

Philippines: Rodrigo Duterte orders police back into deadly drug war - Police have killed dozens of children in Philippines war on drugs, Amnesty says

Wednesday 6 December 2017, by [McVEIGH Karen](#) (Date first published: 6 December 2017).

President had stood down police less than two months ago in response to rising opposition to controversial campaign.

The Philippines' president, Rodrigo Duterte, has told human rights groups criticising his deadly anti-drug war to "go to hell" after ordering police back to the frontlines of the crackdown.

Duterte stood the police down from his campaign less than two months ago in response to rising opposition. But his spokesman said on Tuesday that he was reinstating them because drug crimes had risen in their absence.

The president dismissed criticism over the thousands of people killed in the drug war as he said the Philippines had turned into a "narco-state".

"You can go to hell, all of you!" Duterte said in a speech, referring to human rights groups, Catholic bishops and priests who had urged an end to the killings.

"I do not want Filipinos to be turned into fools during my time. You can do that at any other time but not during my time, during my watch."

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said Duterte signed an order Tuesday reinstating the police to the drug war because there had been a "public clamour" for their return.

"There has been a notable resurgence in illegal drug activities and crimes committed," Roque said as he read the order.

Duterte, 72, was elected last year on a promise to eradicate drugs from society by launching an unprecedented campaign in which up to 100,000 people would die.

Since he took office, police have reported killing about 4,000 people in the crackdown.

Another 2,290 have been murdered in drug-related crimes, while thousands of other deaths remain unsolved, according to government data.

Many Filipinos continue to support the crackdown and believe Duterte is making society safer.

But in October he announced that the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency would replace the police in the drug war following mounting public opposition, including rare street protests, that were

triggered by officers allegedly murdering three teenagers.

Duterte said later he had removed police from the drug war “in deference” to critics, including rights campaigners, Catholic bishops and the European Union.

However Duterte also repeatedly said he believed the anti-drug agency, with only about 2,000 officers, would not be able to effectively prosecute the crackdown. The police force has about 165,000 officers.

The October suspension was the second time Duterte had hauled police off the drug war.

In January he did the same after it was revealed that officers involved in the anti-drug campaign murdered a South Korean businessmen inside national police headquarters.

Duterte said at the time the police force was “corrupt to the core”. But he reinstated the police in March without making major reforms to address the graft issue.

Agence France-Presse

* The Guardian. Wednesday 6 December 2017 04.08 GMT:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/06/philippines-rodrigo-duterte-orders-police-back-into-deadly-drug-war>

Police have killed dozens of children in Philippines war on drugs, Amnesty says

Rights group urges International Criminal Court to open investigation into crimes against humanity committed over past 18 months in brutal state crackdown.

Police have killed dozens of children in the “war on drugs” in the Philippines in the last 18 months, Amnesty International said.

The rights group urged the International Criminal Court to open an investigation into crimes against humanity in the violent crackdown, including the deaths of an estimated 60 young people by police and vigilantes. Some of those killed were deliberately targeted in anti-drugs raids, while others were caught in the crossfire. There have also been “riding in tandem” attacks, carried out by vigilantes on motorcycles, which are often paid for by police [1], Amnesty said.

Relatives of some of the victims told the rights group how they witnessed police fatally shooting children at point blank range as they were begging for mercy.

The killing by police of a 17-year-old student, Kian Delos Santos, in August, sparked nationwide protests in the Philippines after CCTV footage emerged of him being dragged along the street by two plain clothes officers, casting doubt on police claims he was shot in self defence. More than 12 police officers have been investigated for the Santos killing after the case received international attention, but no one has yet been held to account.

Since Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippine president, took office in June 2016, more than 3,900 “drug personalities” have been killed in his anti-drugs campaign, although activists say they are suspected

users and alleged small-time dealers. More than 2,000 others have been killed in drug-related crimes and thousands murdered in unexplained circumstances, according to police data.

In October, amid waning public support for his deadly campaign, Duterte ordered police to end all operations in his anti-drug offensive, and placed the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in charge, saying the shift was to target big networks and suppliers.

James Gomez, Amnesty's director for south-east Asia and the Pacific, said: "How many bullet-riddled bodies must be found dumped on the streets before the international community takes action?"

"It is time for international justice mechanisms to step in and end the carnage on Philippine streets by bringing the perpetrators to justice. The country's judiciary and police have proven themselves both unwilling and unable to hold the killers in the 'war on drugs' to account.

"The ICC must open a preliminary examination into the situation and cast its net widely. Responsibility is not just limited to those pulling the trigger, but also those who order or encourage murders and other crimes against humanity."

The ICC recently indicated that it will investigate and pay special attention to crimes against children.

Duterte and other high-level government officials have openly advocated for extrajudicial killings, which could amount to criminal responsibility under international law, Gomez said.

One 17-year-old victim was killed after he was woken up in the middle of the night. The victim's partner, known as O, told Amnesty: "They pointed a gun at my head [and] told me to get out ... I heard shouting and three gunshots, then three more shots."

Researchers from Amnesty witnessed large numbers of children suspected of drug-related offences kept in overcrowded and unsanitary holding centres for minors in the Philippine capital, Manila. Some said they had been beaten and tortured by police on their arrest, and claimed police had framed them by forcing them to pose in photographs with drugs that had been planted.

Karen McVeigh

@karenmcveigh1

* The Guardian. Monday 4 December 2017 16.52 GMT Last modified on Monday 4 December 2017 22.00 GMT:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/dec/04/police-have-killed-dozens-of-children-in-philippines-war-on-drugs-amnesty-says>

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Footnotes

[1] <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/philippines-president-duterte-war-on-drugs-thousands-killed>