

PANTAO REPORTS

KAMING MGA NAIWAN



*Mga Kuwento ng Pamilya ng mga
Biktima ng Giyera Kontra Droga*

Findings of the 2017-2024 Documentation of Extrajudicial
Killings (EJKs) and other Human Rights Violations
Committed Under the So-Called War on Drugs



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Monitoring and Documentation of EJKs and Other Human Rights Violations

As the BBM–Duterte UNITEAM disintegrates amid irreconcilable differences, families affected by the so-called war on drugs continue to wait in vain for the justice they desperately seek. To add insult to injury, the ongoing Quad-Comm hearings in the Philippine Congress have deepened their pain instead of offering solace and a clear path to accountability.

Despite the tireless efforts of human rights defenders and the families of victims, injustices and widespread human rights violations persist. Those in power remain resistant to the truth, choosing instead to remain complicit in protecting former President Duterte and other key players in the so-called war on drugs.

As the International Criminal Court investigation continues, families left behind remain steadfast and undeterred in their quest for justice. They persist in fighting against the systemic injustices and human rights violations perpetuated by the Marcos Jr. administration, which continues the controversial anti-drug policies of Duterte. These families demand accountability and confront the ongoing suffering inflicted by the government's actions within their communities.

It has been eight years since the start of the drug war, and while the Marcos Jr. administration touts a supposedly “softer” approach to battling illegal drugs, the reality of the ongoing violence is conveniently left out. As the years pass, the public also risks forgetting the painful and brutal events of the so-called war on drugs. This is why it remains crucial to hear the stories of those directly affected. As a society, we owe it to every victim to understand the pain resulting from these heinous acts against humanity.

In this report, we present findings from the Philippine Human Rights Information Center's (PhilRights) monitoring and documentation activities, covering cases of alleged human rights violations from July 2016 to September 2024. This report also highlights four stories of families left behind after the victims' deaths, presenting the multidimensional nature of the impact of the drug war to those left behind.

These accounts offer but a snapshot of the extensive harm caused by the so-called war on drugs. The urgent responsibility of recording these violations, preserving their memory, and collecting evidence for accountability has never been more critical.

Para sa mga biktima at kanilang mga naiwan.

Our Methodology

PhilRights' documentation abides by the principles and investigation guidelines set by The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Deaths (2016). This document, also known as *The Minnesota Protocol*¹, was issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) to set international legal standards to prevent unlawful deaths and investigate extra-legal, summary, and arbitrary executions.

The Minnesota Protocol clarifies that a “potentially unlawful death” may (1) have been due to the acts or omission of the State, its organs or agents including law enforcers, paramilitary groups, militias or death squads allegedly “acting under the direction or with the permission or acquiescence of the State,” and “private military or security forces exercising State functions,” (2) have happened when the victim was in detention by or in custody of the State, its organs or agents, and (3) have been due to the failure of the State to fulfill its obligation in protecting life. Under international law, a “potentially unlawful death” is the product of an arbitrary, summary, or extra-legal execution or an alleged extrajudicial killing. In the event that the victim survived the incident, the violation is referred to as “frustrated or attempted extrajudicial killing.”

PhilRights works with community partners in Manila, Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela, and Quezon City, and the provinces of Bulacan and Rizal for the referral of cases that occurred from July 2016 until the present, for the monitoring of human rights situation in the communities, and for the provision of assistance to victims and their families. The information obtained from the interviews with victims, families, and witnesses are checked against media reports, police records, death certificates, and other sources of information.

¹ United Nations Publications, *The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016)* (New York: United Nations Publications, 2017), accessed July 12, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/MinnesotaProtocol.pdf>.

THE PHILIPPINES' SO-CALLED WAR ON DRUGS: A TIMELINE



Rodrigo Duterte wins the presidency in the national elections by a comfortable margin.

May

2016

Oplan Double Barrel, comprising Oplan High-Value Target and Oplan Tokhang, is launched, leading to a surge in drug-related killings. In his first SONA, Duterte warns against relying on human rights to avoid death.

July

June

Duterte is inaugurated as the 16th president of the Philippines.





A secret detention cell is discovered in a Manila police precinct, holding arrested drug users and peddlers in inhumane conditions. Lawyer Jude Sabio files the first ICC complaint against Duterte, alleging crimes against humanity in the drug war. Presidential legal counsel Salvador Panelo dismisses the complaint as baseless.

PDEA reports that 50% of barangays nationwide are drug-affected.

NBI confirms police involvement in the kidnapping and killing of a Korean businessman accused of drug ties. Oplan Tokhang is suspended, but killings continue.

January

April

June

2017

February

PNP declares a war on illegal gambling, leading to a rise in arrests and killings.

May

UN Special Rapporteur Agnes Callamard makes an unannounced visit to the Philippines. Martial Law is imposed in Mindanao due to clashes with the Maute group in Marawi City.





The killing of 17-year-old Kian delos Santos by Caloocan police officers, captured on CCTV, sparks nationwide outrage. Bulacan police conduct a “One Time Big Time Operation,” resulting in 32 deaths.

August

PDEA takes over anti-drug operations, and Oplan Double Barrel is suspended again.

October

July

Former Senator Trillanes and Rep. Alejano file a supplemental complaint with the ICC. Martial Law in Mindanao is extended until the end of 2017.

September

Paolo Duterte is investigated by the Senate for alleged drug smuggling. Over 1,000 Caloocan police officers are fired due to abuses, with many reassigned to Bulacan.

December

PNP reports 4,000 drug-related deaths since June 2016, but Human Rights Watch estimates the toll at 12,000.



2018

PNP relaunches Oplan Double Barrel with new guidelines, though human rights abuses continue.

January

Duterte orders the Philippines' withdrawal from the ICC.

March

Chief Justice Sereno is unseated after the Supreme Court grants a quo warranto petition filed by Solicitor General Jose Calida.

May

February

ICC begins an inquiry into crimes against humanity in Duterte's drug war. Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque says Duterte welcomes the preliminary examination and is ready to defend his actions.

April

Duterte declares Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno as his enemy





The mayor of Tanauan, Batangas, becomes the 11th local official killed in the drug war.

July

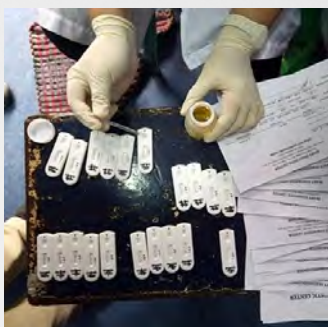


The police officers who killed Kian delos Santos are found guilty of murder and sentenced to reclusion perpetua.

November

June

PNP proposes drug tests in schools to combat drug use among students.



August

Families of eight drug war victims, represented by the National Union of People's Lawyers, file a complaint against Duterte for crimes against humanity.



December

The government's official death toll for the drug war surpasses 5,000



2019

Lawmakers propose lowering the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 12.

January

The Supreme Court orders the release of documents related to the drug war.

April

UNHRC adopts a resolution, led by Iceland, to investigate drug war killings in the Philippines.

July

March

The Philippines officially withdraws from the ICC.

May

General midterm elections are held.



The Senate investigates “ninja cops” involved in the drug trade, leading to the resignation of Police Chief Oscar Albayalde.

October

The U.S. bans officials linked to Sen. Leila de Lima’s detention.

December

August

The implementation of Good Conduct Time Allowance (GCTA) for high-profile convicts is questioned, leading to public outcry.

November

Duterte appoints Vice President Leni Robredo as co-chair of the Inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs (ICAD).





ICC Prosecutor finds “reasonable basis” for crimes against humanity in Duterte’s drug war. The Palace dismisses this as political propaganda.

Police officer Jonel Nuezca shoots a mother and her child in Tarlac over a feud.

December

Human Rights Watch reports a 50% increase in drug war killings during the pandemic, citing government data.

