

Forum: United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Issue: The Question of the Philippines Drug War

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Introduction

The Philippine Drug War encompasses the Philippine Government's policies and actions to prevent, decrease, and punish the huge number of drug users and abusers in the Philippines ; As stated by the Chief of Police (Ronald Dela Rosa) and sponsored by the President (Rodrigo Duterte) - the Anti-Drug Policy is aimed at "the neutralization of illegal drug personalities nationwide." The Drug War has been supported by several countries around the world, and primarily involves an aggressive crackdown on citizens involved with drug production and consumption carried out by the Philippine National Police (otherwise known as the PNP), and other associated bodies such as the National Philippine Army (NPA). The Drug War, because of the large amount of alleged illegal actions involved, has also acquired international attention regarding the several judicial, humanitarian, socio-economic, political aspects involved.

President Duterte's political campaign and rise to presidency was predicated upon this campaign, wherein he had promised the killing of tens of thousands of criminals (drug users) as part of his "War on Drugs". While addressing a gathering after stepping into office on June 30, 2016, President Duterte told a crowd in the city of Davao that they would be awarded with a medal for shooting (and killing) any person involved in the consumption or selling of drugs. Despite the encouragement of the needless killing of those involved with drugs, the campaign is highly popular and supported by the average voter in the Philippines, with about 82% of Pinoys satisfied with the war and its effects on the nation as a whole. Because of the general perception of the population revolving around drug production and consumption (in that those involved deserve to be harshly treated against), President Duterte has had the political backing necessary to put a positive spin on any potential negative effects of the "War on Drugs".

From a judicial and humanitarian standpoint, the campaign has received negative attention from several global institutions, including the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), due to the publicly available insider accounts of police officers committing and admitting to illegal

actions as part of the crackdown. In a Reuters Interview of an undercover, retired cop, it was revealed that the cop had written a 26-page, unpublished report entitled, "The State-Sponsored Extrajudicial Killings in the Philippines." The report makes several claims regarding President Duterte's ties to the Davao Death Squad, and also states that police officers were rewarded for ridding the streets of "troublemakers" apart from drug dealers and consumers, including rapists, gang members, and alcoholics - all for the price of 10,000 pesos a head. Although the report does not provide concrete, documented evidence, it does cite the testimonies of 17 officers directly involved in the "War on Drugs". There has also been activity from the PCHR (Philippine Commission on Human Rights), the PDEA (Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency) and the ICC (International Criminal Court) about Rodrigo Duterte's campaign.

The War on Drugs has been an issue of global dispute and discussion. While the Philippine Government has not accepted any liability regarding the illegalities of the stringent actions taken by the PNP and other associated bodies, there have been several grassroots movements that have attempted to do the same. With increasing international momentum against the mechanisms of enforcement involved, the War on Drugs will hopefully be transformed into a policy that is legal in its entirety, and effective in its implementation.

Definition of Key Terms

Drug War

The "Drug War" was a ruthless campaign started by President Rodrigo Duterte against drug users and drug pushers in the Philippines - It was the main movement/ideology (the USP - if you will - of his political campaign) he propagated and utilized to win the Philippine Presidential Election of 2016.

UNHCR

A global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people.

OHCHR

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) is the leading UN entity on human rights. They represent the world's commitment to the promotion and protection of the full range of human rights and freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

ICC

The International Criminal Court (ICC) investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

UNODC

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) helps make the world safer from drugs, organized crime, corruption and terrorism ; they are committed to achieving health, security and justice for all by tackling these threats and promoting peace and sustainable well-being as deterrents to them.

IDPC

The International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) is a global network of 192 NGOs that focuses on issues related to drug production, trafficking and use ; it promotes objective and open debate on the effectiveness, direction and content of drug policies at the national and international level, and supports evidence-based policies that are effective at reducing drug-related harm.

Shabu

A common drug used in the Philippines, Shabu is an amphetamine derivative (trade name Methedrine) used in the form of a crystalline hydrochloride; used as a stimulant to the nervous system and as an appetite suppressant.

Key Issues

Aggressive Approach to Enforcement of Drug Laws

One of the major issues with the “War on Drugs” has been an extremely aggressive approach to the enforcement of such laws. Such aggressive enactment of the Anti-Drug Laws led to initial failure and also caused many of the setbacks we see in the Philippines Anti-Drug Policies today.

