Strengthening Atrocity Prevention in the Philippines

November 2026



Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

The University Of Queensland
AUSTRALIA

Acknowledgements

This paper is a publication of the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Communications:
Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
School of Political Science and International Studies
The University of Queensland St Lucia Brisbane QLD 4072 Australia
Email: r2pinfo@uq.edu.au
Web https://r2pasiapacific.org/

© Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
All Rights Reserved

DOI https://doi.org/10.14264/19014a5

This report is an open access report distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. Under this licence you are free, without having to seek our permission, to use this publication in accordance with the licence terms. You must keep intact the copyright notice and attribute the author/s as the source of the publication. For more information on this licence, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Executive Summary

In January 2026, the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect published *Beyond the War on Drugs: Ongoing Atrocity Risks in the Philippines*. Guided by the United Nations Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, the report identified a range of factors that contribute to ongoing medium-to-high risk of atrocity crimes in the Philippines. The report concluded that atrocity risks persist despite a notable decline in extrajudicial killings in recent years as well as high-level efforts to pursue accountability for alleged crimes against humanity perpetrated under the administration of former President Rodrigo Duterte.

The purpose of this accompanying report is to shift the focus from identifying risks to strengthening prevention. It sets out recommendations for how the Philippine government and other stakeholders can address underlying drivers of atrocity risk, strengthen sources of resilience, and build capacities to more effectively prevent atrocity crimes and their incitement.

This report identifies three broad priorities for strengthening atrocity prevention in the Philippines. The first centres on addressing the primary conditions that drive or create a permissive environment for political violence and armed conflict, mainly through a set of political and electoral reforms and the full implementation of the peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The second focuses on strengthening the state's capacity for atrocity prevention, including through improved monitoring of violence and emerging risks, dedicated atrocity prevention training for government officials, and stronger domestic, regional, and international partnerships for prevention. The third involves deepening commitment to atrocity prevention and protection norms in the Philippines and strengthening the ecosystem of accountability in the country. This entails enhancing protections for journalists and human rights defenders and more effectively investigating and prosecuting serious human rights violations. It also involves reinforcing the state's international accountability for atrocity prevention, for example through ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and rejoining the ICC. Together, these measures are intended to support atrocity prevention in the Philippines through a nationally owned and 'whole-of-society' approach that combines structural prevention, early action, and accountability.

Introduction: From Risk Analysis to Prevention Strategies

The Philippines continues to face significant risk of atrocity crimes, despite a decline in extrajudicial killings (EJKs) from the peak of former President Rodrigo Duterte's controversial 'war on drugs' under Operation Tokhang.[1] Although EJKs involving state law enforcement agents have declined under President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr,[2] drug-related and other targeted killings persist, alongside broader patterns of political violence and serious human rights violations. Widespread impunity, corruption, and weak institutional safeguards continue to leave civilians vulnerable to violence perpetrated by state security agents, political clans, private armed groups, and 'gun-for-hire' operators. Journalists, human rights defenders, and environmental activists also face persistent threats and attacks.[3] Armed clashes between the Philippine military and the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA), as well as violence involving some extremist groups in Mindanao, remain sources of risk to civilians.[4] At the same time, despite important advances in the peace process between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), peace in the Bangsamoro region remains fragile due to delays and grievances surrounding implementation of the peace agreement and the normalisation process.[5]

The January 2026 report *Beyond the War on Drugs: Ongoing Atrocity Risks in the Philippines*[6] examined the risk of atrocity crimes in the Philippines using the risk factors identified in the United Nations Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes.[7] The report concluded that, despite the decline in EJKs from the levels alleged to constitute crimes against humanity, many of the conditions that enabled such violence and other serious human rights violations remain, and the Philippines continues to face medium-to-high risk of atrocity crimes. This report builds on that assessment by shifting the focus from identifying risks to considering how atrocity crimes can be prevented.

Because effective prevention must respond to the nature and sources of risk, this introductory section briefly revisits, and offers minor updates on, the six key risk factors

---

[1] Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Beyond the War on Drugs: Ongoing Atrocity Risks in the Philippines," The University of Queensland, January 2026, pp. 3, 8–9, from https://r2pasiapacific.org/files/12570/Philippines%20%20Risk%20assessment%20Jan%202026%20%20FINAL%281%29.pdf (Accessed 28 Sept 2026)
[2] Ibid., pp.8-9, drawing on data compiled by the University of the Philippines Third World Studies Center.
[3] Ibid., pp. 3, 10–12.
[4] Ibid., pp. 4–7.
[5] International Crisis Group, "Peace in the Philippines: Bangsamoro's Moment of Truth," Asia Report No. 355, 10 March 2026, pp. i–ii, from https://www.crisisgroup.org/rpt/asia-pacific/philippines/355-peace-philippines-bangsamoros-moment-truth, accessed on 28 September 2026.
[6] Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Beyond the War on Drugs."
[7] United Nations, "Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention," 2014, from https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/genocide_framework_of_analysis-english.pdf, accessed on 28 September 2026

identified in the earlier assessment and highlights corresponding gaps in the country's capacity to manage them, as summarised in Table 1 below. This analysis provides the basis for the prevention priorities set out in the remainder of the report. Accordingly, this report presents a set of atrocity prevention capacities and strategies for consideration, particularly by the Philippine government. The recommendations are intended to support the Philippines' capacity to prevent atrocity crimes through a nationally owned and 'whole-of-society' approach that combines structural prevention, early action, and accountability.

Table 1: Risk Factors and Gaps in Atrocity Prevention

Risk Factor	Indicators	Gaps in Atrocity Prevention
1. Situations of armed conflict or other forms of instability	Internal armed rebellion against the state	1. Unresolved issues in implementing the peace agreement in Mindanao 2. Decommissioning of MILF combatants not completed 3. Persistence of communist armed insurgency and counter-insurgency operations
2. Record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law	Human rights violations perpetrated by state agents, private armies, and political clans against individuals and groups	1. Unresolved cases of EJKs and enforced disappearances 2. Barriers to investigating and prosecuting EJKs and other human rights violations against journalists, human rights advocates, activists, and Indigenous peoples
3. Weakness of state structures	Inadequate response to promote accountability for violations of human rights and prosecute perpetrators of EJKs	1. Lack of transparency in law enforcement investigations 2. Low trust in judicial process 3. Limited institutional capacity to prosecute perpetrators of human rights violations
4. Capacity to commit crimes	Existence of private armies and culture of impunity among state and non-state actors	1. Lack of political will to dismantle private armies 2. Persistence of culture of impunity among state and non-state actors
5. Inadequate mitigating factors	Patronage politics, political dynasties, corruption, and lack of accountability	1. Opposition from political dynasties and clans to political reforms 2. Lack of voter education on the effects of patronage politics
6. Triggering factors	Election-related violence; Duterte's case before the ICC as a polarising issue	1. Proliferation of small arms 2. Limited efforts to disarm private armies 3. Proliferation of misinformation and disinformation ('fake news') 4. Use of hate speech on social media

Situations of Armed Conflict

The Philippines is still at a considerable risk for atrocities due to continued and widespread armed violence and risk of conflict, especially in Mindanao. While the 2014 peace agreement between the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) paved the way for the creation of a transitional

government in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), it is nonetheless a fragile peace with high potential for re-eruption of violence. This is due to continuing unresolved issues related to decommissioning—otherwise known as demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR)—of MILF troops, clan conflicts in BARMM, and issues related to the political dynamics between Manila and the regional stakeholders in BARMM. A recent report by the International Crisis Group pointed to several challenges to a stable peace in Mindanao, to wit: 1) political instability and flare-ups of violence; 2) Manila's unfulfilled promises of socio-economic development to the region as part of the peace agreement; 3) the normalisation process (including the disarming of former MILF rebels) is behind schedule and currently deadlocked on the remaining 14,000 combatants; 4) transitional justice and amnesty provisions are still on hold due to bureaucratic obstacles; and 5) the national government's inability to overcome funding problems to complete the normalisation process.[8]

A series of political interventions by the national government are also a major concern. Specifically, the Marcos Jr administration replaced the Bangsamoro Transition Authority Interim Chief Minister, MILF Chairman Murad Ephraim, without consultation with the MILF Central Committee in March 2025. Thereafter, the government appointed seven members of the BARMM parliament who were not endorsed by the MILF. As well, the MILF Central Committee nominated 41 names to the parliament, but the government appointed only 35, thereby effectively turning the MILF-majority into a minority in its parliament. This is contrary to the Bangsamoro Organic Law which explicitly states that the regional legislature should be MILF-led.[9] Because of these interventions from the national government, the MILF in July 2025 suspended the decommissioning process of remaining combatants.[10] Until Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr stepped down in April 2026, there was a growing lack of trust in the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity (OPAPRU), which was viewed by some in MILF as no longer a neutral or an honest broker in the peace process as it supported the leadership changes in BARMM and had picked sides.[11] The appointment of the new peace adviser, Mel Senen Sarmiento, former interior and local government secretary, to succeed Galvez, was welcomed by BARMM officials and MILF leadership and appears to have mitigated the growing mistrust towards the national government in implementing the peace agreement.[12] ***However, beyond the change in leadership in OPAPRU, the national government should continue to respond to grievances among BARMM and MILF stakeholders and show its commitment in delivering on its promises. This could avert further increase in violent incidents in BARMM, which in 2024 recorded 3,000 such incidents (or a 20 per cent increase from the previous year).***[13]

[8] International Crisis Group, "Bangsamoro's Moment of Truth," pp. i–ii.
[9] Bong Montes, "The Bangsamoro Peace Process is in Trouble; President Marcos Needs to Act Now," Mindanews, 16 February 2026, from https://mindanews.com/mindaviews/2026/02/the-bangsamoro-peace-process-is-in-trouble-president-marcos-needs-to-act-now/, accessed on 26 February 2026.
[10] Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Beyond the War on Drugs," p. 4.
[11] Montes, "Bangsamoro Peace Process Is in Trouble.
[12] "BARMM admin, stakeholders support change in OPAPRU leadership," SunStar, 21 April 2026, from https://www.sunstar.com.ph/davao/local-news/barmm-admin-stakeholders-support-change-of-opapru-leadership, accessed on 17 June 2026.
[13] Bong Montes, "The Bangsamoro Peace Process in Trouble…", Ibid.