September

Jude Sabio withdraws his ICC complaint, claiming it was political propaganda. ICC Prosecutor says the withdrawal will not affect the preliminary examination.

January

October

UNHRC adopts resolution 45/33, focusing on capacity-building and technical cooperation to promote human rights in the Philippines.

July

Duterte signs the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, criticized as a tool to suppress dissent and target activists.



2020

2021

February

Sen. De Lima is acquitted of one of three drug charges against her.



Government data shows over 6,000 drug-related deaths

April



Duterte ridicules the ICC in his SONA, reaffirming his intent to continue the drug war. The Philippines signs its first UN joint program on human rights to investigate unlawful killings, despite withdrawing from the ICC.

July

June

ICC Prosecutor requests to open a full investigation into Duterte's drug war, based on the preliminary examination's findings.





2021

ICC Pre-Trial Chamber authorizes an investigation into crimes committed in the Philippines while it was an ICC member (2011-2019), including alleged Davao Death Squad killings.

September

October

Presidential candidate Marcos says he will not assist ICC investigators, only allowing them to enter the country as visitors.

The Philippines requests the ICC defer its investigation, citing ongoing domestic probes. The ICC temporarily suspends its investigation.

November



Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte win the national elections.

May



Marcos Jr. is inaugurated as the 17th president. He rules out rejoining the ICC and convenes a legal team to discuss handling ICC proceedings.

July

2022

April

The Supreme Court denies all motions for reconsideration against the Anti-Terror Law.

June

ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan requests to resume the investigation after the Philippine government fails to prove genuine investigations of crimes committed in Duterte's drug war.



2023

ICC authorizes reopening the investigation. Marcos' legal counsel Enrile insists the ICC has no jurisdiction over the Philippines.

January

February

Marcos refuses to cooperate with the ICC, citing national sovereignty. Solicitor General Guevarra files an appeal to suspend the ICC's probe.

Navotas RTC convicts police officer Jeffrey Perez for the murder of Carl Arnaiz and Reynaldo de Guzman. Marcos declares disengagement from the ICC following the court's rejection of the government's appeal.

March

May

Marcos acknowledges abuses in Duterte's drug war but maintains the ICC lacks jurisdiction. The Philippines distances itself from ICC-related parts of the Summit for Democracy Declaration.

ICC rejects the Philippine government's appeal to suspend its investigation. Justice Secretary Remulla advises Sen. dela Rosa to avoid countries where the ICC has influence.

July

2022

January

Roque claims ICC investigators have been entering the Philippines, but the Bureau of Immigration cannot confirm this.

Remulla reaffirms that the ICC has no jurisdiction over the Philippines, asserting national sovereignty over internal legal matters.

February

May

Trillanes anticipates an ICC warrant for Duterte by June. The House Committee on Human Rights begins hearings on drug war killings but refuses to cooperate with the ICC.

Manila 6th District Representative Bienvenido “Benny” Abante Jr. claims that the refusal of the victims’ families to come forward is the reason why the Philippine police are having difficulties with the EJK investigations.

June



Atty. Chel Diokno reports that under Duterte's presidency, there were 20,322 deaths in the first 17 months of the former president's administration. These deaths were listed as "accomplishments" by the Office of the President's 2017 year end report.

July



Implicated by Magdadaro and Tan Jr. in the murder of three alleged drug lords, Royina Garma was issued a subpoena by the House. She is a former police colonel and alleged Davao Death Squad (DDS) member who has allegations of criminal activity emerging during recent hearings. Garma was then detained after evading questions about her involvement in EJKs.

September

2024

August

The Philippine House of Representatives begins to hold hearings to examine EJKs under the drug war and the Duterte administration's suspected utilization of funds from illegal gambling and drug sales to finance the killings.

In a Quad Committee hearing, inmates Fernando Magdadaro and Leopoldo Untalan Tan Jr. admit to killing three alleged Chinese drug lords. They claim to have been instructed by law enforcers under the Duterte administration to kill in exchange for their release.





Marcos Jr. announces that he and his government body are remaining neutral amidst the ICC drug war probe v. Duterte.

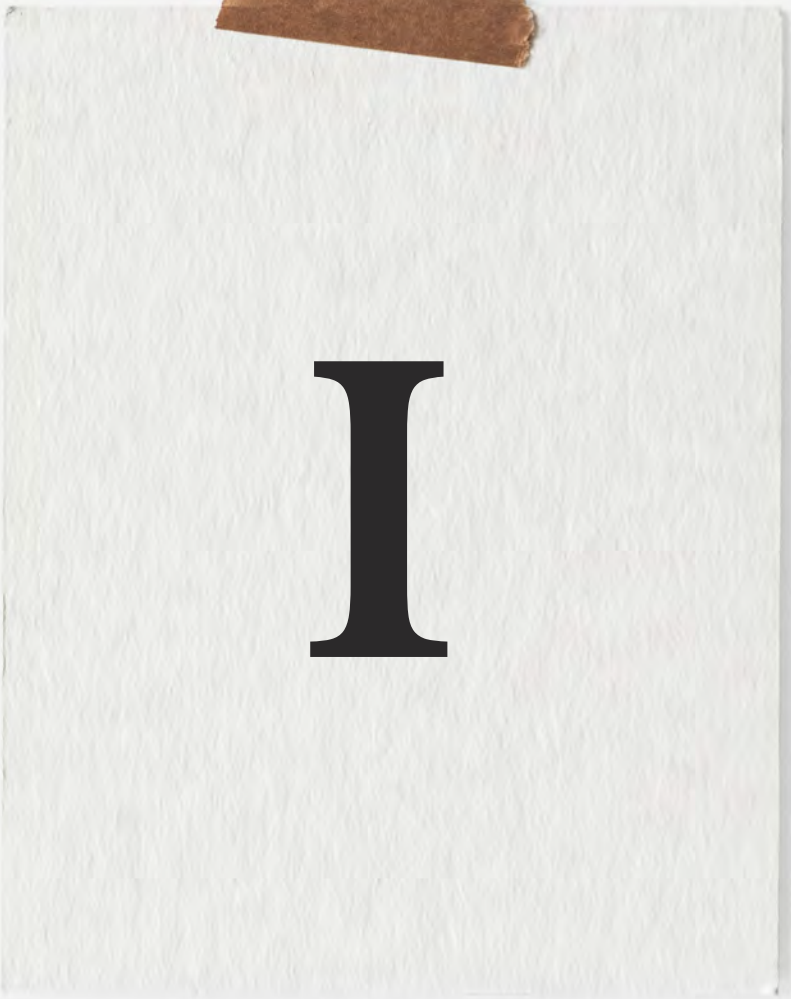
PNP Chief Gen. Rommel Marbil announces a recalibration of their anti-drug campaign. He claims that the new plan shall align with Marcos Jr.'s call for a rights-based and bloodless approach. University of the Philippines Third World Studies Center researchers refute the 'bloodless' claim and estimate over 700 drug-related killings since Marcos Jr. became president.

November

October

Rodrigo Duterte appeared before a Philippine Senate hearing on the drug war. He admitted to (1) ordering law enforcers to kill 'criminals', (2) offering a three million pesos prize for the capture of suspected drug lords, dead or alive, and (3) the existence of his Davao Death Squad (DDS), which executed thousands of EJKs.





PART 1

Enduring Harms: Families Left Behind Grapple with Multidimensional Impacts of the so-called War on Drugs

A Grieving Mother Finds Her Way

Carmel felt uneasy.

It was another day working as a door-to-door salesperson and Carmel and her coworker were sheltering from a heavy downpour and neither had access to their cellphones. Her coworker left her phone in their service motorcycle under the rain; Carmel left hers at home.

It was July 2016, mere weeks since Rodrigo Duterte took office and launched the so-called war on drugs, a key campaign promise. That afternoon, Carmel lost her son. To this day, she wonders what would have happened if she had her phone with her. Would she have made it in time to do something and protect her son?

