



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Watch: The Philippines August 2020

Genocide Watch is issuing a Genocide Watch for the Philippines under the Duterte regime.

President Rodrigo Duterte's government is committing crimes against humanity in the Philippines, through a state-sponsored mass murder campaign Duterte portrays as a "War on Drugs." Under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, police officers engage in extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests of dissenters, and suppression of media freedom. At least 5,000 mostly poor Filipinos have been killed since 2016, though Amnesty International reports that the figure could be as high as 12,000.

On July 3, 2020, President Duterte signed the "[Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020](#)" which creates a presidential appointed anti-terrorism council with the power to designate individuals and groups as terrorists, and detain them without charge. The law also allows for 90 days of surveillance and punishments that include life imprisonment without parole. The Supreme Court has received six petitions challenging the Act.

The Anti-Terrorism Act is used against critics of the Duterte administration by naming them 'terrorists' or members of a 'terrorist organization.' The Act permits warrantless arrests and allows authorities to hold individuals for weeks without charge. The Act is used to grant impunity for killings of persons who are falsely implicated as drug users, as well as detention of those who criticize Duterte's policies.

In the name of combatting drug use, the Philippine National Police kill drug addicts, and justify these murders of civilians as national [self-defense](#). To promote the self-defense narrative, police plant false evidence, including guns, ammunition, and drugs on victims' bodies. While the government claims that vigilantes or rival drug gangs commit most of the killings, international media report that masked gunmen work closely with police.

With growing international criticism of the "War on Drugs," the Duterte administration has [widened its targets](#) to include all those opposed to the "war," including human rights groups, activists, journalists, and media outlets. Encouraged by Duterte, nearly 3,000 Duterte opponents have been gunned down by police and vigilante death squads. Duterte has even pledged to pardon policemen implicated in these killings. Many critics of the Duterte regime are now caged in overcrowded prisons. Yet his campaign remains politically popular.

The Abu Sayyaf Group is the most violent of the Islamic separatist groups operating in the southern Philippines. It claims it is fighting for an independent Islamic state. Since 1991, Abu Sayyaf has engaged in kidnappings for ransom, bombings, beheadings, assassinations, and extortion. Most Filipinos condemn Abu Sayyaf. The group relies on its Muslim members' families and friends for support and recruitment. Abu Sayyaf blends into surrounding populations, complicating government attempts to defeat it.

Genocide Watch recognizes the situation in the Philippines as Stage 5: Organization; and Stage 6: Polarization.

Genocide Watch urges the Philippine government to repeal the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020. Genocide Watch urges the United Nations Human Rights Council to conduct an impartial investigation. We support an International Criminal Court preliminary examination into these crimes against humanity.