BARMM elections finally took place on 14 September 2026, after being postponed four times since first scheduled for 2022. Over 600 candidates competed for the 80-seat Bangsamoro Parliament, with over 2.3 million registered voters taking part. The regional elections took place amidst heightened tensions within the MILF leadership, increased security risks in 108 areas declared by the Commission on Elections (which includes Marawi in Lanao del Sur where the 2017 siege took place and Maguindanao where the Ampatuan massacre took place in 2009), and growing concern over broader upsurge in violence targeting military forces in the region.[14]

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) deployed over 10,000 troops in the BARMM area to secure the conduct of the elections and to monitor the peace and order situation.[15] The AFP remains the only security institution in the BARMM, given the absence of a credible and capable police force in the area; however, despite earning the respect of the residents in the region over the years, it is still ill-equipped to manage local conflicts over the long term.[16] Residents in the BARMM also view the military as more dependable than the police as the latter is seen as weaker and more politicised.[17] A local monitoring group warned of increased violence in the run up to the elections amidst deepening political polarisation in the region and resurgence of 'rido' or clan feuds.[18] Specifically, the weak implementation of the gun ban and the heightened risk of extremist violence gaining ground in the BARMM contribute to the recent resurgence of violence in the region.[19]

Although the election was relatively peaceful apart from in Cotabato City, neither the Bangsamoro Federalist Party (BFP) nor the MILF-linked United Bangsamoro Justice Party (UBJP) secured the 41 seats required for a majority in the 80-member parliament.[20] Eventually, the BFP was able to form a coalition with sufficient seats to enable interim Chief Minister Abdulraof Macacua to become the chief minister on 30 October 2026 when the BARMM parliament officially convened its first session. [21] President Marcos Jr welcomed the creation of the BFP-led majority coalition even as he expressed the national government's continuing support for Bangsamoro autonomy.[22] Among those that joined the

[14] Ava Dumaup and Shay Du, "In Numbers: First BARMM elections in numbers," Rappler, 3 September 2026, from https://www.rappler.com/philippines/in-numbers-first-barmm-parliamentary-elections/, accessed on 3 September 2026.
[15] Rex Espiritu, "Army deploys over 10,000 personnel for BARMM elections," The Manila Standard, 2 September 2026, from https://manilastandard.net/news/314786572/army-deploys-over-10000-personnel-for-barmm-elections.html, accessed on 4 September 2026.
[16] International Crisis Group, "Policing the Bangsamoro: Peace in the Southern Philippines," Asia Report No. 358, 3 September 2026, from https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2026-09/358-policing-the-bangsamoro.pdf, accessed on 3 September 2026, accessed on 3 September.
[17] Ibid.
[18] See "Bangsamoro at a Crossroads: Persistent violence and socioeconomic challenges loom over the first Parliamentary," Boto Mo Bangsamoro! Bulletin No. 3, 3 September 2026, from https://conflictalert.info/our-work/bulletins/59/bangsamoro-at-a-crossroads, accessed on 4 September 2026.
[19] Ibid.
[20] "Bangsamoro poll results trigger coalition talks," The Manila Times, 21 September 2026, from https://www.manilatimes.net/2026/09/21/regions/bangsamoro-poll-results-trigger-coalition-talks/2428993, accessed on 28 September 2026
[21] Ferdinand Cabrera, "Macacua secure 46-member coalition backing ahead of BARMM chief minister vote," Rappler, 16 October 2026, from https://www.rappler.com/philippines/elections/macacua-secures-coalition-backing-ahead-barmm-chief-minister-vote/, accessed on 19 October 2026.
[22] Ibid.

coalition with the 31-member BFP were the Lanao-based Serbisyong Inklusibo-Alyansang Progresibo Party, Raayat Democratic Party, and sectoral representatives. Some district MPs from UBJP and the Bangsamoro Grand Coalition were also part of the majority coalition.[23] The UBJP, the MILF's official political party, is not part of the governing coalition, despite the MILF's central role in negotiating and implementing the 2014 peace agreement.

Tensions remain high in BARMM, and major challenges to the regional government's capacity to govern include, among others: 1) managing the internal rift between the two major parties (BFP and UBJP); 2) earning the trust and confidence of the various constituencies in the region in the delivery of basic services; [24] 3) containing or reducing local violence through institutionalised dispute settlement, including conflicts among clans (or 'rido' conflicts);[25] and 4) implementing the various components of the peace agreement between the national government and the MILF, including completion of the decommissioning process of MILF forces, which could pave the way for a formal exit between the peace signatories. Following the BARMM elections, the MILF and the national government peace panels signed a declaration in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in late September 2026, which include the terms of reference for an updated roadmap in implementing the peace agreement. This includes implementation of the fourth and final phase of decommissioning 14,000 MILF combatants and over 2,400 weapons. The new agreement also covers socioeconomic development, security arrangements, dismantling private armed groups, civilian protection, and transitional justice and reconciliation.[26]

Meanwhile, the communist armed insurgency in the country persists despite claims by the military that it has defeated the CPP/NPA. Despite a steady decline in armed encounters over the past two years, there is still sporadic violence in communist-influenced areas in the Philippines that resulted in civilian deaths, including suspected sympathisers such as student activists, journalists, and humanitarian volunteer workers.[27] In April 2026, military operations against suspected communist rebels in Toboso, Negros Occidental resulted in 19 people killed and more than 650 residents displaced.[28] Since 2025, the NPA rebels have killed 45 suspected military spies across the country, an average of three to four each month.[29] Amidst the current policy of the government not to pursue

[23] Joselle R. Badilla, "BARMM leaders firm up coalition to rule the region," MSN.com, 17 October 2026, from https://www.msn.com/en-ph/news/other/barmm-leaders-firm-up-coalition-to-rule-region/ar-AA2efBsQ, accessed on 19 October 2026.
[24] Haironesa Domado, "The Bangsamoro's New Government Faces A Test of Public Trust," The Diplomat, 9 October 2026, from https://thediplomat.com/2026/10/the-bangsamoros-new-government-faces-a-test-of-public-trust/, accessed on 19 October 2026.
[25] Ibid.
[26] "Completion of MILF decommissioning pushed to advance Bangsamoro peace, says SAP Lagdameo," Philstar, 7 October 2026, from https://www.philstar.com/nation/2026/10/07/2561572/completion-milf-decommissioning-pushed-advance-bangsamoro-peace-says-sap-lagdameo, accessed on 19 October 2026.
[27] See Tomas Buenaventura, "The communist insurgency in the Philippines: A 'protracted people's war' continues," ACLED, 13 July 2023, from https://acleddata.com/report/communist-insurgency-philippines-protracted-peoples-war-continues, accessed on 3 September 2026.
[28] Ambo Delilan, "'Painful shared reality': the killing of 19 suspected communist rebels in Negros Occidental," Rappler, 21 April 2026, from https://www.rappler.com/philippines/visayas/killing-suspected-rebels-negros-occidental-april-19-2026/, accessed on 2 September 2026.
[29] Ibid.

peace talks with the CPP/NPA/National Democratic Front (NDF) leadership, the OPAPRU has been undertaking local peace talks and community-building efforts to end the local communist insurgency in various affected provinces.[30]

Record of Serious Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

As mentioned in the *Beyond the War on Drugs: Ongoing Atrocity Risks in the Philippines*, EJKs perpetrated against journalists and media practitioners continue under the Marcos administration despite progress in the country's overall ranking in the Global Impunity Index in 2024.[31] There are also unresolved cases of EJKs and enforced disappearances perpetrated against environmental activists, human rights advocates, indigenous peoples, as well as members of progressive party-list groups.[32] The inability of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute these cases reflects the lack of political will on the part of national leadership to implement relevant domestic laws and international conventions on human rights protection.

Weaknesses of State Structures

Relatedly, there are continuing inadequate responses by the government in addressing human rights violations, including EJKs, particularly in prosecuting and holding accountable state perpetrators of human rights violations in the country. Specifically, though there are high-level accountability efforts through the ICC, there is lack of transparency in investigations involving law enforcement agents and police officers especially during the Duterte administration's drug-war campaign. This contributed to low level of trust in the country's judicial process among family members of EJK victims. For example, prosecuting cases involving police officers and other law enforcers faced certain obstacles such as contaminated or doctored forensic evidence, unwillingness of victims' families to testify due to fears of retaliation from accused police or law enforcement agents, and lack of adequate protection for police officers as potential state witness.[33] There is also a lack of adequate forensic experts in the Philippines, although the government in June 2025 launched, as part of its human rights protection program, the creation a National Forensic Institute to train more medical personnel and experts in forensic science.[34]

---

[30] Priam Nepomuceno, "Local peace engagements providing valuable vs. insurgency," Philippine News Agency, 7 August 2026, from https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1281303, accessed on 3 September 2026.
[31] Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Beyond the War on Drugs," p. 10.
[32] Ibid., pp. 11–12.
[33] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Situation of Human Rights in the Philippines," A/HRC/44/22, advance edited version, 4 June 2020, from https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/PH/Philippines-HRC44-AEV.pdf, accessed on 28 September 2026; Dempsey Reyes, "Fortun: Autopsy of drug war victims uncovers falsified info," Inquirer.net, 13 April 2022, from https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1582229/fortun-autopsy-of-drug-war-victims-uncovers-falsified-info, accessed on 28 September 2026; and Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Beyond the War on Drugs," pp. 10, 21.
[34] Harlene Delgado, "UP Manila sets up National Forensic Institute," ABS-CBN News, 18 June 2025, from https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/health-science/2025/6/18/up-manila-launches-national-forensics-institute-1915, accessed on 10 March 2026. The institute's forensic medicine program is a joint program between the University of the Philippines College of Medicine and Monash University in Australia and supported by the Australian government.