Andrew was 33 years old, a father to eight children, and Carmel's second eldest son. He was her spitting image. That afternoon, Andrew became among the first victims of the newly launched "war on drugs."

"Para akong lukaret, takbo ako nang takbo. Baka daw pati ako napatay . . . siyempre yayakapin ko 'yung anak ko. I was going mad; I kept running. They said I could have been killed but I had to hug my child."

On that July afternoon, Andrew was sleeping at home after completing his early *pasada* shift as a tricycle driver. His three sons, aged ten, nine, and seven, were in the room with him. At around 3 o'clock, approximately 20 men, some wearing police uniforms and others in civilian clothing, surrounded their house. Three of them barged in, claiming they were looking for someone. The others, including his children, siblings, and father, were asked to leave. Andrew was ordered to stay behind.



Police Operations

Under PhilRights' documentation, alleged extrajudicial killings are categorized as "having occurred during police operations" if:

- a) Police authorities, whether in official uniform or not, introduced themselves as such during the course of the operation.
- b) The police authorities acknowledge (to the media or in official records) that the incident was a police operation.

In comparing narratives, there are contradictions between what the police reports state and what the families say about the conduct of the operations. For example, a case may be reported as a buy-bust operation while the family would assert that the police entered their house without any warrant or sufficient acceptable cause. All of the obtained official reports of police operations conflict with the narratives of the families, from the conduct of the operation up to the evidence recovered.

As of October 2024, 96 documented victims were killed in police operations and under police custody. 43 of them were killed in buy-bust operations reported by the police and/or the media.

According to his family, Andrew tried to leave with them but one cop stopped him and asked for his name, “*Teka muna, ano bang pangalan mo?* Hold on, what’s your name?” which he then gave. The police officer looked at a piece of paper on his hand, “*Ah! ’Yang Andeng tsaka ’yung Andrew, iisang tao lang ’yan. Doon ka lang. Pasok ka sa loob. Mamamatay ka na.* Andeng and Andrew is one person. Stay there, go inside. You’re about to die.” Soon, shots were fired. And then, “Buhay ka pa ha! You’re still alive!” followed by one last gunshot.

Carmel heard the news from her boss; she rushed home but found that her son was already taken by Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) to a funeral home.

Dealing with the funeral home was a whole ordeal. Wracked with grief, all she wanted was for her son to be treated with the dignity he deserved in death. Still, funeral costs were prohibitive for Carmel and her family; they were asked to pay Php35,000, an amount they could not meet. An employee offered an alternative: hold off on the autopsy and agree to falsify the cause of death on the death certificate so they can take his body home.

They lowered their fees to Php25,000. Carmel remembers the conversation she had with the employee, “Pero may pipirmahan kayo, ilalagay namin sa death certificate ng anak mo, sepsis, impeksyon sa dugo. You have to sign something. We will put sepsis, a blood infection, on your son’s death certificate.”

Carmel was confused and asked for clarification. Her son was killed by gunshot wounds, his bed and his whole room was soaked in blood. The employee remarked, “*Wala kayong pera, eh. Ganoon garwin natin.* You don’t have money. This is what we’ll do.”

Falsification of the Cause of Death

These were the causes of death, as written, among the available 105 death certificates of documented victims:

- 53 - “gunshot wounds,” “multiple gunshot wounds,” “gunshot,” or “gunshot wound” indicating the body part/s
- 9 - “cardiac arrest,” “heart attack,” “(acute) myocardial infarction,” with no stated underlying cause
- 7 - “shooting incident”
- 3 - “pneumonia”
- 2 - “asphyxia” and “asphyxia by strangulation”
- 1 - “acute respiratory distress syndrome,” with no stated underlying cause
- 1 - “Dead-on-Arrival,” with no stated underlying cause
- 1 - “blatant [sic] traumatic injuries”
- 1 - “hypertension”
- 1 - “septic shock, anemia, multiple skin infection”
- 1 - “decapitation and without right index finger”

*Causes of death for 27 victims could not be determined

With erroneous and insufficient details on the causes of deaths, families will find it difficult to use the death certificates as documentary evidence in legal cases.

Days leading to the incident, Carmel found out through concerned neighbors that Andrew's name was listed on the drug watchlist. Killings in their community were already rampant, quickly becoming one of the hotspots of the so-called war on drugs. Andrew had been using drugs but Carmen knows her son had stopped as soon as Duterte took power.

"Mama, pumunta man sila rito okay lang, wala naman silang makikitang shabu. Mama, even if they come here it's OK, they won't find shabu (street name for methamphetamine)."

Carmen had received a message a day before Andrew's murder that the police were looking for an alias "Andeng," which also happens to be Andrew's nickname. Carmel pleaded with her son to flee their home and stay with relatives to be safe.

"OK lang 'ma, tsaka, may kakampi ako, 'ma. It's OK, 'ma. Also, I have an ally." As he said this, he bumped his fist to his chest and pointed at the sky. Call it a mother's instinct, but Carmel was terrified.

As a young girl, Carmel's greatest dream was to have her own house with enough rooms for everyone—a sanctuary with all her loved ones. She grew up in an informal settlement under a bridge in Quezon City.

She favored reading books and studying over playing outside. Among her most cherished memories are their family outings at Manila Bay along Roxas Boulevard. The open space, the sea breeze, and the bay's famed sunsets offered a welcome respite to a girl used to cramped spaces. Indeed, there were times that she would sleep outside on the neighbor's parked jeepney. Unfortunately, this exposed her to sexual violence at a young age. A dark memory that still haunts her to this day.

When she met Alfred, her husband, she found a safe space. Alfred's family was welcoming and kind to her. Despite their young age, him 19 and her only 16, her family allowed her to move in with him. She believed it was her parents' way of giving her a better future.

True enough, Carmel and Alfred had their own home. Carmel's dream came true.

Carmel was pregnant with their first child when they were relocated by the government to a housing project in Caloocan City. This home would be where the couple would raise their seven children. One vivid memory she often recalls with fondness is that of her kids asleep in their bunk beds that her husband had made.

Alfred was a shoemaker. In the early years of their marriage, he was earning enough to meet their needs.

But as the children were growing up, his earnings dwindled. Opportunities grew scarcer. Carmel helped out with odd jobs on top of taking care of her children full-time. Over time, Alfred's meager earnings were further split between an affair and night outs with friends. He began to neglect his children and started physically abusing Carmel.

It was at this point that Carmel decided to work abroad as an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW).

"I was forced to work abroad then because my husband was a drunk. Had nothing going on except drinking. My children at nine o'clock had nothing to eat. I just had a miscarriage at the time, who would have been our seventh child. I just came back from the East



Avenue Hospital, I was just discharged. I found my husband in the streets, drinking. He gave me Php20 which I used to get half a kilo of rice and chicharon. I will never forget that.”

This was in 1998 and Carmel worked as a domestic helper until 2000. She had a kind boss and the job wasn't too difficult. At home, her eldest child got very sick and Carmel had to rush back home to take care of him. It was a burst appendix that was not addressed in time and eventually took her child's life.

Despite her grief, Carmel had decided to go back abroad to work but Alfred demanded she stay, arguing that her children needed her. All this while Alfred continued with his drinking and abuse.

Carmel accepted all the work that came her way. She became a door-to-door salesperson, sold handmade rugs, and worked odd jobs in the community for a pittance. She was able to scrape funds together and support the entire household.

Meanwhile, Alfred's abuse became a regular occurrence. Worse still, her children were not spared, especially Andrew.

Andrew was a sweet son. Carmel was particularly fond of him because they looked extremely alike. He was her male version and Andrew would use this to his advantage to win his mother's favors. Unfortunately, just like how Alfred got into barkada and vices, Andrew at age 17 was exposed to drugs. When Alfred found out, he began to physically abuse his son and this started the strain in their relationship.

