

Security expert: Anti-terror law could help stop rights abuses

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A much maligned new anti-terror law is needed for battling al-Qaeda-linked militants more effectively and to protect human rights by forcing authorities to operate within a legal framework, a terrorism expert said Friday.

Rohan Gunaratna, who heads the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore, said the Human Security Act that takes effect Sunday has been watered down but could be revised later to make it a more potent weapon against terrorists.

"I think the counterterrorism law is very weak, but the government has to implement it," Gunaratna told The Associated Press by telephone. "It's a good starting point."

Military forces have dealt with terror threats for years but have been accused of extra-judicial killings. If enforced properly, the new law will protect human rights by drawing a legal line that anti-terror units must not cross, he said.

Considering the legitimate terror threats confronting the country, "people living outside the Philippines are shocked that the country did not have anti-terrorism legislation," he said. - **AP**

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