

**The Philippines – Very High/Ongoing:**

The Philippines remains at a very high risk for atrocities as the Philippine National Police (PNP) at the beginning of the year more intensified anti-drug war campaign against middle- and high-value targets. Extra-judicial killings are also expected continue in light of the government’s anti-communist insurgency operations and stalled peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF). In Mindanao, attacks by ISIS-affiliated groups against the military and civilians are likely to continue.

As of 30 November 2019, the PNP reported that there were 5,552 drug suspects who were killed in the government’s anti-drug war operations. Over 8,000 high value targets were arrested that include 222 foreign nationals, 297 elected officials, 82 uniformed personnel, and 347 government employees.<sup>i</sup> In late December, the PNP also announced that it will roll out the use of body cameras by policemen in 2020 as part of “improving the government’s drug war image” and dispel perceptions about police brutality.<sup>ii</sup> Public opinion remains highly supportive of the government’s anti-drug war, with 73% believing that the number of drug users in the Philippines has decreased significantly since President Duterte took office in 2016. However, 76% of the respondents believe that multiple human rights abuses were committed in the anti-drug war<sup>iii</sup> and 56 % agreed that the UN Human Rights Council should investigate the EJKs in connection with the drug war.<sup>iv</sup> In October, the PNP Internal Affairs Service reported that 461 suspects died in police custody since President Duterte took over in 2016.<sup>v</sup> Meanwhile, in an effort to address concerns about PNP corruption, the Department of Justice said that it will criminal charges against former PNP Chief Oscar Albayalde and 12 of his former subordinates for allowing a drug lord to escape in exchange for Pesos 10 million.<sup>vi</sup> Notwithstanding all these concerns, the approval rating of President Duterte remains very high at 87% based on public opinion survey in December 2019.<sup>vii</sup>

The risk of atrocities in the Philippines are expected to continue in relation to extra-judicial killings. A Senate panel that investigated the series of killings in Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental between October 2018 and July 2019 recommended that the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) investigate police, military, and anti-communist vigilante groups for human rights violations and file appropriate charges. Farmers, human rights defenders, church workers, and unarmed civilians were targeted in the killings.<sup>viii</sup> Meanwhile, a human rights advocacy group said that the Philippines was deadliest place among 23 countries for the third year with 50 people killed between January to November 2019 for protecting land against encroaching industries. It was also the deadliest country for land rights activists.<sup>ix</sup> Between September and November 2019, four environment protection activists were killed in country.<sup>x</sup> Since July 2016, a total of 46 judges, prosecutors, and lawyers have been killed in the country as of 28 January 2020.<sup>xi</sup>

In Mindanao, suspected ISIS-linked militants launched a grenade attack near a Catholic Church in December, injuring 23 people including 9 soldiers. The AFP blamed the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) for the attack, although the latter denied responsibility for the attack claiming that they do not attack civilians.<sup>xii</sup> Martial law in Mindanao was lifted by the government following its imposition in May 2017 in the aftermath of the Marawi siege by ISIS-affiliated militants. In December, a local court convicted Andal Ampatuan Jr. and other members of his clan for the murder of 58 people that included 32 journalists in the worst-election related violence in the country in November 2009. The massacre, which took place in Maguindanao, resulted in the signing of the Philippines domestic law against genocide and crimes against humanity by President Arroyo.

## Recommendations

### The Government of The Philippines should:

1. Take positive steps to fulfil its responsibility to protect by adhering to international human rights law in its anti-drug war campaign. It should address the public's continuing concerns about human rights violations committed by police and other law enforcers in the country.
2. Address the continuing violations of human rights by police, military, and anti-vigilante groups in relation to the government's counter-insurgency campaign by filing appropriate charges against violators.
3. Investigate attacks and extra-judicial killings of judicial officials, lawyers, human rights defenders, as well as land rights and environmental activists and prosecute the perpetrators of EJKs.

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<sup>i</sup> Cathrine Gonzales, "PNP to intensify drug war vs middle-level, high-value targets in 2020," Inquirer News online, 6 January 2020, from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1209448/pnp-to-intensify-drug-war-vs-middle-level-high-value-targets-in-2020>, accessed on 30 January 2020.

<sup>ii</sup> Darwin Pesco, "PNP to roll out body cameras in 2020 to change drug war image," Manila Times online, 27 December 2019, from <https://www.manilatimes.net/2019/12/27/supplements/pnp-to-roll-out-body-cameras-in-2020-to-change-drug-war-image/667889/>, accessed on 30 January 2020.