Concurrently, the Philippines consistently ranks low in the global Rule of Law Index and Corruption Perception Index, which reflects certain aspects of the state's weaknesses such as addressing gaps related to access to justice, corruption, and human rights protection. In the 2024 Rule of Law Index, the Philippines ranked 99 out of 142 countries and ranked 13 out of 15 among East Asia Pacific countries.[35] Figure 1 below shows the pertinent score of the Philippines in the Rule of Law Index based on various dimensions. It scored lower than its global index ranking in human rights (118/142) and criminal justice (124/142) dimensions of the index. Its overall score of 0.46 did not change from the previous year and only its regional rank changed by 1.

Figure 1: The Philippines and Rule of Law Index Score[36]

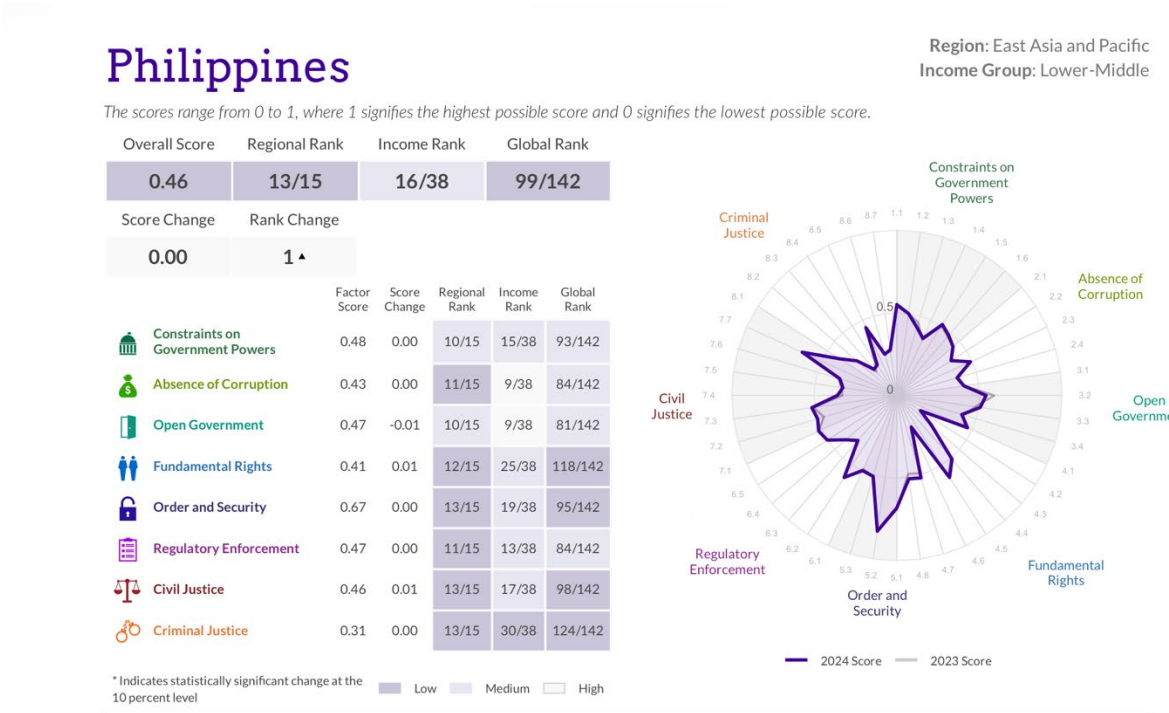


Image Source: Rule of Law Index 2025

According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), the Philippines' global ranking has been declining over the last decade.[37] Figure 2 below shows the country's CPI scores since 2012. In 2025, the Philippines ranked 120 out of 182 countries and scored 33, which is below the world average of 42. Its highest score was 38 in 2014 but has been in decline since, although it again improved its score to 36 in 2018.

[35] World Justice Project, Rule of Law Index 2024 Report, p. 143, from https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/downloads/WJPIndex2024.pdf, accessed on 14 March 2026.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Corruption Perception Index, 2025, Transparency International, from https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/philippines, accessed on 14 March 2026.

Figure 2: Philippines Corruption Perception Index, 2012-2025

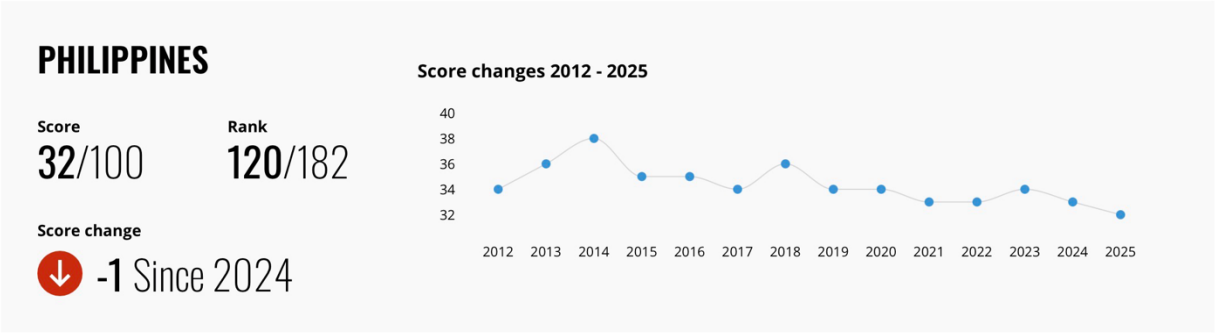


Image Source: Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index 2025

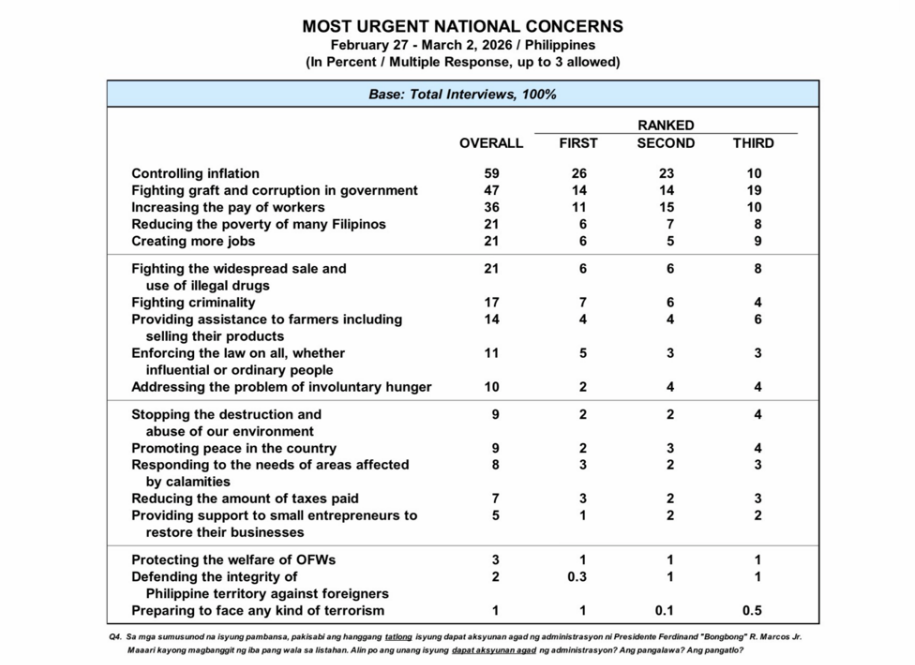
It is likely that that under the current Marcos Jr's administration, the Philippines CPI score will decline further due to the recent exposé on corruption involving legislators and other government officials in connection with flood control projects. ***While the government promised to prosecute those who are involved, the public has so far been sceptical about the state's commitment in pursuing accountability for plunder of public funds and transparency in the implementation of the annual budget. According to a public opinion survey in December 2025, 94% of the public believe that graft and corruption in the Philippines is widespread, with 71% saying it is "very widespread" and 24% saying it is "somewhat widespread."***[38] The public's belief that there is widespread corruption in government may have contributed to the fall in President Marcos Jr's net trust rating to -3% before the end of 2025 amid investigations into the flood control projects, with 41% of respondents expressing little trust in him.[39] In another public opinion poll conducted in the first quarter of 2026, 44% of respondents showed distrust in Marcos Jr, although this was 10% lower than in March 2025.[40] In the same survey, 47% of respondents pointed to graft and corruption in government as the overall second most urgent issue of concern after inflation.[41] See Figure 3 below.

Public belief that there is widespread corruption in government undermines the integrity of state institutions, including the police and courts. According to Regalado and Sun (2024), decades of corruption in the country has undermined the integrity of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and can account for the link between government performance and trust in the police. They also contend that while media exposure and consumption are ineffective in predicting Filipinos' trust in judicial authorities, the use of social media or internet are negatively associated with the public's trust in courts and weakly associated with trust in the police force. Furthermore, age and urban residency are

[38] Pulse Asia Research Inc., "December 2025 Public Opinion Survey on Corruption," 9 January 2026, from https://pulseasia.ph/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/MR3-UB2025-4-MR-on-Corruption-Final.pdf, accessed on 16 March 2026.
[39] Llanesca T. Panti, "SWS: Marcos net trust rating drops to -3%, Sara Duterte rises to 31%," GMA News online, 26 December 2025, from https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/970820/sws-marcos-net-trust-rating-drops-to-3-sara-duterte-rises-to-31/story/, accessed on 14 March 2026.
[40] Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz, "44% of Filipinos distrust Marcos 54% trust Duterte in Q1 2026–Pulse Asia," The Manila Bulletin, 16 March 2026, from https://mb.com.ph/2026/03/16/44-of-filipinos-distrust-marcos-54-trust-duterte-in-q1-2026-pulse-asia, accessed on 16 March 2026.
[41] Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz, "Survey shows inflation as top most urgent concern for Filipinos," The Manila Bulletin, 16 March 2026, from https://mb.com.ph/2026/03/16/survey-shows-inflation-remains-top-urgent-concern-of-filipinos, accessed on 16 March 2026.

