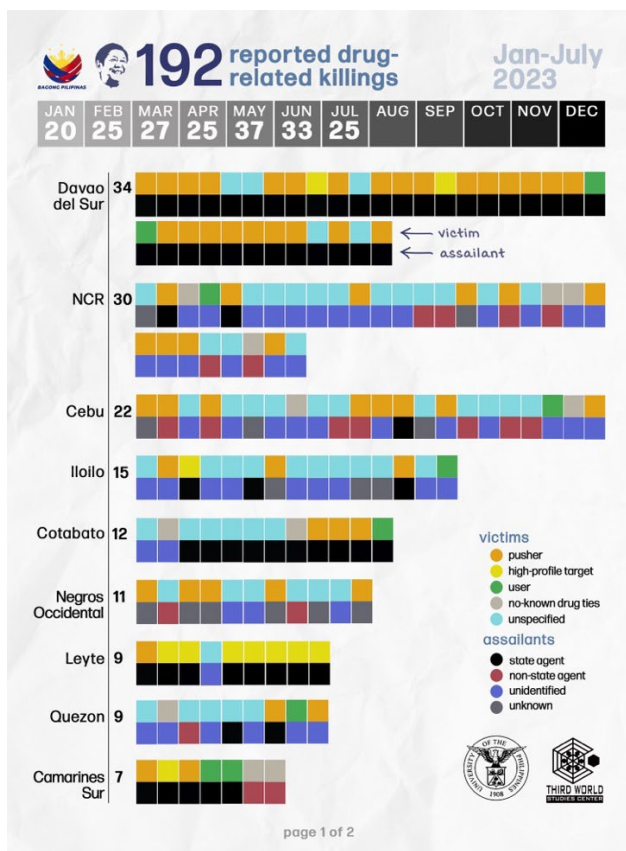


The Philippines Risk: High

The Philippines remains at high risk for atrocities as the government’s drug war continues unabated resulting in 192 people killed as of end of July from the beginning of 2023, while another seven (7) people were killed in the first seven days of August. Thus far, 374 people have died in connection with the drug war under the administration of Marcos Jr. since he took office on 30 June 2022.¹ For the last seven months this year, Davao del Sur topped the number of people killed (34), followed by the National Capital Region (NCR) at 30, and Cebu at 22.² It is significant to note that the main victims in Davao del Sur were pushers who were all killed by state agents (see infographic below). Davao City, the capital of Davao del Sur, is the hometown of former President Duterte where he now resides.



Source: UP Third World Studies Centre Facebook Infographic

To demonstrate its resolve in cleaning up the ranks of the Philippine National Police (PNP) of police officers involved in the drug trade, criminal cases were filed in July against 69 policemen who were allegedly found to have pilfered 990 kilograms of methamphetamine worth Pesos 6.7 billion (US\$119 million).³ For his part, President Marcos Jr. accepted the resignation of 18 third-level police officers of the PNP composed of three generals and 15 colonels who were reportedly linked to illegal drug trade. The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) said that it will file appropriate charges against these officers accordingly. The eighteen resigned officers were among the 953 PNP policemen who were investigated by the DILG for their involvement in illegal drug activities.⁴

Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) Appeals Chamber on 18 July dismissed the appeal of the Philippine government against the resumption of the investigation into the Duterte drug war in the country. In rejecting the appeal, the court said that it was not convinced that the Philippines government was making a “real or genuine effort” in conducting its own probe and prosecution of the

Duterte administration's drug war-related killings.⁵ For his part, Solicitor General Menardo Guevarra said that the Philippines will continue its own probe into the drug war killings, while Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla reiterated his previous statement that the ICC will not be welcome into the country.⁶

Recommendations

The Philippines government should:

- Uphold the state's primary responsibility to protect.
- Comply with international norms on human rights protection. Specifically, it should hold accountable law enforcers and other members of the security sector for violations of human rights in relation to the war on illegal drugs during the Duterte administration and after.
- Vigorously push for the amendment of Republic Act 6891 on Witness Protection Program (WPP) to cover law enforcers as part of encouraging them to turn state witness in the drug war related killings and other EJKs
- Reconsider its position on membership of the International Criminal Court (ICC)
- Cooperate with the ICC as it pursues its investigation of drug war related killings during the term of President Duterte and abide by the Supreme Court's 2021 resolution that declared the ICC to have jurisdiction over the country despite its withdrawal from the Rome Treaty in 2019.
- The Department of Justice should pursue its own credible and transparent probe into the drug war killings both under the administrations of President Duterte and Marcos Jr.
- Encourage PNP and Department of Justice to pursue vigorous investigation of killings involving policemen and other law enforcement agents in relation to the past and ongoing drug war operations and file appropriate criminal charges against them.

¹ University of the Philippines Third World Studies Centre (TWSC) infographic, July 2023 and 1-7 August 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/up.twsc>, accessed on 11 August 2023.

² Ibid.

³ Joviland Rita, "PNP: 69 complaints filed over P6.7 billion shabu haul," GMA News online, 10 July 2023, from <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/875348/pnp-69-complaints-filed-over-p6-7-billion-shabu-haul/story/>, accessed on 10 July 2023.

⁴ "Marcos accepts resignation of 18 cops linked to illegal drugs," CNN Philippines, 25 July 2023, from <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2023/7/25/Marcos-accepts-resignation-18-cops-drugs-.html>, accessed on 25 July 2023.

⁵ "ICC to continue probe into Duterte's drug war; court chamber junks PH appeal," CNN Philippines, 18 July 2023, from <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2023/7/18/icc-to-continue-duterte-drug-war-probe.html>, accessed on 20 July 2023.

⁶ Ibid.