The effects of political and societal pressure on the PNP has culminated in gruesome acts of violence around the nation, which has only accentuated the issue of crimes revolving around

drugs. According to Colonel Romeo Caraman, the HDE (Head of Drug Enforcement) of the PNP (as stated in a Reuters Interview), “Shock and Awe definitely did not work” as “Drug Supply is still rampant.” The Colonel also stated that he would favor a newer policy that targeted high-profile criminals (rather than low-scale, petty criminals), so as to target the root of the problem. Although these remarks were later claimed to be incorrect, they serve as a powerful reminder of the inefficiencies involved within the campaign.

Incentivization of Illegal Killings

Reports by the Human Rights Watch, Rappler, Reuters, and other credible sources of information cite various accounts (at a shockingly increasing rate) of suspected drug dealers and users being shot dead by the Philippine National Police and other vigilante groups such as the Davao Death Squad. These reports clearly display to us how officers of the PNP have been incentivized to carry out illegal killings as part of the “War on Drugs,” and have been paid to utilize any method as deemed necessary to carry out such gruesome acts of violence. There have been many accounts of Gang Members and vigilantes (such as those of the Davao Death Squad) being involved in Police Operations. The PNP have labelled the Operation as Operation Double Barrel Project Tokhang. The most surprising aspect of the Operation is the fact that there have been several accounts of fake “buy-bust” encounters with the police. Along with this, there are also a large number of police reports that have “unidentified gunmen” who may be, in all probability, vigilantes and gang members. There have also been several reports stating that Police Officers often plant evidence (including guns and drugs) at the crime scene to substantiate and validate the killing of the suspect. In a special report, Reuters also quoted Arturo Lascanas, a former policeman, who stated that he was paid for the neutralization of drug suspects. In the 1990s, this was between 3,000 to 5,000 Pesos per killing, and this amount was significantly increased in the 2000s. These accounts reveal how the incentivization to achieve tangible results has resulted in the use of illegal mechanisms in the PNP ; more importantly, it points to the irresponsibility of the Philippine Government, with regards to a lack of action in this regard.

Lack of Accountability

Another issue that accentuates the problems in the campaign is the lack of accountability that exists within the system, with regards to the actions of the police officers. A major part of why police officers continue to use illegal means to achieve the goals of the Anti-Drug

Policy. Another reason is because officers are practically granted political impunity as part of the campaign, given the political support from Duterte, majority public support, and lack of punishment of officers for incitement of violence, framing of victims, and other interrelated issues. Finding a case ensuring accountability of officers is as good as searching for a needle in a haystack, given the great extent to which the victims' family has to go to in order to definitely prove the crime has occurred. For example, 3 officers were convicted for the killing of Kian Delos Santos, but only after video footage contradicting the official police report came out, subsequently sparking public outrage. Secondly, it took about a year to convict the 3 officers in charge of the murder, simply due to the fact that concrete evidence had to be provided to court, thereby proving that the officers killed Kian without any suspicion, a fact that deters the families of other victims from coming forward. Although Police Officers stated that he was a suspected drug dealer, the family denied these allegations. Due to a "shoot first, think later" attitude cultivated in officers, officers remain fearless about the consequences of killing suspects due to the lack of accountability prevalent in the system. The aforementioned case was a high-profile case and was the first case of officers being convicted in the "Drug War" - a war with devastating after-effects.

Lack of Freedom of Media

Under Duterte's presidency, the freedom of press has significantly declined and with respect to the coverage of the government's fight against drugs. The media has been silenced and restricted to the extent that journalists are using their personal platforms to call out Rodrigo Duterte. The press and the government already have a shaky relationship with the latter taking jabs at the former consistently. The president is known for his arbitrary and impulsive behaviour with him having done things such as changing Filipino foreign policy completely, with a shift towards China away from the West, so it is no surprise that he imposes restrictions on journalists. He has armed his supporters online to attack all forms of negative press for him. Reporters without borders have even put the Philippines at 133 on the Press Freedom Index.

At this point, reporters and journalists believe Duterte's main aim is just to drown out and condemn independent and critical voices.

Impact on Children

One of the main victims of the drug war are children. They have been victims either directly, with 122 being killed in crossfire or as proxies to attack parents or indirectly with a multitude of children losing their parents or family members to shooting on suspected drug possession or use.

