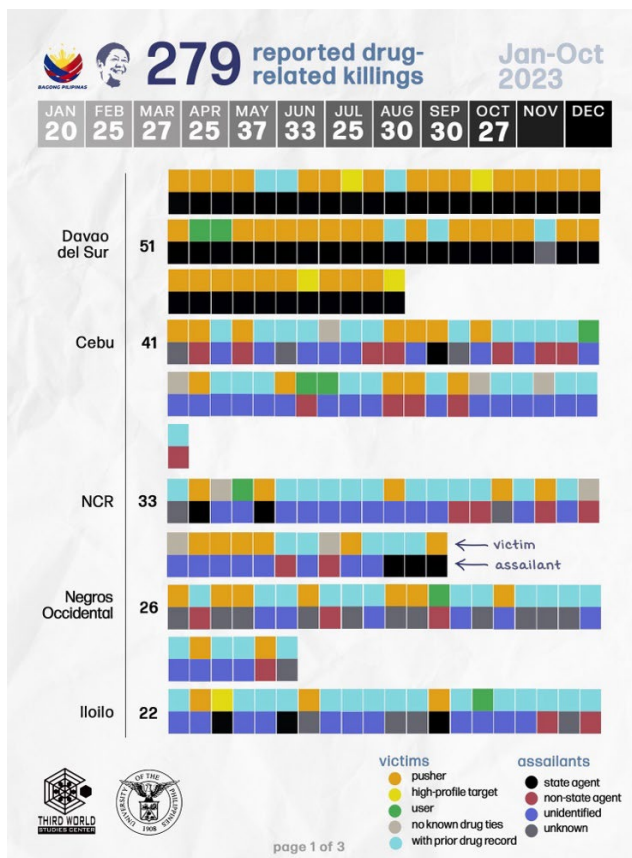


**The Philippines Risk: High**

The Philippines remains at high risk for atrocities as the government continues with its drug war campaign, election-related violence, and extra judicial killings perpetrated against journalists.

As of end of October, there are now a total of 279 reported drug-related killings across the country since January, with 57 more deaths reported in the last two months. Davao del Sur recorded 51 killings perpetrated by state agents, followed by Cebu (41), and the National Capital Region (NCR) at 33.<sup>1</sup> (See infographic below.) Most of those killed were drug pushers while some were known to have prior drug record. Davao City is in Davao del Sur, a known bailiwick of former President Rodrigo Duterte.



Source: UP Third World Studies Centre Facebook Infographic

A group of legislators in the lower house of the Philippine Congress recently filed a resolution urging the government of President Marcos Jr to support the ongoing investigation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) after Duterte admitted in a video recorded interview in a local TV station that he used his government’s confidential intelligence funds to bankroll the extra judicial killings when he was president of the country and as former mayor of Davao City.<sup>2</sup> Duterte’s admission was made as he was defending her daughter, Vice President Sara Duterte, who proposed to Congress a budget that included a substantial amount of confidential and intelligence funds for 2024 for both the Office of the Vice President and her cabinet position as head of the Department of Education. During the budget hearings, several legislators questioned the rationale for having a substantial budget for confidential and intelligence funds (CIF) in her two offices but were not convinced by her explanation.

The elder Duterte's video recorded admission on the use intelligence funds to undertake extra judicial killings was immediately sent to the ICC as additional evidence by group of former military officers who originally filed the case against him in 2017.<sup>3</sup> One of the minority legislators who questioned the CIF budget proposal of Sara Duterte also filed a case in the Philippines against the elder Duterte after he also threatened to kill the legislator in the same video recorded interview.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, extra judicial killings continue in the Philippines under the administration of President Marcos Jr. In the recent village-level and youth council elections held in late October across the country, the Commission on Elections reported that there were 19 deaths and 244 violent incidents.<sup>5</sup> A radio man in Mindanao was also killed while on livestreaming his radio show on Facebook. He is the fourth member of the Philippine press killed under the current administration. Between 1992 and 2023, 158 journalists and media workers have been killed in the country based on data from the Committee to Protect Journalists. The Philippines ranked eight in the 2023 Global Impunity Index's worst country for prosecuting people accused of targeting media practitioners.<sup>6</sup>

### Recommendations

#### The Philippines should:

- Uphold the state's primary responsibility to protect by complying with international norms on human rights protection.
- Hold members of the security sector accountable 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 drug war killings.

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<sup>1</sup> University of the Philippines Third World Studies Centre (TWSC) infographic Jan-Oct 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/up.twsc>, accessed on 10 November 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Cristina Chi, "Lawmakers renew call for ICC probe after Duterte's admission of funding Davao killings," Philstar, 18 October 2023, from <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/10/18/2304752/lawmakers-renew-call-icc-probe-after-dutertes-admission-funding-davao-killings>, accessed on 18 October 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Dempsey Reyes, "Ex-President Duterte faces raps after threatening Sara critic," Inquirer.net, 13 October 2023, from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1845073/ex-president-duterte-faces-raps-after-threatening-sara-critic>, accessed on 14 October 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Zacarian Sarao, "Comelec notes 19 dead, 244 violent incidents in barangay, SK elections," Inquirer.net, 31 October 2023, from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1853213/19-died-244-violent-incidents-occurred-during-bgy-sk-elections-says-comelec>, accessed on 31 October 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Praveneena Somasundaram, "Philippine radio host fatally shot while live-streaming show, police say." The Washington Post, 6 November 2023, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2023/11/06/philippines-radio-journalist-killed-livestream/>, accessed on 10 November 2023.