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Monday 24 March 2025, by [LABAN Kababaihan](#) (Date first published: 24 March 2025).

The words and actions of former President Rodrigo Duterte have been deeply harmful to women in our country. His repeated offensive comments about women aren't just careless or insensitive—they are dangerous, perpetuating a culture of disrespect and violence that threatens the rights and dignity of women. As Duterte faces an ongoing trial in the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity, these actions and words take on an even greater significance. With three women set to serve as judges in his case, this moment is a reminder that his behavior toward women is not just a national issue but an international one.

His previous public pronouncements are not just “bad jokes” or “misunderstandings.” They are clear violations of women's rights that go far beyond careless words. They contribute to a culture where women are objectified, degraded, and even targeted for violence. There were three (3) harmful, reckless and unacceptable specific statements that he made which are particularly troubling:

1. [Philippines: Duterte's misogynistic remarks: Duterte's misogynistic remarks: Duterte's misogynistic remarks \(...\)](#): In 2018, Duterte casually instructed soldiers to shoot female rebels in the vagina, saying that without their reproductive organs, women are “useless.” This kind of statement doesn't just dehumanize women, it also encourages violence. It reduces women to nothing more than their bodies, disregarding their humanity and their value as equal citizens. It is a clear message that women's lives and safety don't matter. This kind of language is dangerous, and it fuels further harm against women, especially in conflict zones where violence against women is already a grave concern.

2. [Philippines: Duterte's misogynistic remarks: Duterte's misogynistic remarks: Duterte's misogynistic remarks \(...\)](#): Duterte also referred to women as “bitches” during an event meant to honor women in law enforcement and national security. Such event supposedly meant to celebrate and honor the hard work and dedication of women, not insult them. By using such degrading term, he not only insulted those women but also sent a message to the rest of society that it's okay to treat women with disrespect. This kind of language undermines the work women do every day, and it teaches our children that degrading others is acceptable.

3. [Philippines: Duterte's misogynistic remarks: Duterte's misogynistic remarks: Duterte's misogynistic remarks \(...\)](#): In perhaps the most disturbing moment, Duterte casually made controversial remarks regarding Jacqueline Hamill, an Australian missionary who was raped and murdered during a prison riot in Davao City in 1989. At the time, Duterte was the mayor of Davao and commented that Hamill was “so beautiful” that “the mayor should have been first” to do it. He also casually admitted to attempting to touch a maid while she was sleeping. By downplaying this as some sort of youthful mistake, he trivialized sexual assault, sending a message that it's not a serious crime and shouldn't be treated as such. His casual admission of this behavior encourages a culture of silence and impunity when it comes to sexual violence, making it harder for survivors to come forward and seek justice.

They contribute to a broader culture of misogyny and sexism that is harmful not just to individual women, but to society in general. Every time we allow such statements to go unchecked, we take a

step backward in the fight for equality and safety for all women.

As Duterte faces charges of crimes against humanity, including extrajudicial killings during his war on drugs, his words and actions are now under international scrutiny. This trial represents an opportunity for the global community to stand up for justice, ensuring that powerful leaders like him cannot act with impunity. The fact that three women will serve as judges in this trial makes it all the more significant. Their participation underscores that women's rights must be respected at every level, whether in the Philippines or in the international arena.

If you see yourself regularly participating in the March 8 parades or actively engaged for the entire month of March because it's Women's Month, then you must have agreed with these arguments. We must demand accountability. Leaders like Duterte must understand that their words and actions matter—not just in their home countries, but on the international arena. It's time to stand up, speak out, and show that misogyny, violence, and degrading acts have no place in our society. The fight for women's rights is a fight for everyone, and we must ensure that our leaders, no matter how powerful, are held accountable for their actions.

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