highly correlated with public trust in courts and the police in the Philippines, with older age showing diminished trust in courts and those living in urban areas showing lesser trust in the police.[42]

Figure 3: Public Opinion on Urgent National Concerns[43]



MOST URGENT NATIONAL CONCERNS
February 27 - March 2, 2026 / Philippines
(In Percent / Multiple Response, up to 3 allowed)

Base: Total Interviews, 100%

	OVERALL	RANKED FIRST	RANKED SECOND	RANKED THIRD
Controlling inflation	59	26	23	10
Fighting graft and corruption in government	47	14	14	19
Increasing the pay of workers	36	11	15	10
Reducing the poverty of many Filipinos	21	6	7	8
Creating more jobs	21	6	5	9
Fighting the widespread sale and use of illegal drugs	21	6	6	8
Fighting criminality	17	7	6	4
Providing assistance to farmers including selling their products	14	4	4	6
Enforcing the law on all, whether influential or ordinary people	11	5	3	3
Addressing the problem of involuntary hunger	10	2	4	4
Stopping the destruction and abuse of our environment	9	2	2	4
Promoting peace in the country	9	2	3	4
Responding to the needs of areas affected by calamities	8	3	2	3
Reducing the amount of taxes paid	7	3	2	3
Providing support to small entrepreneurs to restore their businesses	5	1	2	2
Protecting the welfare of OFWs	3	1	1	1
Defending the integrity of Philippine territory against foreigners	2	0.3	1	1
Preparing to face any kind of terrorism	1	1	0.1	0.5

Q4. Sa mga sumusunod na isyung pambansa, pakisabi ang hanggang tatlong isyung dapat aksyunan agad ng administrasyon ni Presidente Ferdinand "Bongbong" R. Marcos Jr. Maaari kayong magbanggit ng iba pang wala sa listahan. Alin po ang unang isyung dapat aksyunan agad ng administrasyon? Ang pangalawa? Ang pangatlo?

Image Source: Pulse Asia Media Release, 16 May 2026

Capacity to Commit Atrocity Crimes

In the Philippines, the capacity to commit atrocity crimes relates to the presence of private armies linked to political clans and non-state armed groups. It is also linked to the culture of impunity among state agents such as those from the ranks of the military, police, and other law enforcement agencies. Since the restoration of the democratic order in 1986, the Philippine government has been pursuing the dismantling of private armies as mandated by the 1987 Constitution.[44] ***However, it has not been successful in implementing the constitutional mandate as the Philippine legislature has failed to pass a law that permanently bans all private armies***.[45] This partly explains the continuing risk for

[42] Julliane Regalado and Ivan Y. Sun, "Trust in Legal Institutions: An Examination of the Philippines," Asian Journal of Criminology, 2024 (19), pp. 543-544, from https://doi.org/10.1007/s11417-024-09441-1, accessed on 16 March 2026.
[43] Pulse Asia Research Inc., "1st Quarter 2026 Nationwide Survey on the Performance and Trustworthiness Ratings of the President and the Vice-President, Urgent National Concerns, and the Performance Ratings of the National Administration," media release,16 March 2026, from https://pulseasia.ph/updates/1st-quarter-2026-nationwide-survey-on-the-performance-and-trustworthiness-ratings-of-the-president-and-the-vice-president-urgent-national-concerns-and-the-performance-ratings-of-the-national-adminis/, accessed on 16 March 2026.
[44] Article XVIII, Section 24 of the 1987 Constitution states that "Private armies and other armed groups not recognized by duly constituted authority shall be dismantled. All paramilitary forces including Civilian Home Defense Forces not consistent with the citizens armed force established in this Constitution shall be dissolved or when appropriate converted into the regular force."
[45] Jake J. Maderazo, "Congress should ban private armies permanently," Inquirer.net, 7 March 2023, from https://opinion.inquirer.net/161534/congress-should-ban-private-armies-permanently, accessed on 16 March 2026.

atrocity crimes based on human rights violations, extrajudicial killings, and political violence perpetrated by private armed groups. Specifically, incidents of election-related violence persist due to rivalry among various political clans across the country during election season. The inability of the national government to dismantle private armies is linked to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, a culture of impunity among some political clans who recruit or hire individuals for security services (including retired police or military personnel or those who have gone absent without leave), as well as the presence of paramilitary forces and criminal gangs in various parts of the country.[46] Some political clans or warlords also use private armies to intimidate rival candidates or political clans and their supporters, to commit election fraud such as vote-buying and voter disenfranchisement, or simply to prevent the holding of elections, especially in conflict-affected areas.[47]

Inadequate Mitigating Factors

Mitigating factors are conditions or capacities that contribute to resilience, restraint, or protection and act as a counterbalance against atrocity risks—such as legal protections, strong civil society, independent media, local prevention mechanisms, or regional or international human rights monitoring. In the case of the Philippines, many of these factors are present, but are not robust enough to prevent violence against certain groups or individuals. For example, the 1987 Constitution mandates the Philippine Congress to enact a law that would ban political dynasties.[48] However, for the past four decades, the legislature has not passed such a law given that political clans continue to dominate Congress. Public clamour for the enactment of such a law could not have come at a more auspicious time, given the flood control corruption controversy that followed President Marcos Jr's State of the Nation Address in July 2025, in which he named several contractors with links to legislators who are involved in the scandal.[49] As of early 2026, both chambers of the legislature are now tackling several versions of anti-political dynasty bills, including limitations on the use of the party-list system by political clans running for a seat in Congress.

Once enacted into law, the ban on political dynasties can contribute to combatting corruption, opening political representation, enhancing political party competition, and promoting

[46] For a historical background and dynamics of private armed groups and political violence in the Philippines, see Kroef, Justus M. van der. "Private Armies and Extrajudicial Violence in the Philippines." *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 13 (1986): 1-21; Buchanan, Cate et al. "Armed violence in Mindanao: militia and private armies." (2011); Hall, Rosalie Arcala. "Security Arrangements Between / Among Co-located Armed Actors in the Bangsamoro (Philippines) Conflict Zone Vortragende:." (2017); Verbrugge, Boris. "Decentralization, institutional ambiguity, and mineral resource conflict in Mindanao, Philippines." *World Development* 67 (2015): 449-460; and May, Ronald James and Belinda A. Aquino. "Vigilantes in the Philippines: from fanatical cults to citizens' organizations." (1992).

[47] See for example Smith, Thomas J. and Joseph Anthony L. Reyes. "Understanding Election Violence in the Philippines: Beware the Unknown Assassins of May." *Pacific Affairs* (2021); Ballar, Kier Jesse D., Renner Paul Refani, and Jurel Yap. "Election-related violence in the Philippines: Trends, targets, and perpetrators." (2022). ASOG WORKING PAPER 22-005, available at http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4036939; Han, Jun Young. "Foreign Aid, Violence, and Electoral Support in Developing Countries: Experimental Evidence from the Philippines." *Political Studies Review* 23 (2024): 504 – 528; and Ventura, Brian. "Violence in Democracies: Patronage and Election Violence in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines." (2016).

[48] Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines (1987), art. II, sec. 26.

[49] Inquirer.net, "The clamour for anti-dynasty law," 20 February 2026, from https://opinion.inquirer.net/189862/the-clamor-for-antidynasty-law, accessed on 16 March 2026.

transparency in elections across national and local government positions. It may also help government efforts in dismantling private armies of several political clans and warlords across the country who use their resources and power to undermine the rule of law, commit human rights violations, or use violence to intimidate political rivals during elections. Furthermore, the ban on political dynasties would also contribute to strengthening accountability and constraining political patronage, especially in poor and conflict-affected areas of the Philippines where voters are subjected to bribery, intimidation, or vote-buying by warlords and political clans who want to stay in power.[50] It is also critical to promote voter civic education, especially among young people and first-time voters whose primary source of information is from the social media. Specifically, they need to have a deeper knowledge and understanding of the harms of political patronage and the importance of more competitive elections through disciplined political parties that advocate for good governance, rule of law, and human rights protection instead of continuing to support candidates that belong to political dynasties.

Triggering Factors

Triggering factors are events or developments that can catalyse or rapidly accelerate existing atrocity risks, leading underlying tensions or vulnerabilities to escalate toward mass violence. In the Philippines, the most common triggering factor is election-related violence, usually instigated by warlords and political clans using their private armies. According to the UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes, other indicators of this risk include measures taken by the international community perceived as undermining the state's sovereignty, as well as acts related to accountability processes perceived as unfair.[51] The last two indicators are particularly relevant in the Philippines in relation to the arrest and surrender of former President Rodrigo Duterte to the ICC in March 2025.[52] Specifically, this has ignited the use of hate speech and incitement by staunch supporters of the Duterte clan against individuals and groups who supported the Philippine government's decision to hand him over to the international court. They also attacked EJK victims' families who were attending the pre-trial chamber hearings in the ICC. Many of the Duterte clan's supporters, including some legislators, denounced his surrender to the ICC as an affront to the country's sovereignty. Despite the provision in Republic Act 9851 (RA 9851) allowing the surrender of Filipinos who are being investigated or prosecuted by international courts,[53] as well as the Supreme Court's unanimous resolution in March

[50] Karylle Castro, "The Ruling Family: How Political Dynasties Are Destroying Democracy in the Philippines," Democratic Erosion Consortium, 1 May 2025, from https://democratic-erosion.org/2025/05/01/the-ruling-family-how-political-dynasties-are-destroying-democracy-in-the-philippines/, accessed on 16 March 2026. See also "Elections, Political Dynasties, and Brouhaha," Socioeconomic Research Portal for the Philippines, 17 March 2025, from Philippine Institute for Development Studies https://serp-p.pids.gov.ph/feature/public/index-view?feauredtype_id=1&slug=elections-political-dynasty-and-brouhaha, accessed on 16 March 2026.
[51] United Nations, "Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes," p.17
[52] International Criminal Court, "Situation in the Philippines: Rodrigo Roa Duterte in ICC custody," press release, 12 March 2025, from https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-philippines-rodrigo-roa-duterte-icc-custody, accessed on 28 September 2026.