<sup>iii</sup> Melissa Luz Lopez, "SWS: Majority of Filipinos see many abuses, killings in drug war," CNN Philippines online, 13 January 2020, from <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2020/1/13/SWS-Filipinos-see-abuses-drug-war.html?fbclid=IwAR0xPILMLHmA78ENre-VJnSfdwW4XqbVsndVAYtb4LtSrQNoGfZhDhZILU>, accessed on 30 January 2020.

<sup>iv</sup> "Fourth Quarter 2019 Social Weather Survey: 76% of Filipinos see many human rights abuses in the administration's war on illegal drugs, 24% see few," Social Weather Stations, 12 January 2020, from <https://www.sws.org.ph/swsmain/artcldisppage/?artcsyscode=ART-20200112221436>, accessed on 13 January 2020.

<sup>v</sup> Rambo Talabong, "Over 450 die under police custody since Duterte assumed office," Rappler.com, 22 October 2019, from [https://www.rappler.com/nation/243157-deaths-under-police-custody-since-duterte-assumed-office-2016?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_campaign=Echobox&utm\\_source=Facebook%23Echobox=1571738072](https://www.rappler.com/nation/243157-deaths-under-police-custody-since-duterte-assumed-office-2016?utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_source=Facebook%23Echobox=1571738072), accessed on 22 October 2019.

<sup>vi</sup> Donna Pazzibugan, "DOJ charges Albayalde, 12 'ninja cops' with graft," Inquirer News online, 17 January 2020, from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1214299/doj-charges-albayalde-12-ninja-cops-with-graft>, accessed on 30 January 2020.

<sup>vii</sup> Catherine S. Valente, "Duterte approval rating up in 2019," The Manila Times online, 21 December 2019, from [https://www.manilatimes.net/2019/12/21/news/national/duterte-approval-rating-up-in-2019/666069/?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook%23Echobox=1576863900](https://www.manilatimes.net/2019/12/21/news/national/duterte-approval-rating-up-in-2019/666069/?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook%23Echobox=1576863900), accessed on 21 December 2019.

<sup>viii</sup> Marchel Espina, "Negros killings: Senate panels recommend probe of cops, army, vigilante group," Rappler.com, 28 January 2020, from [https://www.rappler.com/nation/250350-senate-panels-recommend-probe-policemen-army-vigilante-group-negros-killings?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_campaign=Echobox&utm\\_source=Facebook%23Echobox=1580168104](https://www.rappler.com/nation/250350-senate-panels-recommend-probe-policemen-army-vigilante-group-negros-killings?utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_source=Facebook%23Echobox=1580168104), accessed on 30 January 2020.

<sup>ix</sup> Rina Chandran, "Study: PH deadliest nation for farmers, indigenous people over land disputes," ABS-CBN news online, 11 December 2019, from <https://news.abs-cbn.com/spotlight/12/11/19/study-ph-deadliest-nation-for-farmers-indigenous-people-over-land-disputes>, accessed on 11 December 2019.

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<sup>x</sup> Nick Aspinwall, “Threats, raids and murders stalk Filipino environment activists,” Al Jazeera online, 6 December 2019, from [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/threats-raids-murders-stalk-filipino-environment-activists-191128071615516.html?utm\\_source=hootsuite&utm\\_medium=facebook](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/threats-raids-murders-stalk-filipino-environment-activists-191128071615516.html?utm_source=hootsuite&utm_medium=facebook), accessed on 6 December 2019.

<sup>xi</sup> Jodesz Gavilan, “LIST: Judges, prosecutors, lawyers killed under Duterte gov't, Rappler.com, 29 January 2020, from [https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/216239-list-judges-prosecutors-lawyers-killed-under-duterte-government?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook%23Echobox=1572963559](https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/216239-list-judges-prosecutors-lawyers-killed-under-duterte-government?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook%23Echobox=1572963559), accessed on 30 January 2020.

<sup>xii</sup> Jeanette I. Andrade, “AFP blames BIFF for Mindanao blasts that wounded 23 people,” Inquirer News online, 24 December 2019, from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1205167/afp-blames-biff-for-mindanao-blasts-that-wounded-23-people>, accessed on 24 December 2019.