When Andrew died, Carmel felt her husband's guilt; she knew that he felt responsible for their son's death. Andrew knew of his father's drug use and a lot of their fights revolved around the other's issues with drugs.

Carmel had no interest in seeking justice, there were killings everywhere almost every day in their neighborhood, mostly led by the law enforcement themselves and nothing seems to be done about them. At that point, she has lost trust in the justice system. She focused on caring for her grandchildren, especially as Andrew's partner left three of their eight kids with her a few days after Andrew's passing.

“Takot po ang meron sa akin. Kaya wala po akong nilapitan . . . Wala po. 'Yung pakiramdam ko noon, lahat kalaban ko. Fear is all I felt, that is why I did not approach anyone. Nobody. All I felt at the time was that everybody was an enemy.”

Now, Carmel feels vastly different. In her grief, and while managing her many roles at home, she found time to do community work with a peoples' organization in her area. Although it was volunteer work, she had a small allowance that helped out with her large family's needs. It was during one of these community activities that Carmel met with a PhilRights volunteer. They started to talk about what happened to Carmel's family and the human rights violations they had experienced at the hands of the State. Carmel began opening up and soon after consented to having Andrew's case documented. Now, she works as community monitor for PhilRights, reaching out to other women left behind due to the so-called war on drugs. Together with other women relatives of victims, Carmel is now actively engaged as a human rights defender in her community.

“Sama-sama po kami, pinaglalaban 'yung nasa sa loob namin.” We're in this together, fighting for what's in our hearts.

Upheaval: A Child's Life in the Midst of Duterte's War on Drugs

Leandro was shot dead by two unidentified gunmen wearing black bonnets on August 1, 2019, at around 5 p.m. in a Navotas City street. He was only 24 years old and the breadwinner to his partner Jennie and stepdaughter Apol.

Operations Conducted by Unidentified Perpetrators such as Riding-in-Tandem Assailants

Another group of alleged perpetrators involves unidentified assailants, killers riding in tandem. The alleged perpetrators of these killings are usually masked and dressed in black or dark-colored clothing. There are also cases with non-police perpetrators who wear civilian clothes and/or do not hide their faces. Majority of the informants and families have stated that they believe that the unidentified assailants have links with State agents. This is congruent to what Amnesty International has revealed in their 2017 report where they interviewed hired killers who admitted receiving orders to kill from an active-duty police officer.[1]

As of October 2024, 92 of the documented victims were killed in operations conducted by unidentified assailants. 28 of them were killed by drive-by riding-in-tandem assailants.

Apol was only 12 years old when Leandro was killed. She grew up calling him “Papa,” and remembers him as a dependable, caring, and responsible father figure in her life. She recalled that he would always find a way to provide three meals a day for them and even an occasional outing to her favorite fast-food joint. Apol felt that back then she lived a comfortable life, had a roof over her head, running water, and electricity at their home but, she also understood that it was difficult for her father to earn a living for the three of them especially when he was unable to sell drugs.

Despite her young age, Apol was aware that Leandro supported their family by selling illegal drugs and understood that it was probably his only means to provide for the three of them. “*Siguro po para mabuhay niya kaming pamilya niya, kaya niya po ginawa ’yon. Para makapag-aral ako, ganoon po.* Perhaps for us to make a living that’s why he did that. So I can go to school.”

Gunshot Wounds

On average, a victim suffered from four gunshot wounds. 77 victims sustained four or more gunshot wounds.

Two victims had at least 20 gunshot wounds; they died in separate operations that informants allege were conducted by perpetrators believed to be police officers in Plaridel, Bulacan and in a police operation in Navotas City.

One can argue that the firing of more than one bullet to stop the target from running away or from resisting the arresting police officers is already indicative of undue force.

The use of excessive force is not allowed as stipulated in Rule 7 (Use of Force during Police Operations) of the Revised Philippine National Police Operational Procedures.[2] Rule 7 also specifies the factors to consider in the reasonableness of the force employed, which include the number of aggressors, nature and characteristics of the weapon used, physical condition, size and other circumstances to include the place and location of the assault. Based on the narratives of the informants who were present during the time of killings, the circumstances did not warrant the use of excessive force.

As of October 2024, 150 were shot in the head and/or neck and 73 were shot in the trunk (shoulders, back, chest, abdomen), signifying the intent to kill of the perpetrators.

Apol was only eight years old when Duterte became president and launched his drug war but she became familiar with the horrors of Tokhang as many in their neighborhood fell victim to the killings that ensued. She became fearful for her father's safety and had asked him to stop selling drugs, "*Sabi ko po kay Papa na magbago na po siya, baka po kasi [may] mangyari sa kanya. Kaso hindi po nakinig si Papa sa akin . . . sinasabi po niya na di po kami mabubuhay kapag wala daw 'yon.* I told Papa to change, thinking that something bad might happen to him. But he refused to listen . . . he was saying that we wouldn't survive if not for that."

On that fateful day, Apol knew that her father left to sell drugs and she and her mother were left at home. She could barely remember the events of the day before his death but she remembers how much she regrets that she wasn't able to stop him from leaving that day. "*Dapat po pala pinigilan ko si Papa umalis. Para di nangyari sa kanya 'yon.* I should have stopped him from leaving. So it could not happen to him." Leandro's sibling informed them of what happened and they rushed to see him. Jennie and Apol found him lifeless bathed in a pool of his blood.

Apol understood that her father's job contributed to his death. Apol also knew that Duterte's Tokhang didn't give her father a chance, "*Dapat tulungan niya po 'yung mga taong magbago, hindi po 'yung kailangan niya ipapatay.* He should help people change, instead of ordering to kill them."

Upon Leandro's death, Apol and Jennie were left to fend for themselves. They had to move due to fear that they could also be targeted just like how Leandro was killed. Apol remembers how immediately after her father's death her life had become a daily struggle—from moving from place to place to meeting and losing new father figures.

Alleged Links to Illegal Drugs

Informants were asked whether they had knowledge of the victim's involvement in illegal drugs (whether as a user or peddler).

125 had a history of drug use only, according to families/informants.

12 had a history of drug peddling only, according to families/informants.

16 had a history of both drug use and peddling, according to families/informants.

One was alleged to be an operator of a drug den, according to families/informants.

According to informants/families, the nature of the victims' work was a contributing factor to their drug use and that they were not addicts. Some of the families of the truck drivers, for example, claimed that the victims were using illegal drugs to help them stay awake during long drives. Some victims had also been influenced by their co-workers to use illegal drugs.

Some of the documented victims were involved in street-level illegal drugs trade ("pushers") due to lack of livelihood opportunities. Informants said that earnings from street-level peddling are minimal.

82 victims had no known links to illegal drugs.

Months after Leandro's death, Jennie met Bon. This new relationship proved disastrous very quickly. Bon was abusive toward Jennie and Apol witnessed the traumatic incidents of physical abuse against her mother. She also experienced deprivation such as sleeping outside under the rain, particularly at times when Bon was intoxicated by alcohol. Eventually, Jennie and Apol left Bon.

After a while, Jennie then met Rudy. But the new couple fell victim to police abuse. As Apol tells it, Rudy and her mom were walking near their house when cops approached and arrested the two of them on the premise that Rudy was topless in a public area. When they were taken into custody, Rudy was subjected to intimidation, with the cops pointing a gun at him and subjecting him to torture by having him drink urine. Jennie was also slapped on the face. The couple was also forced to eat spicy noodles. Jennie and Rudy pleaded with the cops but Rudy was told that he would be sentenced to a year while Jennie would be in custody for a month. Jennie refused the detention, after all the apparent violation is not a grave misconduct. She pleaded with the police to let them go, and they later agreed to have Jennie render a month of service in the precinct in exchange for their freedom. For a month Jennie cleaned and washed the dishes of the whole precinct.

