

**Forum:** Human Rights Council

**Issue:** Measures to address the humanitarian issue in the Philippines as a result of the Drug War

**Student Officer:** Karl Stuecker

**Position:** Chair of Human Rights Council

## Introduction

The Philippine Drug War, since its introduction in 2016, has produced thousands of casualties. According to the government, 3,900 deaths occurred during legal operations led by authorities. Non-governmental organisations, such as Amnesty International, however, have reported more than 14,000 deaths as a result of investigations. In a statement, the Philippine government considered all those who have been killed as ones who fought against the authorities that were reinforcing Philippine laws, and as such, people who fight authorities and disrespect the law. This has raised international attention, especially the fact that all these casualties include infants and teenagers. Several governments and heads of states have raised their concerns towards the new Philippine policies and asked for a more diplomatic and peaceful approach. However, the Philippine government, under President Rodrigo Duterte, has shown no tolerance or consideration towards international condemnation. On August 18th, 2016, the United Nations Human Rights committee recommended the Philippines to stop extrajudicial killings. They referred to Duterte's actions as giving a "license to kill" to his citizen, through his public encouragement to kill anyone involved in drug issues. As a response, Duterte claimed he would withdraw from the UN and make his own alliances with China and African nations.



*Caption 1: Public protests against the violence of the Drug War*

## Definition of Key Terms

### Rodrigo Duterte

Rodrigo Duterte, a former Mayor of Davao City, won the 2016 Philippine presidential elections. During his run for presidency, he had promised a zero-tolerance policy towards criminals and drug addicts. As a mayor, he had been criticised by NGOs related to Human Rights of extrajudicial killings of street children, drug users or small criminals. In this process, he has allegedly been involved in a civilian group called Davao Death Squad, who claim themselves to be reinforces of the national law, and have killed more than a thousand civilians who they claim to be drug addicts.

### Philippine Drug War

The phrase Philippine Drug War refers to the ongoing conflicts in the Philippines as a result of the newly implemented Drug policies. In the course of their reinforcement, government officials have killed numerous civilians without any proof of their drug affection or involvement in the issue. Official statements describe all killed civilians as “fighters against government officials”.

### Extrajudicial Killings

Extrajudicial killing refers to the process in which government officials and authorities harm and kill someone without providing a judicial process or a legal trial. Most governments regard these actions as illegal and inhumane, yet it is assumed to have happened numerous times under the Duterte leadership.

### Drug Crimes

Internationally there are several recognised drug crimes, which have been identified by the Duterte government. Drug Paraphernalia refers to the selling, importing and exporting of any equipment used to conceal or produce drugs. Especially the Selling within the Philippines has been an ongoing issue, as it provides a source of income to the vast amount of people living in poverty. The possession and Manufacture or trafficking of Drugs has also been ruled illegal in the Philippines. However, due to the huge underground system, including several corrupt government officials, the Trafficking of drugs has been hard to investigate on as the poverty of the Philippine’s has played into the hands of corruption, disallowing any efficient investigations to be held.



*Caption 2: Police officers searching for drugs*

## General Overview

### Philippine Drug Policies

The Philippines, since the inauguration of Rodrigo Duterte, have implemented a no-tolerance drug policy, in which they allow the legal killing of drug addicts and drug dealers. This is reinforced not only by the police, the military, but also civilian groups such as several Death squads in cities. On a national level, Duterte has found great support for his rigorous response to the severe drug problems in the Philippines. He is credited with great success with similar policies as a Mayor of Davao, where he killed 90% of all Drug addicts and claimed for Davao to now be the safest city in the whole country. However, recent statistics have proven otherwise, showing that Davao has the highest murder rate and second highest rape rate in all of Philippines according to police statistics. While officials have now admitted that Duterte used flawed and exaggerated data to support his claims, these have already been made public and have led to great support for Duterte during the presidential elections, ensuring him a majority in parliament, giving him full control of laws passed.

#### *Dutertes control over the government*

Due to his big national support and majority in the parliament, Duterte has yet to fear any serious opposition, and thus has without compromises passed numerous policies. Any opposition has been removed in many ways, such as Senator Leila de Lima, who led investigations against him about his potential extrajudicial killings as a Mayor. After a months of investigation, Duterte announced that de Lima had been having an affair with a married man, her driver, Ronnie Palisoc Dayan. Duterte claimed that Dayan, who had previously been associated with drugs, collected drug money for him. In a news conference on August 21, 2016, Duterte claimed property over wiretaps and ATM records that should confirm the accusations. He stated: "What is really crucial here is that because of her [romantic]

relationship with her driver which I termed 'immoral' because the driver has a family and wife, that connection gave rise to the corruption of what was happening inside the national penitentiary." He claimed to have gotten these informations form an anonymous foreign country. Duterte's dominance had previously raised concerns from several countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, as this can lead the already weakend political system in the Philippines to further be destabilised. The high involvement of relatives in the government also concerns nations who are desperately trying to build up well-working democratic systems throughout Asia.

