

# Statement on Extrajudicial Killings in the Philippines

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Human Rights Watch commends the work of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

In addition to persistent politically motivated killings, Human Rights Watch remains concerned by killings carried out with the knowledge or direct participation and support of local authorities against so-called “undesirables” in the Philippines. Human Rights Watch documented many of these killings in recent years, particularly on the southern island of Mindanao.

In our May 2014 report “One Shot to the Head: Death Squad Killings in Tagum City, Philippines” we detailed the involvement of local government officials and police officers with a “death squad” responsible for the extrajudicial killings of alleged drug dealers, petty criminals, street children, and others over the past decade. This death squad also committed guns-for-hire operations, targeting a journalist, a judge, and a tribal leader as well as local politicians and businessmen. Particularly disturbing is the failure of the Philippine government to seriously investigate the death squad and bring those responsible to justice.

Madame President, our findings of hundreds of extrajudicial killings in Tagum City reflects broader problems of law enforcement and a dysfunctional criminal justice system in the Philippines. The Tagum Death Squad, for instance, is an offshoot of similar death squad activity in nearby Davao City. Past Human Rights Watch research indicate the spread of these abusive “anti-crime” campaigns to several other cities in the country.

Extrajudicial executions, including politically motivated killings, by state security forces have been a longstanding problem in the Philippines. Although the number of killings has decreased dramatically in recent years compared to a decade ago, they continue largely with impunity. There has been an uptick the past year in attacks on journalists and environmental activists. Leftist activists, politicians and labor organizers also remain at risk.

We welcome in this regard the Congressional resolution N°. 1222 adopted directs the Congressional Committee on Human Rights to conduct an immediate investigation into extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the Tagum Death Squad. This resolution is a much-needed signal that the country’s culture of impunity for extrajudicial killings needs to come to an end. We urge the Government of the Philippines to take all necessary steps to bring an end to extrajudicial killings and ensure that respect for international human rights and humanitarian law prevails in the Philippines, and encourage the Special Rapporteur to give particular attention to these cases.

**HRW**

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\* JUNE 16, 2014:

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/16/statement-extrajudicial-killings-philippines>