Now at 17 years old, Apol reflects on the changes and hardships in her young life brought about by a loss of her Papa. *“Noong nawala si Papa, sobra po kaming naghirap. Nawalan po kami ng ilaw, kuryente. Hirap na rin po kaming makahanap ng kakainin namin. Dami pong nagbago noong nawala si Papa.* When Papa died, we suffered a lot. We couldn’t pay for electricity. We struggled to afford food. So much has changed since Papa died.”

There was a time, in the midst of all these changes, when Apol realized that in her young life, the problems she faces are unfair, *“Ang sakit-sakit po kasi dinadanas ko ’yung mga problema na hindi naman po dapat. Kasi iniisip ko po na bata pa lang ako, bakit puno na po ako ng problema?* It hurts a lot since I have to go through these problems when I shouldn’t have. I’m thinking I’m just a kid, why do I have to deal with so many problems?”

Currently, Apol is a Grade 9 student and believes in her dream that one day she will become a flight attendant and finally provide a good life for her mother and herself. Apol knows that her mother is struggling to support her which is why she also helps out by working when she can so she can cover school expenses. Invariably, this means frequent school absences.

She knows that pursuing college would be difficult but she already accepted the inevitable reality of having to work while studying *“Plano ko pong mag-working student po ako para po habang nag-aaral po ako, kaya ko pong gampanan ang pag-aaral ko. Meron po akong sariling pera, mayroon po akong maibibigay po kay Mama. May makakain po kami na maayos.* I plan to be a working student so that I can cover my school needs. I would have my own money, and I would give some to Mama. We would eat better.”

This is also her hope for the many orphaned children in the wake of the bloody war on drugs.



A Family's Nightmare: Multiple Victims, Multiple Human Rights Violations

Kate's family has lost three loved ones in the drug war. The latest victim, Carlo, was killed in June 2022 in the waning days of the Duterte administration.

Carlo, the family's eldest son, helped out a lot with his family and friends. Kate says that a huge portion of Carlo's Php450 a day salary as a construction worker goes to support his immediate family and nephews in Navotas City.

"Binibigyan ako, nanay ko, kahit hindi lumaki sa nanay ko 'yon. Mabait, sobra. He would send money to me, and to my mom, even if he didn't grow up with mom. He was very kind."

As a kid, Carlo and his siblings would steal fish in the fishport market to sell to help make ends meet. They were called bakaw by the people back then. "Sa mata ng iba, sa mga mata ng mga nagtitinda doon, pagnanakaw. Pero siyempre, wala naman kaming magandang mapuntahan or mapasukan noong mga araw nito, kahit noong araw gutom din. In others' eyes, in the eyes of the vendors there, it was stealing. But of course we have nowhere to go or opportunities to earn at that time. Even then times, we were so hungry."

Carlo's whole family was living in a cramped small house, together with his nephews. The climate of fear when Duterte announced his bloody drug war reached their humble abode, sparking discussions among them on how they would evade the spate of killings against drug suspects in Navotas City.

The first victim was his youngest brother Tom, 31 years old, who was killed in a police operation after being arrested in Navotas City in the early days of March 2017. Not much information was made known to the family by the police, but according to a taxi driver whom they talked to, the arresting police officers beat Tom repeatedly inside the police car.

Signs of Torture

During the interviews, informants shared what they regard as signs of torture on the bodies of their relatives who were killed in furtherance of the government's so-called drug war.

41 bore signs of torture

Six were alleged to have died from torture alone

Some of the signs of torture:

Beatings and Bruises

Mutilated Body Parts

Broken Limbs

Missing Fingernails

Burn Marks

Cuts and Wounds

Covering of Body Parts with Packaging Tapes

Asphyxiation

Their father Mac, 50 years old, was also killed in a police operation, identified as a buy-bust operation in the police report one early morning in June 2019. The police officers forced their way into the house, shot Mac's friend dead, and ordered him to go downstairs. Mac obliged, but after reaching the first floor, the police officers shot him twice in the head.

Carlo's family did not attempt to seek justice for Tom and Mac, afraid of the repercussions from the police perpetrators.

Discouraging Strategies

The investigators and police officers allegedly discouraged families from filing cases. Some families were told that nothing can be done to the cases of the victims because they are already dead, and that there is no point investigating.

With ICC's ongoing investigation on the Philippine situation, many families in Navotas City and Caloocan City reported that police and National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) operatives have recently been approaching them about filing cases. Rather than gathering evidence, police instead have been trying to convince the families to sign waivers, sworn statements, or even blank papers to show that they would no longer pursue their cases due to the alleged lack of witnesses and evidence.

It was May 2022; election season was at a fever pitch and there was hope that a new set of leaders could finally end the so-called war on drugs. Carlo had just been released from prison after being arrested unlawfully the year before. Fearing for his safety around their home in Navotas City, Carlo chose to move in to his grandmother's house in Tondo, Manila.

This was the same house where Carlo was apprehended one afternoon in November 2021. Several armed men in civilian clothing barged into his grandmother's house which led to a brief chase where Carlo ended up on the roof. Carlo was caught; the armed men pointed guns at him and beat him up.

The armed men took Carlo to a nearby basketball court where they beat him again. Carlo was yelling, calling for his grandmother Lucia, who was too scared to do anything. The armed men covered Carlo's head with a black sack and tied his hands with a steel wire. Neighbors witnessed the entire scene unfold but could not do anything out of fear.

The armed men forced Carlo to ride a motorcycle and took him to a hidden cell behind the police station in the city. Carlo spent the next three days in the hidden cell before he was transferred and detained in another police station in the city. One informant said that the police officers forced Carlo to identify other drug suspects in exchange for his release but Carlo refused.

The cops asked Carlo's family Php4,000 for what they called bail, an amount the family could not afford to pay. Carlo was kept in detention where he contracted COVID-19. He would be detained for months.

In May 2022, Carlo asked Kate to follow up on his papers in preparation for his plea bargain at the Manila Regional Trial Court. In the evening, Carlo then called his aunt to ask for Php1,000 from his grandmother, refusing to say what it was for. To the family's surprise, Carlo was released without any documents. [EP1]

Even when up and about, Carlo remained in fear for his safety. One early morning in June 2022, Carlo went out to top up credits for his cellphone. When he got to the community basketball court, the lights went out and six armed men in civilian clothes approached Carlo. He attempted to run back home, but the armed men pursued him and shot him multiple times before leaving the scene.

Lucia was informed of the incident and rushed Carlo to the hospital. Carlo was declared dead on arrival at around 2:30 in the morning.

Kate learned from the witnesses at the site of the killing that Carlo was mistakenly identified as a target of the perpetrators. *“Napagkamalan po siya, ‘yung hinahanap kasi doon din sa mismong lugar. Eh, sobrang dilim doon sa Tondo, sobra. May mga pulis, sa tabing riles po, eh, siya ‘yung nakita.* He was mistaken for someone else, as their target was also in the area. It gets really dark in Tondo. There were police by the railroad and they spotted him.”

Mistaken Identities

The investigators and police officers allegedly discouraged families from 11 documented EJK victims were victims of mistaken identities; five died in police operations, one was killed in an operation believed to be perpetrated by the police officers, and five were killed by alleged vigilantes. They were killed in operations targeting other persons (“damay”) which proves either the wanton disregard of perpetrators on the due process or the incompetence of the police perpetrators in conducting their operations.

Later in the hospital, several police in civilian attire approached Kate and their aunt to ask them to come to the police station for interviews, but they refused due to fear and distrust. *“Di kami nagpa-interview kahit sinasama kami, kailangan daw eh. Eh, di nga kumuha ng pulis [report] kasi nga may phobia nga kami sa mga pulis. Kukunin kami, nakasibilyan.* We refused to be interviewed even though they were asking us to come with them; they said we needed to go. We didn’t even get a police report because we have a phobia of the police. They wanted to take us when they were not in uniform.”