[53] Section 17 of Republic Act 9851 allows the Philippine government to dispense of investigation or prosecution of cases involving Filipinos if there are ongoing investigations or prosecution in international courts. See Republic Act 9851, An Act Defining And Penalizing Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity, Organizing Jurisdiction, Designating Special Courts,

2021 upholding the jurisdiction of the ICC over the country,[54] some Duterte supporters in the Senate, including some incumbent senators named as co-perpetrators in the EJKs, insisted that the ICC no longer has jurisdiction over the Philippines.[55] The use of fake news or disinformation/misinformation and hate speech through social media platforms to attack and malign judges in the international court, misrepresent the facts of the case against Duterte, and undermine the credibility of the ICC continued during the pre-trial hearings in The Hague in late February.[56]

Meanwhile, Vice President Sara Duterte faced another round of impeachment in 2026 in the lower house of Congress following the Supreme Court's decision in July 2025 that declared her impeachment that year as unconstitutional, although the highest court did not rule on her guilt or innocence based on the impeachment charges. This is another triggering factor that could further polarise the Philippines in the run up to the 2028 elections after she declared her intention to run for the highest office in February 2026, which she announced after several impeachment complaints against her were refiled in Congress. It is likely that she will use her father's continued detention in The Hague as a political issue to win more support and boost her trust and approval ratings in public opinion polls. While her recent trust and approval ratings are overall better than the ratings of President Marcos Jr, there are also significant declines in her ratings across the country.[57] Specifically, her trust rating overall declined by 7% as her distrust rating went up by 10% from a year ago. As well, her performance approval rating declined by 4% as her disapproval rating increased by 11%.[58] This may be due to the revived impeachment complaints in the lower house of Congress and her allies' attempts to muddle the flood control corruption scandal even as her sibling, who is a district representative from Davao City, received about P51 billion in infrastructure funds, part of which was for flood control projects under the Duterte administration.[59]

Overall, there are still gaps in managing triggering factors in the Philippines. This includes challenges to disarming private armies and containing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, as

---

And For Related Purposes, from https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2009/ra_9851_2009.html, accessed on 12 May 2026.

[54] "Philippines top court rules ICC has jurisdiction", France 24, 21 July 2021, from https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210721-philippines-top-court-rules-icc-has-jurisdiction, accessed on 17 March 2026.

[55] "Who are Duterte's alleged co-perpetrators named by ICC?," GMA News Online, 14 February 2026, from https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/976533/who-are-duterte-s-alleged-co-perpetrators-named-by-icc/story/, accessed on 28 September 2026.

[56] "Inside the pro-Duterte playbook: A year of disinformation vs ICC case," Rappler, February 2026 from https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/fact-check/rodrigo-duterte-playbook-disinformation-vs-icc/, accessed on 28 September 2026

[57] Pulse Asia Media Release, 16 March 2026, p. 7, from https://pulseasia.ph/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/MR2-UB2026-1-MR-on-Ratings-and-Urgent-Concerns-final.pdf, accessed on 17 March 2026.

[58] Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[59] See Germelina Lacorte and Mary Joy Salcedo, "Exec confirms Rep Duterte district's P51-B infra funds in dad's term," Inquirer.net, 10 September 2025, from https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2107023/exec-confirms-pulong-districts-p51-b-infra-funds-in-last-half-of-pas-term, accessed on 17 March 2026 and Rgil Relator, "P8-B of 1st District funds in Davao City under Duterte went to flood control projects," GMA Network, 10 September 2025, from https://www.gmanetwork.com/regionaltv/news/110137/p8b-of-1st-district-funds-in-davao-city-under-duterte-went-to-flood-control-projects/story/, accessed on 17 March 2026.

well as the lack of adequate mechanisms for monitoring and preventing the use of social media to spread disinformation/misinformation ('fake news') and use of hate speech for incitement against individuals and groups, including undermining the credibility and integrity of international accountability mechanisms such as the ICC.

The use of 'red-tagging' (or labelling individuals or groups as communist sympathisers) especially by steadfast Duterte supporters and some elements in the security sector against human rights advocates, journalists, and progressive party-list legislators should also be banned as part of preventing hate speech and incitement to violence. Specifically, law enforcement agencies must comply with the Supreme Court's ruling in 2024, which declared 'red-tagging' a threat to people's life, liberty, and security.[60]

Understanding these key atrocity risks provides the basis for identifying where and how preventive action can be taken. The next section of this report discusses the relevant strategies for atrocity prevention in the Philippines, which stakeholders may pursue as part of managing the above risk factors (for additional analysis on these risks, see *Beyond the War on Drugs: Ongoing Atrocity Risks in the Philippines*).[61]

Strategies for Atrocity Prevention

There are three major strategies that stakeholders in the Philippines may pursue as part of filling the existing gaps in atrocity prevention. These include: 1) addressing the root causes of violence in the country; 2) strengthening the capacity of the state and other non-state stakeholders in preventing atrocities; and 3) deepening the commitment of the Philippines to international norms on human rights protection and accountability for atrocity crimes through implementation of domestic laws and ratifying international conventions to address the culture of impunity, as well as demonstrating credible leadership in ASEAN in promoting human rights protection and atrocity prevention based on its experiences in peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Mindanao, for example.

1. Addressing Root Causes of Violence and Atrocities

The Philippines should give priority to addressing the root causes of conflict and violence in the short- to medium-term. This includes passing the anti-dynasty law as mandated by the Constitution and implementing it beginning in the run up to the 2028 national and local elections. As discussed in the *Beyond the War on Drugs*,[62] the continuing dominance of political dynasties or clans across the country has perpetuated the cycle of poverty and violence especially in conflict-affected areas of the

[60] "Philippine Supreme Court Rejects 'Red-tagging,'" Human Rights Watch, 8 May 2024, from https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/08/philippines-supreme-court-rejects-red-tagging, accessed on 17 June 2026.
[61] 'Beyond the War on Drugs: Ongoing Atrocity Risks in the Philippines', Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, The University of Queensland (January 2026). https://r2pasiapacific.org/files/12570/Philippines%20%20Risk%20assessment%20Jan%202026%20%20FINAL%281%29.pdf
[62] Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Beyond the War on Drugs," pp. 15–16.

Philippines. The current Congress may be able to enact the ban on political dynasties that covers only up to the second degree of consanguinity or affinity, which could reduce the number of political clans in national elective positions by 30%. The lower house is currently holding its plenary debate on its version of the bill (House Bill No. 8389), endorsed by over 170 members. Its main proponents claim that, if enacted, the bill could reduce the number of elected local government officials belonging to political clans by about 5,000 from the current 9,852.[63] Based on election data, there are 9,852 local officials out of 17,983 local level-positions (54.8%) who belong to 4,239 political clans across the country.[64]

However, it is important to also recognise that while passing this law is important, implementing its provisions is another hurdle that must be overcome. Some political clans who are unwilling to give up power may resort to legal action and question its provisions all the way to the Supreme Court. While many are expecting that Congress may be able to pass the law before the end of 2026 in time for the 2028 elections, any delay in the implementation of the law would only enable some political clans to hold on to power. At the same time, there is no guarantee that the implementation of the law would necessarily lead to an automatic reduction of political violence in the country, especially in conflict-affected areas where political clans and warlords would like to continue their rule. In this regard, the government should expect some resistance from some political clans who may resort to violence as part of their efforts in undermining the law, including the use of private armies, election fraud, and bribery. ***Successful implementation of the law requires that the government is able to exact costs and achieve accountability for those that continue to pursue and profit from dynastic practices. Otherwise, the law will simply be a symbolic veneer with no appreciable effect on this risk factor.***

Apart from the ban on political dynasties, the government should also address the economic issues related to the continuing dominance of political clans and warlords in the country, especially in poor and conflict affected communities. Specifically, in the context of the conflict in Mindanao, the national government should address the legitimate grievances of the MILF leadership on the delivery of socio-economic packages to former rebels who have already surrendered their weapons as part of the decommissioning or DDR process. Other grievances amongst BARMM stakeholders must be addressed directly by the highest leadership to prove its commitment to the peace agreement signed with the MILF. This includes progress in the rehabilitation of Marawi City as well as responding to the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by the Marawi siege in 2017 and the Zamboanga crisis in 2013. Failure to respond urgently to the socio-economic needs of conflict-affected communities in Mindanao increases the risk of resumption of violence, given that militant groups can take advantage of government failures in implementing the peace agreement and exploit the grievances of disaffected IDPs to recruit new members. This could then undermine the progress achieved in implementing the peace agreement signed in 2014. The legitimate concerns of the MILF about its political representation in the BARMM parliament including choosing their delegates must be addressed in line with Bangsamoro Organic Law.

[63] Gabriel Pabico Lalu, "Anti-dynasty bill to displace 5,000 execs from families—Adiong," Inquirer.net, 11 March 2026, from https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2194129/anti-dynasty-bill-to-displace-5000-execs-from-families-adiong, accessed on 16 March 2026.
[64] Ibid.

1.1 Pass Meaningful and Comprehensive Anti-Dynasty Law

As argued above, Congress should pass a comprehensive anti-dynasty law that would effectively limit political clans from participating in local and national elections based on consanguinity and affinity. The anti-dynasty law should also incorporate a ban on the use of private armies by political clans, especially in conflict-affected areas of the Philippines. The law should also ban political clans from directly or indirectly engaging in government projects, even as existing laws on divestment of business holdings by elected officials should be amended to prohibit family members, relatives, or friends from buying shares divested by government officials. Currently, there are no existing mechanisms to ensure the strict enforcement of and compliance by government officials with Section 9 of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees (or Republic Act 6713).[65] Some circumvent the law by 'selling' business interests to relatives, business associates, or friends who can buy the shares at book value. However, the stock certificates are still in the name of the government official who, upon leaving the government, can buy back the shares at the same price to avoid capital gains tax.[66] In 2023, the Supreme Court reversed a 2020 decision of the anti-graft court that convicted a member of the House of Representatives for violation of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (RA 3019), which involved the renewal of a government contract for another 25 years involving a company in which the legislator owned shares. The Court held that the prosecution failed to prove a conflict of interest in the renewal of the contract with the government.[67] This decision implies that prosecuting cases of conflict of interest among legislators who are involved in government contracts may be difficult to pursue unless amendments to the current anti-graft law take place. Specifically, conflict of interest should cover other practices by elected or appointed government officials to circumvent the law by exploiting its loopholes.