The impact that the war has had on children must be ignored by the authorities. In the past year alone, about 125 children (as mentioned before) have died in the crossfire with 7 being proxy victims. In all probability, the figures are even higher. This has taken a toll on the mental and physical health of children, and the lax (and rather slow) behaviour/attitude of the international community in terms of addressing such violations has led to a high escalation of deaths involved as part of Duterte's Anti-Drug Policy. An appropriate response to this impact on children is for Duterte's government to come up with an appropriate framework within their anti-drug policies to help and prevent violence against them. This framework can include sensitivity training and a tie up with the Philippine Child Protection Program in order to ensure the safety of children during drug investigation procedures.

Poverty in the Philippines

The war on drugs is considered a war on the poor. The impact of the anti-drug policy has hurt a lot, especially the urban poor. Across Metro Manila, Cebu Province, and Mindanao, we documented 33 incidents in which 59 people were killed. Suspiciously similar police reports describe alleged drug offenders violently resisting arrest, causing the police to open fire. Consistent witness accounts show instead that the police are often killing people in cold blood, as they're begging for their lives.

The more than 7,000 killings to date have overwhelmingly hit the urban poor. And the police and paid killers have built an economy off extrajudicial executions. Witnesses and family members repeatedly told us how the police stole money and other valuables from their homes, and wedding rings off the fingers of the deceased. The impact of this on the poor cannot be ignored.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Philippine National Police

The Philippine National Police (PNP) are the primary stakeholder in the "War on Drugs", and have been more than vocal about their support of President Duterte's campaign. Under Ronald dela Rosa, police officers of the Philippines engaged in the killing of thousands of people, (most of them poverty-stricken, leading many to believe that the war is actually a war on the poor), planting of evidence, collaboration with gang members, and other illegal activities. When asked about the involvement of several gangs and vigilantes in the killings of drug suspects, Bato

(Ronald dela Rosa) vehemently denied such claims, stating that the PNP would not require any external help to achieve any of its aims. The PNP has affected urban and rural areas in the Philippines, including Manila, Bulacan, Laguna, Cavite, Cebu, and General Santos. By 2017, the Drug War had claimed 12,000+ lives, and by 2019, reports claim that the death toll has reached 27,000+. The situation has just been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the #RealNumbersPH showing a steep rise in the number of deaths during the 4-month lockdown in the Philippines. The police are practically immune to any political consequences of their actions (due to the population's support of President Duterte which only furthers his own political aims). This "immunity" has caused the PNP to develop a harsh, cruel approach to the campaign, wherein officers are encouraged to "neutralize" drug sellers, users, and abusers through any means necessary. Finally, the re-election of President Duterte in 2019 goes to show that the "War on Drugs" will not stop any time soon, given the support that he, as well as the PNP, has gathered, are garnering, and will gain in the future.

Commission on Human Rights

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is an independent Philippine office mandated to investigate complaints of human rights violations, promote the protection of, respect for and the enhancements of the people's human rights including civil and political rights. In 2019, the CHR estimated that the number of lives lost during the "Drug War" was actually 27,000+, and not what official figures pointed out. Furthermore, the CHR also urged the Philippine government to look at the UNHRC probe into the human rights conditions of the nation as an opportunity for the Philippine government to reflect on its past actions, and take effective action on them. As an independent body, the CHR is a powerful stakeholder in the Philippine "War on Drugs", as it is free from any extraneous political, economic, or social control. A powerful example of their independence was when they issued a statement calling on the Philippine government to release documents regarding the "Drug War" saying, "It is only through greater transparency that we can ascertain the truth behind the circumstances leading to these killings". The CHR must use their powerful position to impact the larger proportion of the population, and protect the rights of the classes of Philippine society that are most vulnerable to the dangers posed by President Duterte and his "War on Drugs".

USA

The United States of America has been, and is definitely one of the most powerful stakeholders in terms of the political, economic, and social influence it holds upon President

Duterte's "War on Drugs". However, the USA has been somewhat hypocritical in their response towards the Philippine Drug War, consequently making it ambiguous as to whether or no they support the actions of the PNP with respect to the "War on Drugs". In 2018 alone, as part of Operation Pacific Eagle, (an Overseas Contingency Operation) \$99.3 Million worth of military aid was donated by the US Government to the Army and Police Forces of the Philippines. In combination with Military Aid given as part of other efforts, the United States donated at least \$193.5 Million in the Fiscal Year of 2018. Through 2018, the US DOD was unaware of 76 out of the 77 transactions that took place as part of OPE. However, in 2019, \$108.2 Million was donated as part of Operation Pacific Eagle. These actions signify that the USA originally supported President Rodrigo Duterte's efforts and mechanisms employed as part of the Drug War. Nevertheless, in 2020, the US revoked the visa of Ronald Dela Rosa (a Philippine Senator and former chief of the PNP), thereby signifying condemnation of his role in the violent "War on Drugs".