Access to Information

One hundred and fifty-six families found it difficult to gain access to documents, especially police and medico-legal reports.

Some families who requested reports from the police were told that their requests would be rejected because they might use these documents against the issuing police unit. The families also fear reprisal from the alleged perpetrators if they show any intent to file a case, moreso if they know that the police officers are the alleged perpetrators.

The difficulty of accessing documents hampered the efforts of the families in seeking assistance, often from government agencies and faith-based organizations that require police reports to validate their assistance requests.

At 6:00 in the morning, the police requested to have Carlo's remains in custody for an autopsy. The police said that the autopsy would cost money, after which the family had to refuse.

Carlo's family had to endure more hardships in the days that followed. The funeral home charged them Php40,000 for their services. The family then solicited donations from churches and borrowed from relatives and friends, debts that they have yet to pay off fully. "Until now, naghuhulog pa din 'yung nanay ko. 'Yung iba, inaaway na siya. Until now, my mother is still paying our debts. Some creditors have become hostile against her."

Expensive Funerals

The families of 51 victims struggled to pay the services of the funeral parlors. On average, families were required to pay around Php38,000 for funeral services. Some were asked to pay around Php55,000 before they could retrieve the body, a hefty amount for poor families. They were told that the payment was for the "processing of the body," autopsies, embalming, wakes, and burials.

Families say that the autopsies were poorly done, rendering the results unusable for future investigations. None of the families were provided with the results of the autopsies. A second autopsy on two victims revealed that there were still bullets inside their bodies. Some informants also described funeral parlors encouraging families to waive their right to demand an autopsy.

"Noong nawala siya, parang mas nalugmok [kami]. Parang kailangan talaga namin kumayod. Ako, si nanay—ako lang naman nagtatrabaho sa amin eh. Kasi 'yung kapatid kong babaeng dalawa may kanya-kanya nang buhay eh. Eh, ilan ang pamangkin kong nasa akin? Lima. Our situation worsened when he died. Like we have had to work even harder. I and my mom—it's only me who works among us. I have two sisters but they already have their own lives. How many nephews are staying with me? Five.

Taking care of her five nephews as the family's sole provider is not an easy task even as she works two jobs as a toy vendor and hairdresser. Kate, who is also transgender, admits that she constantly worries about her family's economic vulnerabilities.

"Parang minsan umiiyak ako mag-isa, tapos napapaisip ako paano na lang pag nawala ako? Sino na lang tutulong sa mga pamangkin ko, maliliit pa, nanay ko? Natatakot, para akong natatakot na 'yung . . . alam mo 'yun. Sometimes, I cry alone and wonder what happens if I'm gone? Who will be looking after my young nephews, my mother? I'm scared, I'm scared that . . . you know." Fortunately, the nephews are still able to go to school but now bring packed lunches instead of cash to save money.

Kate said that their mother is the most affected by the series of losses in their family. *"Masakit. Sabi niya, dalawa nang anak ko nawawala diyan sa Manila. Ano bang pinaggagagawa niyan, ba't ganyan? It hurts her a lot.* She said once, "Two of my children were killed in Manila. What were they doing? Why did it end up like this? It took a year for Kate's mom to even begin to recover. For a while, she could not eat nor work and would often be staring blankly into space after Carlo's death.

The community has also not been a source of support. One time, Kate heard their neighbor talking about her mom, “Immune na ’yan sa ganyan. Parang wala namang pakialam sa anak ’yan. Biruin mo, dalawang anak na ’yung namatay, dedma-dedma lang. She is already immune to grief. She seems to not care about her children. Think about it, two of her children have already died and she’s unbothered.” Kate and their family chose to avoid confrontation. When they leave the house, they avoid interactions with the neighbors, even with their judgmental stares.

Their issues with the police did not end in Carlo’s death. Sometime in 2023, six cops in civilian garb barged into their house, accusing one of the nephews of hiding drugs. “Sir, bakit po kayo papasok nang walang pahintulot? Bawal po ’yan. Sir, why are you entering our house without our permission? That’s illegal,” Kate asked. “Mahinahon ’yung ano namin, pero deep inside, nanginginig kami, natatakot. Eh, ’yung kapatid ko, naghi-hysterical ’yung babae. Sagot ba naman ng pulis, ‘Wag kang pala-sigaw-sigaw diyan, tang-ina mo ka. Baka gusto mo sampalin kita.’ We were calm, but deep inside, we were shaking in fear. My sister went hysterical. A cop told her, ‘Stop screaming, you son of a bitch. You want a slap?’”

Illegal Search and Ransacking

There were 12 documented incidents of illegal search and ransacking of their homes.

Missing, Confiscated, and Destroyed Properties

Thirty-two EJK victims had their personal properties such as cash and cellular phones missing after the killings, 13 of these 32 were killed in police operations.

Personal properties of 13 EJK victims were taken; nine of these victims were killed in police operations.

The personal properties of five more EJK victims, such as home appliances and furniture, were damaged or destroyed by the alleged perpetrators.

After the police saw no drugs in the house, they took the piggy bank that belonged to their mother’s partner and went away. The piggy bank contained their mother’s savings from selling counterfeit jewelry on the street.

The family brought the accused nephew to the police station to prove his innocence. While there, the police told them that he was not whom they were looking for, and they returned the piggy bank. Kate and the nephew thought that the fiasco would end there, until the police asked them to speak on camera with a script thanking the authorities for returning the piggy bank. The police made up a story that the piggy bank had been stolen by a civilian and that they retrieved the piggy bank.

“Tinuruan pa kami ha, ‘Eto ang sasabihin ninyo, vivideohan namin kayong mag-ina ha.’ ‘Magpapasalamat po kayo’—may binanggit siyang panglan eh. ‘Nagpapasalamat po kami kay Sir, niligtas niya ‘yung alkansya at paninda ni’—ganoon ang sinabi namin. Kay natatawa nga—ano ba ‘tong pinagagawa namin? Vinideohan kami ng pulis. Pero bawal ‘yon diba? Bawal ‘yon. Ang nangyari kasi, parang huli daw ng pagnanakaw ‘yung gawa nila eh. They coached us, ‘This is what you’re going to say, we will record you on video with your mother. Say thank you to . . .’—one cop mentioned a name. ‘We are thankful to Sir for saving our piggy bank and our wares . . .’—that is what he wanted us to do. I found it funny like what are we doing here? But that’s illegal, right? That’s illegal. What they wanted to portray was what they did was an arrest for theft.”

Kate also believes that their family remains under surveillance after seeing police in the vicinity of their house multiple times. They worry that they would be targeted for another operation, especially that their door has not yet been replaced since the latest ransacking. “Naka-sibilyan lang ho, eh, kilala na namin sa sobrang tagal na namin na nakikita ‘yung ganyang itsura. Pag malalaki katawan tapos matatangkad na mukhang bakulaw, mga pulis, mga SAID ‘yan, mga ganyan! They were in civilian garb, but we already know them after so long. If they have huge builds, are tall and monstrous-looking, that’s them, the SAID (Special Anti-Illegal Drugs Task Force) members!”

Kate and their family have faced unthinkable losses and continue to deal with difficult odds with the continuing harassment from authorities and the economic hardships owing to deaths of family’s providers. Still, they remain hopeful that the Marcos Jr. administration would cooperate with the International Criminal Court (ICC) for justice and accountability and that civil society organizations would continue their support for the families of EJK victims. Kate also yearns for a voting public that chooses wisely in the next elections, to be an electorate who votes for public servants who can actively engage in the protection, respect, and fulfillment of human rights.



**As the Killings Continue,
An Abused Wife Finds
Freedom and Sorrow**

Gina would describe Jose as a hardworking partner whose primary goal was to provide a comfortable life for their family, including their newborn. Yet, it was far from a healthy relationship from the beginning to its sudden end.