1.2 Amend the Party-List Law

Congress should also amend the country's Party-List law to ensure that members of political clans are not able to run as party-list representatives after reaching the maximum term limit as members of the House of Representatives or the Senate. An amendment to the party-list law should restrict representation to marginalised groups as intended by the framers of the 1987 Constitution. Some political clans have abused the party-list law by creating their own party-list groups claiming to represent certain sectors as provided in Section 5 of Republic Act 7941.[68] For example, some party-list groups were created by political clans, big business, and by the military and police. Other party-list groups carry the names of political and entertainment personalities, such as Pacquiao and Duterte.[69]

---

[65] Republic Act No. 6713, Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees (1989), sec. 9

[66] Raul J. Palabrica, "Divestment of business interests," Inquirer.net, 4 May 2015, from https://business.inquirer.net/191248/divestment-of-business-interests, accessed on 11 May 2026.

[67] Mary Ann LL Reyes, "Hidden Agenda: No Conflict of Interest," Philstar, 15 April 2023, from https://www.philstar.com/business/2023/04/15/2258943/no-conflict-interest, accessed on 11 May 2026.

[68] See Republic Act 7941, "An Act Providing For The Election Of Party-List Representatives Through The Party-List System, And Appropriating Funds Therefor", from https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/2/3614, accessed on 10 May 2026.

[69] See Michelle Abad, "Over half of party-list groups do not represent marginalised—watchdog," Rappler, 12 February 2025, from https://www.rappler.com/philippines/elections/kontra-daya-study-party-list-groups-not-represent-marginalized-february-2025/, accessed on 10 May 2026.

Some registered party-list groups are also linked to religious organisations, political clans that have vested economic interests (e.g., involved in government infrastructure projects), and dubious advocacies. In the current 20th Congress, 15 of the 64 party-list representatives, or over 20%, are business executives or own companies in the agricultural, construction, pharmaceutical, real estate, media, and energy sectors.[70] Abuse of the party-list law by political clans and other groups was enabled by the Supreme Court's 2013 decision, which ruled that parties or organisations need not represent marginalised or underrepresented sectors.[71]

1.3. Amend Omnibus Election Code

Congress should also amend the 1985 Omnibus Election Code to support the effective implementation of the anti-dynasty law and the amended party-list law. Specifically, the election code should enhance the mandate of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) to include a ban on candidates associated with political clans who use private armies, have a conflict of interest, or have violated electoral laws on vote-buying, accepting election contributions from prohibited sources, or for non-disclosure of election funds received prior to the start of election campaign period.[72]

The amended election code should also ban the appointment of any person to the COMELEC who served as election lawyer to any local or national candidates within a period of 10 to 15 years prior to his or her appointment. This will ensure that appointed commissioners and other officials in the election body do not have conflict of interest when certain cases are filed against sitting elected officials who have been their former clients. For example, two cases were filed before the COMELEC after the 2025 elections against two sitting senators for violation of the election code related to election funds received from donors in their Statement of Contributions and Expenditures (SOCE). The first case involved Senator Escudero who received P30 million from a contractor involved in the government projects, including flood control, to support his election campaign in 2022. The other senator, Senator Marcoleta, received donations from individuals but failed to disclose their names in his SOCE because they requested him not to disclose their names. The COMELEC terminated the investigations into the two senators, but some civic groups filed a case before the Supreme Court questioning the decision of the election commission.[73] Although the current COMELEC chair is a former election lawyer of Escudero who recused himself from the case, his conflict of interest in the termination of the investigation was criticised by a civic group as setting a 'dangerous precedent' in which candidates could accept donations from individuals tied to government projects.[74] In April 2026, the Ombudsman announced that he will file plunder charges against Senator Escudero for his alleged

[70] Vin N. Buenaagua, "Congtractors: how big business took over the party-list system," UP Halalan, 12 May 2026, from https://halalan.up.edu.ph/congtractors-how-big-business-took-over-the-partylist-system/?brid=YWdncwEL3bbIl43nw0vT626S0vdF, accessed on 12 May 2026.
[71] Michelle Abad, "Over half of the party-list groups do not represent the marginalised—watchdog," ibid.
[72] See Victoria Tulad, "COMELEC seeks to revise decades-old Omnibus Election Code," ABS-CBN, 16 November 2023, from https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/11/16/23/comelec-seeks-to-revise-decades-old-omnibus-election-code, accessed on 10 May 2026.
[73] See Editorial, "Legal hairsplitting," Philstar, 31 March 2026, from https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2026/03/31/2517980/editorial-legal-hairsplitting, accessed on 10 May 2026.
[74] Krixia Subingsubing, "Conflict of interest cited in pro-Escudero Comelec ruling," Inquirer.net, 30 November 2025, from https://www.inquirer.net/461853/conflict-of-interest-cited-in-pro-chiz-comelec-ruling/, accessed on 10 May 2026.

involvement in the flood control corruption controversy.[75] With regard to the case of Senator Marcoleta, the election commission ended the investigation due to a "lack of evidence that he committed an election offense," even though he publicly admitted that he did not name the donors who contributed to his election campaign funds.[76] The Ombudsman filed plunder and graft and corruption charges against Senator Marcoleta who was detained, together with his co-accused, after the anti-graft court ordered his arrest in July 2026. Plunder is a non-bailable offence under Philippine law.[77]

1.4 Fully Implement Peace Agreement with MILF and Respond to Grievances

The government should fully implement the peace agreement with the MILF and effectively respond to the legitimate grievances of the group and other BARMM stakeholders. Specifically, it should deliver on the promised economic and financial aid to former rebel forces as part of the decommissioning process without further delay. The decision of former peace adviser Carlito Galvez to step down as head of OPAPRU augurs well for the rebuilding of trust between the national government and the MILF, along with other stakeholders in BARMM. This is because the new peace adviser, Mel Senen Sarmiento, oversaw local governance and peace and order programs as secretary of the interior and local government under former President Benigno Aquino III.[78] It was under President Aquino III that the government signed the peace agreement with the MILF in 2014.

1.5 Enhance Protection of Journalists and Media Practitioners

Protection of journalists and media practitioners in the Philippines should be a priority in addressing the root causes of violence and conflict in the country. Although the country slightly improved its ranking in the 2026 World Press Freedom Index (from 116 in 2025 to 114 in 2026), the annual world report noted that the Philippines continues to be one of the most dangerous places for journalists.[79] As noted in the companion atrocity risk assessment report[80], there were 184 documented cases of media attacks in the Philippines between July 2022 and April 2025.[81] The Centre for Media Freedom and Responsibility recommended the following steps that the government and state institutions

---

[75] John Eric Mendoza, "Ombudsman: Plunder raps vs Escudero, Romualdez set in May," Inquirer.net, 7 April 2026, from https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2207912/ombudsman-plunder-raps-vs-escudero-romualdez-set-in-may, accessed on 10 May 2026.

[76] Sandy Locus, "Comelec: No evidence Marcoleta committed election offense," GMA News, 18 March 2026, from https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/980470/comelec-no-evidence-marcoleta-committed-election-offense/story/, accessed on 11 May 2026.

[77] Vince Lopez, Joel E Zurbano, and Jimbo Gule, "Marcoleta, Defensor in jail after Sandiganbayan orders arrest," The Manila Standard, 6 July 2026, from https://manilastandard.net/news/crime-courts/314762005/marcoleta-arrested-over-p75-million-plunder-case.html, accessed on 2 September 2026.

[78] "Galvez steps down as peace adviser, ex-DILG chief eyed as successor," BNC.com, 21 April 2026, from https://bnc.bilyonaryo.com/galvez-steps-down-as-peace-adviser-ex-dilg-chief-eyed-as-successor/news/,
Accessed on 10 May 2026.

[79] See "The Philippines," World Press Freedom Index 2026, https://rsf.org/en/country/philippines, accessed on 11 May 2026.

[80] 'Beyond the War on Drugs: Ongoing Atrocity Risks in the Philippines', Asia-Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, The University of Queensland (January 2026).

[81] "The State of Media Freedom in the Philippines in 2025," CMFR, 3 May 2025, from https://cmfr-phil.org/press-freedom-protection/press-freedom/the-state-of-media-freedom-in-the-philippines/, accessed on 11 May 2026.

should take to protect journalists and media practitioners in the Philippines: 1) sustain the pursuit of justice for past unresolved cases; 2) strengthen the government's capacity for prompt prosecution, including the creation of a special unit in the Department of Justice that focuses on press freedom violations; 3) protect at-risk journalists, including extending legal aid, emergency support, relocation assistance, and digital security; 4) dismantle the state's red-tagging apparatus, including penalties against state actors, particularly those working in the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC); 5) pursue institutional reform and transparency, specifically by providing regular updates on the status of investigations on attacks against journalists; and 6) seek international oversight and solidarity, by pursuing cooperative engagement with international press bodies, human rights organisations, and the United Nations to sustain domestic reforms for protection of media practitioners and journalists.[82]

In 2019, the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) and International Media Support (IMS) published the *Philippine Plan of Action for the Safety of Journalists*, which among others recommended pursuing flagship activities that include policy advocacy and engagement with various state agencies involved in the criminal justice system.[83] Specifically, it called for the creation of a legal defence fund for journalists, development and conduct of policy advocacy in partnership with the Supreme Court, the Department of Justice, the Public Attorney's Office, the National Bureau of Investigation, and the National Prosecution Service. The report also listed the advocacy engagement of various media groups in the Philippines with state-led mechanisms and agencies, including the Philippine National Police, the Department of Justice, the National Bureau of Investigation, as well as the Philippine Human Rights Commission, among others. This Plan of Action to protect journalists in the country should be included in the national strategy for atrocity prevention.