Japan

The Constitutional Monarchy of Japan has seemingly turned a "blind eye" to the woes of the Philippine population. On January 12, 2017, the ex-Prime Minister of Japan (Shinzo Abe) appreciated President Rodrigo Duterte's efforts as part of the campaign, and even offered support for it. During the visit, Prime Minister Abe announced a 5-year, \$800M ODA (Overseas Development Assistance) Package to the Japanese government. Even today, Japan is the largest Southeast Asian Trading Partner for the Philippines. In February, 2017, Ro Manabe endorsed the Philippine Chairmanship of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), despite having the chance to openly criticize the Philippine government on their actions. Furthermore, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), whose primary role is to fund Overseas Development Initiatives, agreed to provide the Philippine Health Department with \$17M for "upgrading and enhancement purposes", without any statement regarding how this money will be used ; this fact has raised several eyebrows with respect to Japan's supposed "endorsement" of violations of human rights.

UNHRC

UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) - The UNHRC is an international, inter-governmental UN Organ that has been tasked with the maintenance and protection of Human Rights Worldwide. In 2020, the OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ; the High Commissioner being Michelle Bachelet) released a report on the Philippine Drug War. The report examined 893 sources of information, including police reports,

court documents, open source material (photos and videos), interviews, and Official Records from the Philippine Government. Through intense research and investigation, the report confirmed that the Human Rights Violations that have been present throughout the nation in the past, have been accentuated during the course of the Drug War. Secondly, the report cites official sources which state that the number of killings by the PNP is at 8.663 people. However, other sources estimate the figure to be greater than (if not equal to) three times that figure. The report also states that the failure of domestic systems to ensure accountability has led to a need for international, impartial, and credible investigation into cases (potentially) involving violations of fundamental human rights. Finally, Michelle Bachelet states that the UNHRC is ready to help and support the Philippines in implementing the recommendations of the report (which aim to deter and potentially health the human rights violations that are rampant throughout the nation) for positive change in the long-term.

Timeline

Date	Event	Outcome
1st July 2016	Initiation of the “War on Drugs”	On July 1st, 2016, Rodrigo Duterte initiated the “War on Drugs”, with the principal body of execution being the Phillipine National Police. On the first day of the “Drug War”, 30 alleged drug suspects were killed around the nation.
22nd July ; 29th July 2016	Statements of University Presidents	President Br. Jose Mari Jiminez from the De La Salle University, as well as President Fr. Jett Villarin of the Ateneo de Manila University release calls and speak out to stop and call action against the “culture of death” and violence that had been formed in the country. They also similarly called upon the government to uphold human rights.
2nd August 2016	IDPC Statement	In August 2016, the International Drug Policy Consortium publishes a

		statement of 375 Non-Governmental Organizations calling upon the UNODC to release a statement denouncing the “Drug War” and drug-related incidents in the Philippines
24th August 2016 to 13th October 2016	First hearing on extrajudicial killings (EJK)	The senate committee that was chaired by Senator Leila de Lima takes up the first of the many meetings and hearings on the extrajudicial deaths/killings that were going on in the country. Ultimately this would only last until 13th October when the Senate decided to end all hearings and its probe on the alleged extrajudicial killings that were happening as a result of the war on drugs.
18th October 2016	Killing of Jee Ick Joo	Jee Ick Joo was a South Korean Businessman who was abducted and killed by the PNP Anti-Illegal Drug Group during a bust on the supposition that he was engaged in drug use. 3 months later, this case was one of the first few cases that ensured liability of officers in the “Drug War”. According to the testimony of Jee Ick Joo’s wife, 8 armed men were involved in the kidnapping and killing. After outrage from the Philippine populace, and the presence of hard evidence served as a powerful determinant of the outcome of the case.