Jose and Gina met at a house of a common friend while sneaking out from the lockdown at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. It was love at first sight for the both. Jose had a common-law wife at the time but chose to move with Gina in Navotas City. Their whirlwind relationship gave birth to a child in 2022.

Still, Gina was straightforward in saying that the relationship was abusive. "*Kapag pinaghihinalaan at nagseselos siya, binubugbog at kinukulong niya ako sa bahay.* When he accuses me of having an affair with another man and becomes jealous, he would beat me and keep me at home."

"*Lagi daw po akong tinatawag [ng ibang lalaki], kahit hindi naman. Ayon, kaya nasasaktan niya po [ako].* He often thought that I was getting calls from other men which was not happening. That's why he would beat me." Gina's health would soon deteriorate due to the constant abuse and her relationships with family and friends also suffered.

Gina still loved Jose, who she believes was a good provider for their family. "*May trabaho naman po siya, turwing uuwi siya, may dala siyang pagkain. May dala siyang bigas, ulam.* He had a job, and he brought food every time he came home. He brought rice, stuff to eat."

When asked about the so-called drug war, Gina was initially supportive. "*Marami po kasing adik sa amin.* There are many drug addicts in our community."

"*Si Duterte, tingin ko, babaguhin niya 'yung [sitwasyon] natin pero noong nalaman ko na si Duterte naglalagay ng kapahamakan, nag-iba na 'yung [tingin ko] sa kanya. Madami nang halos namamatay, tinotokhang.* I believed Duterte could change our situation but when I learned that it was Duterte who put us in danger, my perception of him changed. So many people have been killed."

Engaging with politics and social issues was not a priority for the couple. Neither of them decided to vote in the 2022 national elections, believing instead that they need to focus on stabilizing the family's situation and recovering from the pandemic. But a year into the Marcos Jr. administration, their family started to feel the brunt of the economic downturn. "*Lahat po ng biling tumataas, tapos po 'yung mga nagtatrabaho po, naghahanap ng ibang mapagkakakitaan.* 'Yung iba po, bumababa po 'yung sahod. Halos 'yung sinasahod nila, minsan di mo na pinagkakasya sa pang-araw-araw. The costs of goods all went up, and those with jobs were now looking for other means of income. The salaries of other workers decreased. Their salaries were no longer enough for their everyday needs."

Jose was arrested in September 2023 for allegedly engaging in illegal gambling. Gina recounts that Jose experienced torture in the hands of the police. He was ordered to kneel on coarse salt and was hit with a gun in the neck while being forced to admit allegations of drug involvement and to identify other drug suspects he knew.

Illegal Arrests and Arbitrary Detention

Eleven victims had been arrested illegally and detained arbitrarily prior to their deaths.

Illegal arrests and arbitrary detention are characterized by any of the following:

1. Having no warrant, except for crimes in flagrante delicto;
2. Harassment, torture, and sexual abuse;
3. Not informing of and disrespecting the Miranda rights of the accused; forcing the accused to self-incriminate or plead guilty of the crime;
4. Withholding the necessary information on the cause of arrest and detention and identities of the arresting officers;
5. Forcing the accused to give his/her personal information and fingerprints and be taken with mugshots without undergoing the proper procedures;
6. Blindfolding and use of improvised handcuff;
7. Arresting officers not wearing uniform and without proper identification;
8. Improper chain of custody;
9. Use of unofficial vehicles;
10. Detention without permission to seek legal counsel;
11. Extortion;
12. Arrest of minor/child below the age of criminal responsibility;
13. Unlawful charging of a crime; and
14. Other acts not permitted by the police guidelines and by the law.

118 victims of illegal arrests and arbitrary detention who were not killed under the drug war have also been documented aside from the 236 EJK victims.

The police released Jose after a month on the condition that he will serve as a volunteer asset and help identify suspected drug personalities. But the police chief warned him, “*Pag nakita kita sa pabahay [sa Navotas], papatayin kita!* If I see you in the housing project community in Navotas City, I’ll kill you!”

Jose’s return also brought an escalation of his abuse. “*Di katulad dati na pag sinasaktan niya ako, kamay lang, ngayon, pag sinaktan, meron nang dyaryo.* Unlike before when he used to hit me with his hands alone; after his release, he started hitting me with newspapers.” Jose became more short-tempered and paranoid that he would be killed next like his cousin. His fear of people grew and he believed that he was being monitored. “*Nakasarado kasi lagi pinto namin. ‘Ta’s sabi niya may tao, tapos pag titingnan ko naman wala naman tao.* Our door remained closed. One time, he said that there was someone outside, but when I took a look, nobody was there.”

While attending a wake, Jose’s friends told him they noticed three suspicious masked people following him.

Jose was killed midnight of January 14 this year. Cristina, Jose’s sister, was the first to find out among the family. “*Tingnan n’yo si Jose doon, wala na. Look for Jose there; he’s gone.*”

Cristina did not believe what she heard at first. She knew Jose was with their grandmother in Quezon City, where he was staying temporarily after their electricity was cut for not paying their bills. She went to the highway leading to a dike where she saw Jose’s lifeless body, covered in fabric, surrounded by a large crowd and the police.

All that Gina knows from the family is that they were told that Jose was killed in a motorcycle accident despite gunshot wounds on his body and the active threats against him in the months before his death. Rita, Jose's mother, also asked Gina to stop asking about what happened, as she refuses to accept Gina as her son's partner. Gina decided to respect the family's wishes, choosing instead to focus her attention and energy on raising their child as a single mother.

Jose's death continues to bring up complicated emotions for Gina and has shifted the trajectory of her life and that of their son.

For one, Gina is now free from Jose's abuse; her overall health has improved and she has gained weight to a healthy degree.

However, Gina admits that she is still struggling, especially now that their son was left to be her sole responsibility. *"Laking nawala sa akin noong nawala siya. Wala nang mag-aalaga sa anak ko pag umaalis ako [para maghanapbuhay].* I was dealt a huge loss when he died. There is no one else to take care of my child when I have to leave for work."

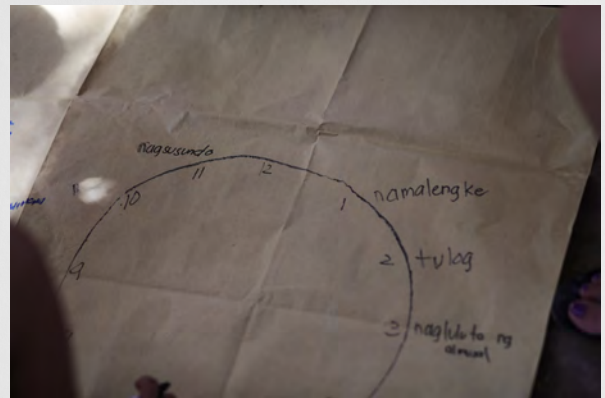
Before, she didn't have to work for their family because that was Jose's role. But now, she has to work round the clock, from early in the morning to fish and then the rest of the day to sell her catch in the community. *"Minsan po mahirap. Minsan kapag wala akong kita, naghahanap ako ng pagkakaparehan po para makakain kami dito.* It's difficult sometimes. On days I don't make enough, I have to find other ways so we can have something to eat.

Gina did not attend any formal schooling so she thinks it is almost impossible for her to find a regular job. Rita works abroad and has expressed some willingness to send some money for the child. But Gina is conflicted about depending on the mom because Rita wants custody of the child.



Gina leans on her family for support, especially in taking care of her child while she is at work. *"Ngayon, pag umaalis po ako, naiiwan ko na lang siya sa mama ko, minsan, pag wala din si Mama, doon lang siya sa amin. Pinapakain din po siya ng tita ko, 'tsaka ng Lola ko, pinapakain po 'yung anak ko. Minsan pinapaliguan din po nila.* Now, when I go to work, I leave my son to Mom, when Mom is not around, I have to leave him at home. My aunt and my grandmother also feed him. Sometimes, they also bathe him."