2. Strengthening the State's Atrocity Prevention Capacities

The Philippine government should also prioritise strengthening its domestic atrocity prevention capacities through education and training, policy-relevant research, and the creation of mechanisms for monitoring violence. A whole-of-government approach to atrocity prevention is necessary to ensure that there is a comprehensive downstream and upstream coordination between state institutions at the national level and local government units, particularly those in conflict-affected areas of the country.

2.1 Establish a national mechanism for monitoring violence

Part of addressing the root causes of conflict in the Philippines entails the establishment of a national mechanism for monitoring violence and developing an early warning and early response system. This mechanism should not be limited to government agencies but should also involve other stakeholders from academia, think tanks, civil society groups, media practitioners, and local government units. This mechanism may serve as a repository of policy-relevant research and data that will be useful for managing atrocity risks as well as developing policy responses to address the root causes of violence

[82] Ibid.
[83] See Philippine Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists, Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication, 2019, from https://aijc.com.ph/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Final_phil_planofaction_safetyofjournalists.pdf, accessed on 11 May 2026.

and conflict across the country. A government inter-agency task force may be convened as an initial step towards creating this national mechanism, which may involve members of the legislature, the national human rights commission, the judiciary, and the security sector. Non-government stakeholders may also be appointed to this mechanism to serve as advisory members based on their relevant advocacies, expertise, and practical experience in Women, Peace and Security, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and atrocity prevention.

2.2 Enhance Capacity in Combatting Human Trafficking and Cyber Crimes

Although the Philippines kept its Tier 1 ranking in the 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report of the US State Department, there are still continuing gaps in the government's efforts to combat this problem. Specifically, the state has failed to identify thousands of potential trafficking victims in online scam operations even as some state agents are allegedly complicit in the commission of these operations.[84] While the government has cracked down on Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGOs) by banning them,[85] there are still reports of continuing illegal gambling operations run by foreign nationals who have overstayed their visas. These illegal operations are involved in illegal job recruitment and forced labour in scam hubs, including the use of fraudulent SMS messages, spam messaging, and other cybercrime activities.[86] In April 2026, the Philippine government announced a new inter-agency standard operating procedures (SOPs) in combatting human trafficking in relation to illegal gambling operations and scam hubs in the country. Specifically, the Presidential Anti-Organised Crime Commission (PAOCC) leading the country's law enforcement and cybercrime agencies in gathering intelligence, processing digital evidence, handling of victims and suspects, preserving assets, and prosecuting suspects.[87] With help from the UN Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNDOC), the new operating procedures aim to address existing gaps in Philippine law enforcement efforts in dealing with illegal gambling operations in the country that continue to engage in human trafficking and other cybercrime activities. Some of these operations have transformed themselves to business outsourcing firms, and livestream online gaming and betting operations often in areas outside the national capital region or Metro Manila. Some corrupt local government officials tolerate these illegal operations as they generate local revenue.[88] As highlighted in the accompanying risk assessment report, the scale and nature of these cyber operations may create conditions for atrocity crimes, particularly where they involve largescale human trafficking, forced labour, and practices amounting to slavery.

---

[84] Bea Cuadra, "Philippines maintain top anti-trafficking rank despite corruption, gaps in victim protection," ABS-CBN, 1 October 2025, from https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/nation/2025/10/1/philippines-maintains-top-anti-trafficking-rank-despite-corruption-gaps-in-victim-protection-0605, accessed on 11 May 2026.

[85] President Marcos in October 2025 signed the Anti-POGO Act (RA 12312), which effectively banned the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations (POGO), from https://pco.gov.ph/news_releases/pbbm-signs-into-law-anti-pogo-act-of-2025-institutionalizing-ban-on-pogos/, accessed on 11 May 2026.

[86] Jason Sigales, "PNP: More illegal text blasters sold online from closed Pogos," MSN.com, 9 May 2026, from https://www.msn.com/en-ph/news/other/pnp-more-illegal-text-blasters-sold-online-from-closed-pogos/ar-AA22zsBQ, accessed on 11 May 2026.

[87] Sam Beltran, "Can Philippines' new anti-POGO playbook rein in fast-moving scam hubs?," South China Morning Post, 30 April 2026, from https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3351903/can-philippines-new-anti-pogo-playbook-rein-fast-moving-scam-hubs, accessed on 12 May 2026.

[88] Ibid.

2.3 Establish a regular training course on atrocity prevention for government agencies

Among the critical areas for strengthening atrocity prevention capacity are education and training in human rights protection; Women, Peace and Security; conflict prevention; human security; civilian protection; and accountability for atrocity crimes. Police officers, military personnel, and other law enforcement agents should be mandated to undergo basic training on atrocity prevention that may include these issue areas, as well as other courses that would deepen their knowledge and understanding of domestic laws and international norms such as international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The Philippine National Police (PNP), the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), the Department of Defense (DND), the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and other pertinent government agencies should adopt a common curriculum for training and education in atrocity prevention, in coordination with various academic institutions in the Philippines and abroad.

2.4 Develop partnership with foreign institutions in atrocity prevention

Partnerships with foreign institutions could also be pursued and expanded to cover relevant issues that may be related to atrocity prevention such as the use of artificial intelligence (AI), social media platforms, and cybersecurity. The government could also consider hosting a regular national and regional dialogues or conferences on these issues to enable various stakeholders in the country to exchange ideas, good practices, and possible joint research projects.

The Philippines may also pursue academic exchanges through fellowships and scholarships with institutions in foreign countries that could contribute to enhancing atrocity prevention capacities of the state and other stakeholders. Some universities in the Philippines may also consider offering courses related to human rights protection, atrocity prevention, and civilian protection, which other universities in Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and Thailand already do for undergraduate students.[89] This will require increasing the national budget for universities and government institutions to support education and training programs related to atrocity prevention. The national government should prioritise increased funding for local governments and academic institutions that have done training, research, and advocacy work in conflict-affected areas in the Philippines.

3. Deepening Commitment to International Norms

The Philippines should show its commitment to international norms such as international human rights law, international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions. One way of doing this is to seriously consider its return as a state party to the Rome Statute.[90] Rejoining the ICC is an important policy issue that the executive and legislative branches of the Philippine government must resolve given the continuing weaknesses of state institutions in pursuing accountability for drug-related EJKs during former President Duterte's term. This should also be a priority concern for the government considering the continuing attacks by steadfast supporters of the Duterte clan against

[89] In Thailand, the Faculty of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University has an undergraduate elective course on human rights, human security, and atrocity prevention. A similar course on atrocity prevention is also offered in Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia.

[90] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 17 July 1998, 2187 UNTS 90. The Philippines' withdrawal from the Statute took effect on 17 March 2019.

victims' families and the ICC, as well as their sustained efforts in falsely characterising his surrender to the international court as an affront to national sovereignty. In the run-up to the 2028 elections, Duterte's detention in The Hague will be a polarising political issue that Vice President Sara Duterte (who, as previously noted, already expressed her decision to run for the highest office in February 2026) will exploit as part of her camp's efforts to consolidate her political base in the Visayas and Mindanao where she remains popular. It remains uncertain whether the Senate can muster the 2/3 votes to convict her of the impeachment charges as some of the senators are known Duterte allies or are unwilling to vote for her conviction if they are running for another term in 2028.

3.1 Ending the Culture of Impunity and Promoting Accountability

The culture of impunity in the Philippines continues to pose a major challenge to promoting accountability, rule of law, and justice. On 12 May 2026, the House of Representatives impeached Vice President Sara Duterte by 255 members. However, a change in the Senate leadership took place on the same day as a new majority bloc formed after 13 senators ousted former Senate President Vicente Sotto. The timing of the move by the new majority bloc composed of pro-Duterte senators may be connected to the impeachment of the vice president.[91] Under the 1987 Constitution, the Senate is supposed to forthwith convene as a trial court to decide her guilt or innocence based on the articles of impeachment passed by the lower chamber.[92] However, with the formation of the new majority bloc, it appeared that there were not enough votes (16 or 2/3 of the 24-member Senate) to convict Sara Duterte. Even prior to the change in the Senate leadership, some pro-Duterte senators said that they would oppose convening the Senate into a trial court if the Vice President is impeached.[93] Even so, the Senate convened as an impeachment court in May 2026. The short-lived change in the Senate leadership lasted only for a few weeks as some of the senators who joined the 'coup' re-joined the former minority bloc in early June 2026.[94] Under the reconstituted majority bloc, the Senate continued as an impeachment court and began its hearings on 6 July 2026.

3.2 Enforcing Section 17 of the Domestic Law Against Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity

Senator Ronald dela Rosa, former chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP) under the Duterte administration, had been in hiding following reports that a warrant of arrest had been issued by the ICC in November 2025. He is alleged to be one of the co-perpetrators of crimes against humanity as he was the main enforcer of Duterte's anti-drug war policy that resulted in at least 6,000 deaths due to extra-judicial killings committed by PNP officers.[95]

---

[91] Ram Superable, "Minority seeks ouster of Sotto ahead of trial," Manila Standard, 11 May 2026, from https://manilastandard.net/news/politics/314738102/minority-seeks-ouster-of-sotto-ahead-of-trial.html, accessed on 12 May 2026.
[92] Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines (1987), art. XI, sec. 3(4) and (6).
[93] Edjen Oliquino, "Lacson vows to oppose efforts to block Senate impeachment court for Sara's trial," Daily Tribune, 9 May 2026, from https://tribune.net.ph/2026/05/09/lacson-vows-to-oppose-efforts-to-block-senate-impeachment-court-for-saras-trial, accessed on 12 May 2026.
[94] Jamaine Punzalan, Jonathan de Santos, and RG Cruz, "Escudero breaks Senate impasse despite Cayetano group's boycott; Gatchalian elected as Senate president pro tempore," ABS-CBN, 3 June 2026, from https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/nation/2026/6/3/senate-plenary-session-majority-minority-1501, accessed on 2 September 2026.
[95] "Who are Duterte's alleged co-perpetrators named by ICC?," GMA News Online, 14 February 2026, from https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/976533/who-are-duterte-s-alleged-co-perpetrators-named-by-icc/story/, accessed on 28 September 2026.