29th January 2017	Dissolving of all Anti-Illegal Drug Operations	After an investigation from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) revealed that the PNP was involved in the killing of Jee Ick Joo, President Rodrigo Duterte dissolved all Anti-Illegal Drug Groups across the Philippines. On January 30, 2017, Chief-of-Police Ronald Dela Rosa suspended all Anti-Illegal Drug Operations nationwide.
1st February 2017	PNP Reaction to Amnesty International Report	On January 31, 2017, Amnesty International released a report on the gruesome “Drug War”, wherein their (CRD) Crisis Response Direct stated, “This is not a war on drugs, but a war on the poor.” On February 1, 2017, the PNP reacted to this report by stating that they have always “observed and upheld human rights” and that they “take strong exception to opinions raised in the latest report of Amnesty International.”
6th March 2017 ; 2nd May 2017	Resuming of Operations ; Launching of #RealNumbersPH	On March 6, 2017, the PNP resumed operations in the “Drug War” by resuming Operation Double Barrel Tokhang (the Operation under which the “Drug War” was initiated). Secondly, on May 2, 2017, the Phillipine Government launched the #RealNumbersPH campaign after public outcry about a lack of accurate numbers and facts about the “War on Drugs.”

6th August 2017	Killing of Kian de los Santos	Kian de los Santos, a teenager in Caloocan City, is killed by the Philippine National Police. Kian Santos's case was gruelly fought in court, and the officers involved were only apprehended for the crime when hard evidence (in the form of video evidence) was submitted in court. He was killed for his alleged involvement in the drug industry in the Philippines.
10th October 2017 ; 22nd November 2017	PDEA takes over "Drug War" ; President Duterte issues order for the PNP	On October 10, 2017, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) took over the "War on Drugs" based on a memo signed by President Duterte. However, on November 22, 2017, President Duterte re-integrated the PNP into the program, and this move was accepted with open arms by the PDEA.
29th January ; 21st April 2018	Bato (Ronald dela Rosa) relaunches Operation Tokhang ; Oscar Albayalde takes over as PNP Chief	<p>On January 29, 2018, Bato (Ronald dela Rosa) relaunched Operation Tokhang, stating that he couldn't give the guarantee of a 100% bloodless "War on Drugs." Three months later, he resigns from his post as PNP Chief</p> <p>On April 21, 2018, Oscar Albayalde took over as the Chief of the PNP. Under Oscar, the death toll of the "Drug War" significantly rises.</p>

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Formulation of the Government Bodies

PDEA

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) is a governmental body that is responsible for efficient law enforcement of all provisions on any dangerous drugs and/or precursors and essential chemicals. As part of its mandate, the PDEA introduces laws and regulations, releases annual reports, authorizes annual press releases, collaborates with several NGOs, and also issues regular updates on the development of the Drug War in the Philippines. Most recently, the PDEA adopted a 3-pronged approach to solving the drug problem - Supply Reduction, Demand Reduction, and Harm Reduction. The 3 processes entail a more humanitarian approach to the drug problem, therefore instilling and displaying a sense of progressivism and altruism that, (given that the overarching authoritarian figure is President Rodrigo Duterte himself) in all probability, doesn't exist.

DDB

The Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) is another governmental body that was mandated to be the policy-making and coordinating agency as well as the national clearinghouse on all matters pertaining to law enforcement and control of dangerous drugs; treatment and rehabilitation of drug dependents; drug abuse prevention, training and information; research and statistics on the drug problem and the training of personnel engaged in these activities. The PDEA, in actuality, is the body in charge of the implementation of policies formulated by the DDB. The inherent problem with the 2 bodies is that they are subsidiaries of the Government of the Philippines, and hence, fall under the control of President Rodrigo Duterte. Therefore, even if the 2 organizations wanted to publish information exposing the illegalities of the "War on Drugs," they wouldn't be able to, since President Duterte would not allow the publishing of the respective articles.

#RealNumbersPH

In 2017, after public and international criticism regarding a lack of authenticity in the numbers and statistics of the "Drug War", the Philippine Government started a movement known as #RealNumbersPH, with the intent of removing any ambiguity regarding the numbers involved. According to the latest report, 5,526 "Drug Personalities" had been killed ; however, in June (the

same month), Ronald dela Rosa (Former Police Chief) stated that the recorded deaths were 6,700. In March, 2019, according to a Philstar report, the PNP put the figure at 29,000 - further creating confusion around the actual number of deaths. In this regard, instances such as the aforementioned one speak volumes about the miscommunication, and lack of reliability involved within the PNP with respect to the “War on Drugs”. #RealNumbersPH was started in order to provide accurate data and facts regarding the impact of the “Drug War” on the Philippine population, and until now, it has not been able to fulfill this goal (as a direct result of the corruption and miscommunication in the governing bodies of the Philippines).

