

Philippine president Duterte bloody war on drugs: International Criminal Court 'cannot stop me'

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Philippine president vows anti-drug war campaign will continue and will be 'brutal' as death toll passes 8,000 mark.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has said he would not be intimidated by the prospect of the International Criminal Court (ICC) putting him on trial over his bloody war on drugs, promising that his campaign would continue and would be "brutal".

"I will not be intimidated and I shall not be stopped just by what? International Criminal Court? Impeachment? If that is part of my destiny, it is my destiny to go," Duterte told reporters on Sunday, shortly before leaving for Myanmar.

"The drive against corruption, criminality and drugs will resume and it will continue and it will be brutal," he said.

"I will not be, for a moment, be out of focus on that. I rose on what I promised and I will fall on that."

More than 8,000 people have died since Duterte took office on June 30 last year, and began his anti-drugs campaign.

A third of the fatalities were killed in raids and sting operations by police who say they acted in self-defence, while the rest were killed by unknown gunmen.

Rights groups said many of the deaths were assassinations of drugs users with police complicity, allegations that authorities have denied.

But a self-confessed assassin who testified to being in a "death squad" under Duterte, when he was mayor of Davao City, is expected to file a case at the ICC this month or in April, accusing the president of crimes against humanity, his lawyer said recently.

Criminals can 'go first'

Duterte said he would never "condone the killing of a criminal person arrested with outstretched arms, begging for his life, or what is popularly known as extrajudicial killings."

"Follow the law and we are alright. Drop shabu and nobody will die tomorrow," Duterte said. Shabu is the street name for the highly addictive crystal methamphetamine that the government blames for most of the serious crimes in the Philippines.

But Duterte warned: "If you place the guys lives in jeopardy ... my order is to shoot you."

He said he would rather see “thousands or millions of criminals go first”, than see security forces killed in the anti-narcotics war.

Two men, including the one who is expected to file the ICC case, have testified before the Philippine Senate saying they were part of an alleged “death squad” in Davao that killed at Duterte’s behest.

But Senate members found no proof of extra-judicial killings and death squads.

The “death squad” and allegations of drugs-related extrajudicial killings were also among the reasons for an impeachment complaint filed by an opposition lawmaker in Congress against Duterte on Thursday.

Duterte said he was not ruling out the possibility that “scalawags in government who are trying to silence guys dealing with them” were behind these extrajudicial executions.

Al Jazeera

Source: Reuters news agency

* 19 MARCH 2017:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/duterte-international-criminal-court-stop-170319134647429.html>

Philippine Vice President Leni Robredo: Bullets can’t stop illegal drug use

Leni Robredo urges Filipinos to ‘defy incursions on their rights’ as she denounces president’s bloody anti-drug war.

The Philippine vice president has raised an alarm about the country’s bloody crackdown on illegal drug use, saying it can’t be solved “with bullets alone” and adding that Filipinos should “defy brazen incursions on their rights”.

Vice President Leni Robredo’s comments, some of her sharpest critiques so far of Rodrigo Duterte’s anti-drug campaign, are likely to antagonise the brash-talking president.

In her speech, which will be shown at a UN-linked forum on extrajudicial killings on Thursday, she raised concerns about a lack of transparency and accountability in Duterte’s crackdown, and the mounting number of killings, which she described as “summary executions”.

Since July last year, more than 7,000 people have been killed, Robredo said in the video.

“We are now looking at some very grim statistics,” she added.

Robredo, who belongs to the opposition Liberal Party, said she had received several complaints from residents who had been rounded up by police, and told they had no rights to demand search warrants as they were living illegally on land they didn’t own.

She said Filipinos should demand greater transparency in the publicly funded campaign and ask

“why no one is being held accountable”, citing what she said were hundreds of complaints filed with the Commission on Human Rights, which recommended that the Department of Justice file criminal complaints.

National police spokesman Senior Superintendent Dionardo Carlos said the allegations, if true, violated police policy and should have been reported to authorities so they could investigate.

“If these are happening, or have happened, our request is for specifics because these are not sanctioned,” Carlos said.

Robredo said she publicly asked Duterte “to direct the nation towards respect for rule of law, instead of blatant disregard for it”.

“We ask him to uphold basic human rights enshrined in our constitution, instead of encouraging its abuse. We also ask the Filipino people to defy brazen incursions on their rights,” she added.

Duterte and his national police chief have said they do not condone extrajudicial killings, but have repeatedly threatened drug suspects with death in public speeches.

Last month, rights group Amnesty International accused police of behaving like the criminal underworld they are supposed to be suppressing, systematically targeting the poor and defenceless, recruiting paid killers, stealing from the people they kill, and fabricating official incident reports.

Al Jazeera

Source: AP news agency

* 16 MARCH 2017:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/03/philippine-vp-bullets-stop-illegal-drug-170315151903974.html>