On 12 May 2026, he showed up in the Senate chamber to cast his vote that led to the ouster of Senate President Sotto. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) tried to arrest him before the start of the Senate's session after serving him the ICC's warrant of arrest, but he refused to surrender and sought the protection of the Senate. Other pro-Duterte senators defended Senator dela Rosa's refusal to surrender to authorities on a false claim that no senator may be arrested while the chamber is in session, even though there were already cases when senators surrendered after warrants of arrest were issued by local courts.[96]

Under Section 17 of RA 9851, which is the domestic law on genocide and crimes against humanity, the government may surrender to international tribunals any Filipino national who is facing investigation or prosecution for atrocity crimes.[97] The refusal of the then pro-Duterte majority bloc in the Senate to surrender dela Rosa to authorities is another clear example of how the culture of impunity is still a major obstacle in ensuring that the rule of law and accountability are complied with especially by legislators who are supposed to uphold these principles. Dela Rosa sought the intervention of the Supreme Court by asking for a temporary restraining order and judicial protection to block his impending arrest and transfer to the ICC.[98] The international court confirmed that the warrant of arrest was issued in November 2025, which was served only on 12 May 2026 after the senator showed up in the Senate.[99]

As part of adopting a whole-of-society approach in promoting accountability for atrocity crimes, the government should support efforts by civil society groups to continue gathering evidence related to the EJKs committed by state agents during Duterte's drug war campaign. Specifically, the creation of the EJK Truth Commission by various civil society organisations in May 2026 to gather and document more information about human rights abuses and testimonies of victims, survivors, and their families related the drug war killings should help the government build cases against perpetrators of atrocity crimes.[100] The public record and recommendations that the commission produces may later be useful inputs in the government's efforts in developing strategies for preventing future atrocities in the country.

---

[96] Third Anne Peralta-Malonzo, "72 hours of chaos: A timeline of Senate standoff and Dela Rosa's escape," SunStar, 15 May 2026, from https://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/72-hours-of-chaos-a-timeline-of-senate-standoff-and-dela-rosas-escape, accessed on 28 September 2026

[97] See Republic Act 9851, An Act Defining And Penalizing Crimes Against International Humanitarian Law, Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity, Organizing Jurisdiction, Designating Special Courts, And For Related Purposes, from https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2009/ra_9851_2009.html, accessed on 12 May 2026.

[98] Joahna Casilao, "Bato dela Rosa appeals before SC anew for judicial protection amidst ICC warrant, PNP subpoena," GMA News, 11 May 2026, from https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/987234/bato-dela-rosa-supreme-court-icc-warrant/story/, accessed on 12 May 2026.

[99] "ICC confirms arrest warrant for Philippine Senator Roland Dela Rosa over war on drugs," ABC.net.au, 12 May 2026, from https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-05-11/icc-arrest-warrant-for-philippine-senator-roland-dela-rosa/106667806, accessed on 12 May 2026.

[100] Zen Hernandez, "Civilian-led truth commission launched to probe EJKs, preserve victims' stories," ABS-CBN, 27 May 2026, from https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/nation/2026/5/27/civilian-led-truth-commission-launched-to-probe-ejks-preserve-victims-stories-1629, accessed on 2 September.

3.3 Ratifying the UN Convention on Enforced Disappearance

The Philippines should give priority to ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons Against Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), which is the only international human rights convention that the country has not ratified.[101] The continuing refusal of the government to ratify this convention is based on the argument that it is redundant as there is already a domestic law in place against enforced disappearance. However, this claim is belied by the fact that various international human rights groups have consistently identified the Philippines as a hotspot for enforced disappearance. [102] In the recent Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva in June 2025, the UN special rapporteur called on the Philippine government to ratify the treaty in light of the continuing culture of impunity in the country. Moreover, despite the domestic law against enforced disappearance that was enacted in 2012, as of August 2025 there has been no conviction yet under the law and no budget has been allocated for its implementation under the Commission on Human Rights.[103]

[101] Dominic Gutoman, "The long ovedue ratification of UN convention on enforced disappearance in PH," Bulatlat.com, 30 August 2025, from https://storage.googleapis.com/qurium/www.bulatlat.com/2025-08-30-the-long-overdue-ratification-of-un-convention-on-enforced-disappearance-in-ph.html, accessed on 12 May 2026.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.

Conclusion

This report has discussed key atrocity risk factors facing the Philippines and the existing gaps in atrocity prevention. Based on the foregoing discussion, the government should consider three strategies that would enhance the state's capacity to prevent atrocity crimes. Specifically, it should focus on: 1) addressing the root causes of violence and atrocities; 2) strengthening its capacity to prevent atrocity crimes; and 3) deepening its commitment to international norms by rejoining the ICC, enforcing Section 17 of RA 9851 by surrendering those accused of EJKs during Duterte's drug war to the ICC, ratifying ICPPED, and demonstrating a credible leadership role in ASEAN on human rights protection and accountability for atrocity crimes. These strategies must be anchored in partnerships between state and non-state stakeholders, involve national and local constituencies, and prioritise national concerns related to corruption, political dynasties, and accountability for human rights violations and atrocity crimes. The table below summarises the strategies against the risk factors in the Philippines.

Table 2: Strategies for Prevention

Prevention Strategies	Relevant Risk Factors
1. Addressing root causes of violence and armed conflicts	
1.1 Pass meaningful and comprehensive anti-dynasty law	1. State weaknesses: corruption, conflict of interest, private armies, proliferation of small arms 2. Inadequate mitigating factors: patronage politics, dominance and control of political institutions by political clans at national and local levels
1.2 Amend Party List Law	1. State weaknesses: corruption, conflict of interest 2. Inadequate mitigating factors: patronage politics
1.3 Amend Omnibus Election Code	1. State weaknesses: corruption, rule of law 2. Inadequate mitigating factors: accountability for election violations (e.g., conflict of interest, non-reporting of election funds)
1.4 Fully implement peace agreement with MILF and address grievances	1. Situations of armed conflict: Decommissioning process incomplete, legitimate grievances against national government, rido conflict 2. Capacity to commit atrocities: security forces, private armies, and MILF's decentralised command structure
1.5 Enhance protection for journalists and media practitioners	1. Record of serious violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law 2. State weaknesses: rule of law, accountability 3. Inadequate mitigating factors: law enforcement agencies' inability to investigate and prosecute EJKs committed against journalists since 1986, as well as environmental activists, farmers, Indigenous peoples, and members of progressive party-list organisations
2.Strengthening the state's capacity for atrocity prevention	
2.1 Establish national mechanism for monitoring violence	1. Situations of armed conflict: implementing peace agreement with MILF and decommissioning of forces 2. State weaknesses: capacity to respond to escalation of violence 3. Triggering factors: election-related violence, use of hate speech and incitement to violence, 'red-tagging' of individuals and groups by security forces and Duterte loyalists
2.2 Enhance capacity to combat human trafficking and cybercrime	1. State weaknesses: corruption among law enforcement agents, limited capacity to combat transnational criminal networks

	2. Inadequate mitigating factors: POGOs banned but many of them have transformed into scam hubs across the country; limited state capacity to protect victims of human trafficking and scam hubs
2.3 Establish training course on atrocity prevention for government officials	1. State weaknesses: limited capacity, resources, and training for law enforcement agents on human rights protection, rule of law, and accountability for atrocity crimes 2. Situations of armed conflict: unstable peace in Mindanao; proliferation of private armies, internally displaced persons in conflict areas, and rehabilitation of conflict areas (e.g., Marawi and Zamboanga)
2.4 Develop partnership with foreign institutions in atrocity prevention	1. State weaknesses: limited government resources for promoting human rights protection and atrocity prevention 2. Inadequate mitigating factors: limited engagement with foreign institutions in capacity building for atrocity prevention including expanding local pool of experts in forensic investigation
3.Deepening commitment to international norms and enhancing accountability for atrocity prevention	
3.1 Ending culture of impunity and promoting accountability	1. Record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law 2. State weaknesses: corruption, inability to prosecute cases involving law enforcement agents involved in EJKs, including alleged perpetrators of atrocity crimes under Duterte's drug war; weak enforcement of ban on private armies 3. Inadequate mitigating factors: unresolved cases of EJKs against journalists, environmental activists, and human rights advocates; use of 'red-tagging' to attack, harass, and intimidate journalists, activists, and progressive party-list legislators by security forces and pro-Duterte supporters 4. Capacity to commit atrocity crimes: political clans and their private armies; rido or clan conflict in Mindanao; proliferation of small arms and light weapons 5. Triggering factors: election-related violence; polarisation after arrest and surrender of Duterte and his alleged co-perpetrators in the ICC
3.2 Enforcing Section 17 of domestic law (RA9851) against genocide, crimes against humanity, and violations of international humanitarian law	1. Record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law 2. State weaknesses: withdrawal from Rome Statute in 2019 due to charges filed in the ICC against Duterte; no charges filed against Duterte in local courts for violation of RA 9851 in relation to the drug war-related EJKs 3. Inadequate mitigating factors: Marcos administration's enforcement of ICC warrant of arrest against Duterte's alleged co-perpetrators constrained by domestic political factors including polarisation
3.3 Ratifying UN Convention on Enforced Disappearances	1. Record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law 2. State weaknesses: refusal of the government to ratify the treaty as it asserts that a domestic law already exists to deal with enforced disappearances in the country 3. Inadequate mitigating factors: no cases filed and prosecuted under domestic law on enforced disappearances; no budget allocated to the national Commission on Human Rights to implement domestic law