalism in exposing abuses and defending democracy. The signatories are seasoned reporters from across the globe, from the Philippines to the United States, Brazil to Kenya, and Australia to Mongolia.

Irene Khan, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression and opinion, has called for justice for Cumpio and expressed dismay at the unjustifiably long pretrial detention. The U.N. envoy [visited](#) Cumpio in prison in January 2024 during a country visit. In May 2025,

her case was included in the 2025 world's ['10 Most Urgent' list](#), according to One Free Press Coalition.

*“The sentencing of Frenchie Mae Cumpio is a stark illustration of the authorities’ disregard for journalists’ most basic rights. As an international NGO coalition that has closely monitored and advocated in her case for years, we remain fully committed to securing her release. We call on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to act without delay by freeing Frenchie Mae Cumpio from prison and putting an end to this injustice.” - #FreeFrenchieMaeCumpio 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)

###