International Alliances

In 2016, the PNP collaborated with DFW (Foundation for a Drug Free World), wherein officers were taught the full Truth About Drugs Curriculum in under 2.5 days, and were also rigorously questioned with respect to what they had learned. To further disseminate information about the cause, the 100 officers who attended the training sessions were given pamphlets and booklets (in both English and Tagalog) to distribute within their own communities. In 2017, 107 officers also underwent such training. Contrary to the expected results, the poor conditions of the local populace have been exasperated and accentuated during the past 2 years, with higher police-related deaths, arrests, and vigilante-style killings.

Possible Solutions

Construction of Rehabilitation Programs

Construction of health-based rehabilitation programs adapted to Philippine culture and the economic conditions of communities have been shown to reduce recidivism rates dramatically and also lead to secondary benefits such as community protection against drugs. These community-based programs have also been shown to be more effective in dealing with the majority of drug users who are not severely addicted to illicit substances. Finally, these community programs help build an active support system in the community, thereby incentivizing those with the problem of drug consumption to come forward and rid themselves of the addiction.

There is a lack of treatment and rehabilitation centers nationwide due to funding problems and many services are unaffordable to the majority in need. Government-run treatment facilities in the country are located only in the National Capital Region (NCR), Caraga Region and Regions I, IV-A, V, VI, VII, X and XI. There are 42 drug rehabilitation centers nationwide which are only able to cater for 5,000 patients, 28 of which are privately operated and are therefore not available to the

vast majority of the people in need. Community and families can definitely be helped through the establishment of community-based programs, drug after care or local support interventions for out-patients.

President Duterte has stated that the government currently lacks the funds to rehabilitate drug addicts. However, he pledged to allocate 110.4 billion pesos to the Philippine National Police: an amount 24.6% higher than the allocated budget in 2016. Additionally, he stated his intention to increase the Armed Forces' budget by 15%, and the Judiciary's budget by 21.5%: all organizations of the government which have not demonstrated the need for larger budgets. In all, President Duterte aimed to give these organizations a combined total of 53.74 billion pesos, translating to 10 billion US dollars. Rather than promising this monstrous amount to branches of government that have not demonstrated an active need for it, Duterte should allocate these resources to the rehabilitation of the thousands of drug abusers who turned themselves in to the government.

International Recommendations

The Philippine government should capitalize on the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS), as an opportunity to finally start fighting the drug problem. The UNGASS had several salient features of the many salient points from its RoundTable Conferences, and the Philippine Government must utilize these features as an opportunity to humanize its approach to the “War on Drugs”.

The GCDP (GCDP) has called for an end to the criminalization of drug users, while simultaneously encouraging the Philippine Government to target high-profile criminals (that have a larger influence on the Philippine Population) rather than low-profile, low-impact dealers and users. Furthermore, it recommends the Philippine Government to focus more on regulating the Drug Markets rather than criminalizing and incarcerating every individual drug-user found.

Decriminalization of Drug Use

Several countries around the world have decriminalized the possession and use of drugs, and have consequently adopted a more humanitarian approach to the problem. President Duterte must shift his focus to establishing a more stable, functional, and humanistic approach rather than the unstable, erratic, forceful approach he has adopted in the status quo. In Portugal, although the decriminalization of drug possession and use was seen as a counter-productive and counter-intuitive approach, the results have shown quite the opposite.

In Portugal :

- The Levels of drug use have fallen below the European average after 2001.
- Drug use has significantly declined among those aged 15-24, the population (supposedly) most at risk of initiating drug use.
- Rates of continuation of drug use have also decreased.
- The number of diagnosed cases of HIV has drastically lowered, and has dropped from 1,016 in 2001 to 56 in 2012.
- During the same 11 years as mentioned above (2001-2012), the number of cases of those suffering from AIDS has reduced from 568 to 39.

The Philippine government can model and appropriate their current system to the practices followed in Portugal, or in any of the 30 countries that have decriminalized drug possession and use in the past. Seen as the dynamic of the Philippine population is one that views drug use as a severe and punishable issue, a non-authoritative approach is likely to yield beneficial results as the fear factor (of getting killed, or harshly treated in prison) is removed.

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