### **International reactions**

Since the commencement of Duterte's presidency, which was effectively the introduction of such uncompromising violence against drug addicts, several countries have stated their concern and disagreement with Durterte's approach towards this issue. While many member states agreed that the number of drug addicts in the Philippines is alarmingly high and has to be reduced, many wished for a more peaceful solution to the issue. The US has been one of the few MEDCs to openly support the Philippine Government, as after a phone-call President Trump referred to the government's role in the war on drugs as "the right way".

#### *Japan*

During an official State Visit to the Philippines in January 2017, Shinzo Abe, the Japanese Prime Minister offered cooperations in countering illegal drugs, and as part of this offered financial assistance in the form of an Official Development Assistance worth \$800. While he didn't make direct reference to the deaths as a result of the ongoing Drug War, he made clear that his solutions were based on peaceful talks between all parties and ensuring the wellbeing of any involved member

#### *China*

China, having taken similar measures in their own country and being known for violent and no-tolerance approaches towards criminal issues, has announced full support for the Drug War. In a public statement, China made no reference to extrajudicial killings and called drugs the "common enemy of mankind". China has since made several public statements confirming their support for the Duterte Administration.



*Caption 3: Officer having successfully found both drugs and illegal weapons*

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

At an UN conference in late September of 2017, 39 states expressed their concerns on the current situation in the Phillipines. Lead by the United States and Iceland, who referred to a “climate of impunity”, the United Nations agreed on a joint statement, stating their concerns for the situation and disagreeing with the approach of the Duterte government. During a session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Philippines rejected more than half of the suggestions they were given by other nations, which also raised concerns in several nations, due to the lack of cooperation of the Duterte government.

### Timeline of Events

| Date                  | Description of event   |
|-----------------------|--|
| June 30th, 2016       | Duterte becomes president, plans to eradicate drug problems in 6 months        |
| May 10 - July 7, 2016 | Police kill more than a hundred prospects when fighting against drug problems  |
| August 8th, 2016      | United States expresses concerns over extra-judicial killings                  |
| September 19th, 2016  | announces that he needs another 6 month to fight drug problems                 |
| July 30th, 2017       | Mayor of Ozamiz City, along with 14 others was killed in violent street fights |

### Possible Solutions

Due to Duterte’s rigorous use of his power, one of the few ways to stop Duterte from further extrajudicial killing is suggesting a military coup d’etat, which essentially is an action in which the military takes over the government from the reigning President. This would, however, require careful planning and maybe even assistance from foreign countries. This action will be semi-violent, as it can easily evoke big street fights and protests, to which the police has to be able to respond. While other countries cannot directly help in the strike itself, as that would go close to colonising the country, they can provide support and resources to the military and other local forces to promote their actions against the government. However, this method is very extreme and is not recommended due to the violence, which will lead to further innocent deaths.

A second way of putting pressure on Phillipine’s president Duterte would be to promote international trade embargoes and other sanctions. By taking such actions, countries can negatively impact the local economy, which can also bring along more local protests as a result to Duterte’s lack of cooperation with other nations. Excluding a country from international trading and development opportunities as, several times, proven to be a great pressuring device, in order to encourage certain actions and measurements, which in this case would be a change of Duterte’s drug policies.

Many heads of states from all over the world have been urging to start diplomatic talks with the Duterte government. Their aim is to diplomatically convince Duterte of a less violent yet equally as effective way to fight drug crimes in his country. Countries have offered not only the possibility of assisting Duterte with advice but more so provide qualified manpower that can help lead local authorities and make up for a lack of qualified officials.

## Bibliography

Berlinger, Joshua. "Philippines' Duterte: We'll Turn to Russia If US Won't Sell Us Guns." CNN, Cable News Network, 17 Nov. 2016, [edition.cnn.com/2016/11/02/asia/philippines-us-arms-sale-reaction/index.html?eref=rss\\_topstories](http://edition.cnn.com/2016/11/02/asia/philippines-us-arms-sale-reaction/index.html?eref=rss_topstories).

agencies, Guardian staff and. "Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte Urges People to Kill Drug Addicts." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 30 June 2016, [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/01/philippines-president-rodrigo-duterte-urges-people-to-kill-drug-addicts](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/01/philippines-president-rodrigo-duterte-urges-people-to-kill-drug-addicts).

Holmes, Oliver. "Rodrigo Duterte Pulls Philippine Police out of Brutal War on Drugs." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 11 Oct. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/12/philippines-rodrigo-duterte-police-war-drugs](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/12/philippines-rodrigo-duterte-police-war-drugs).

France-Presse, Agence. "Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to Extend Drug War as 'Cannot Kill Them All'." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 19 Sept. 2016, [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/19/philippine-president-rodrigo-duterte-extend-drug-war-kill-them-all](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/19/philippine-president-rodrigo-duterte-extend-drug-war-kill-them-all).

News, ABS-CBN. "CPP: Duterte's Drug War Is 'Anti-People, Anti-Democratic'." ABS-CBN News, 13 Aug. 2016, [news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/14/16/cpp-dutertes-drug-war-is-anti-people-anti-democratic](http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/08/14/16/cpp-dutertes-drug-war-is-anti-people-anti-democratic).