Gina wants an end to the killings, for the sake of the dependents who might become widows and orphans. *"Sa gobyerno po, 'yung sinabi po nila na wala nang patayan, sana magkatotoo po. Sana maawa sila sa papatayin nila, kung may maiiwan ba o wala, kawarwa po kasi 'yung mga naiiwan.* To the government, I hope they will be true to their promise that there'll be no more extrajudicial killings. I hope they will have compassion for their future victims, whether they would leave people behind, because it is terrible for those left behind."



The image features a white background with several pieces of torn paper and cardboard. On the left, a vertical strip of brown cardboard is visible, secured by two pieces of dark grey tape. To the right of this, a small, irregular piece of brown cardboard is attached to a larger, rectangular piece of off-white paper. The off-white paper has a slightly textured appearance and features the Roman numeral 'II' printed in a large, bold, black serif font in the center. The overall composition suggests a collage or a page from a handmade book or journal.

II

PART 2

Evolving Patterns: The War on Drugs Under the Marcos Jr. Administration

PhilRights, through its community partners, is actively monitoring the situation in identified hotspots for human rights violations related to the so-called war on drugs. These reports are collated and presented below. While means of verification are variable and subject to limitations due to safety and security concerns, PhilRights can confirm that these reports come from multiple sources over a period of at least a year.

1



Rizal, Bulacan, Metro Manila

The killings in Rizal, Bulacan, and Metro Manila continued into the presidency of Marcos Jr. but are much less rampant. Other human rights violations, however, include a growing set of patterns, implying that the implementation of the **drug policy of the current government has evolved.**

2



Rizal

In Rizal, emerging patterns suggest that **victims of illegal arrest and arbitrary detention are growing.** It was observed that the **police utilized operations that aim to arrest gamblers or gambling spectators** and turned them into opportunities to charge apprehended individuals with drug-related cases in order to meet their quotas. The **victims are forced to hold the drug evidence provided** by the police and to admit, while or after being tortured, that the evidence is theirs **while being recorded on camera in photos and/or video.**

3



San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan

In San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan, community partners reported cases where victims of illegal arrest and arbitrary detention are taken to faraway places, including in Pampanga, for around 24 hours without their families' knowledge. The **victims are tortured inside the vehicles before they are brought back to the city for detention.** Their families see bruises and wounds in their bodies while they are in detention, but **victims are forbidden by the police to reveal the cause** of these injuries.

4



San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan

In the same city, it was also reported that some victims were asked to attend meetings for the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) by barangay officials. But when the victims arrived at the barangay hall, they were ordered to consume a drink that tasted bitter, allegedly containing drugs. They were then asked to submit to drug testing to which they tested positive. In some cases, the victims were forced to use drugs in front of a CCTV camera, footage which is later used by barangay officials as evidence against the victims. In one case, a victim was forced by the police to dance naked on a table, causing intense psychological trauma on the victim.

5



Caloocan City and Manila

In Caloocan City and Manila, there were cases of rape and sexual abuses against the families of victims of illegal arrest and arbitrary detention during the actual arrest. There are also cases of harassment against family members of the victim, including arresting them, to extort money. The police also continue to implement the questionable production of drug watchlists, identifying the drug suspects in the communities through local informants. In past years, inclusion in these lists often meant harassment by the police at minimum if not more flagrant violations, including extrajudicial killings.

6



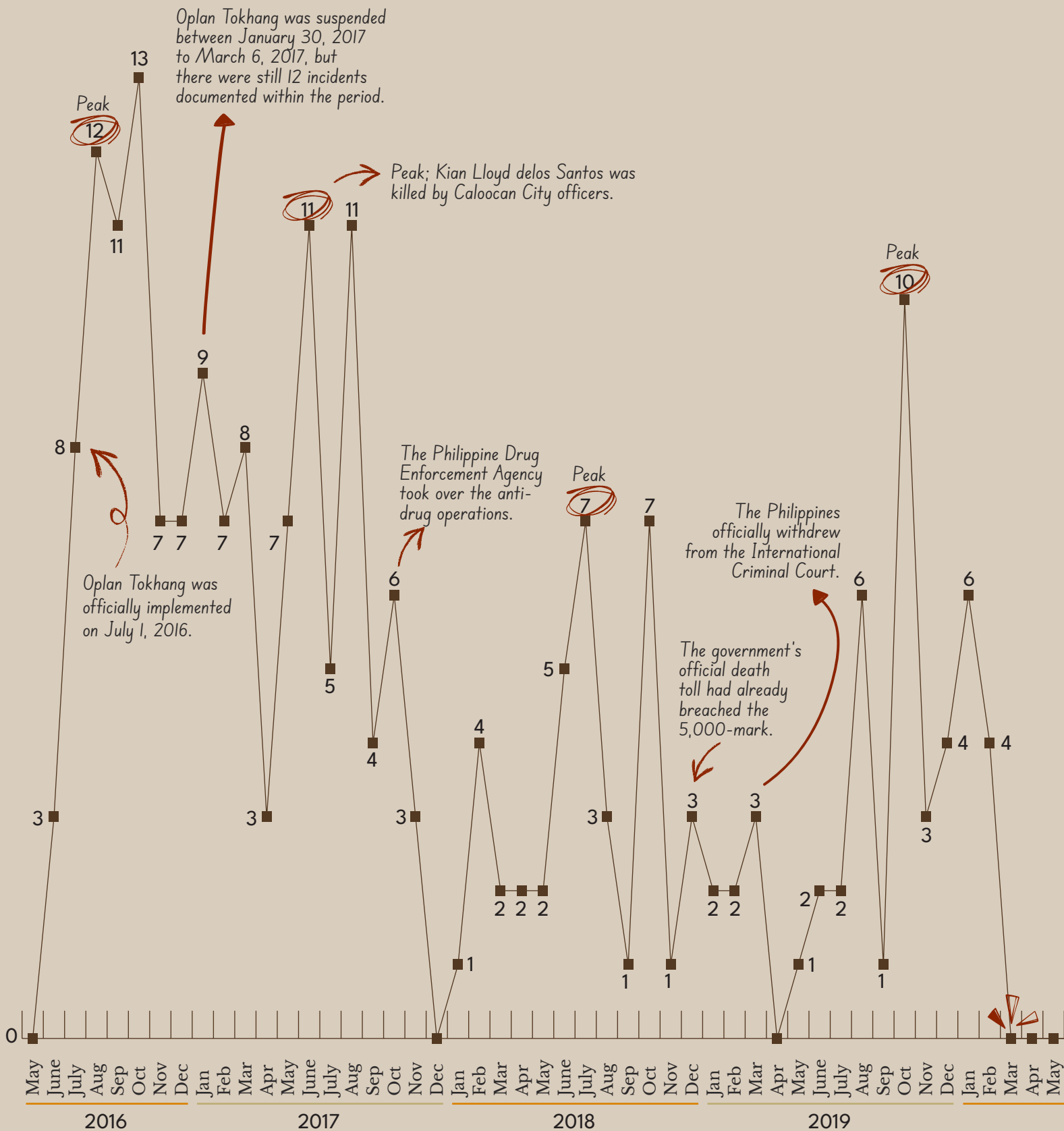
Navotas City

In Navotas City, several victims of illegal arrest and arbitrary detention were killed after their release, and the police would identify a far-fetched cause of death. In one case, police threatened the victim that he would be killed, and after a month of his release from detention, he was found dead. The police then said that he died from a vehicular accident, alleging that his motorcycle hit an electric post. Another victim was identified to have been killed by people with mental illness after being extorted for money and receiving threats from the police.

III

PART 3

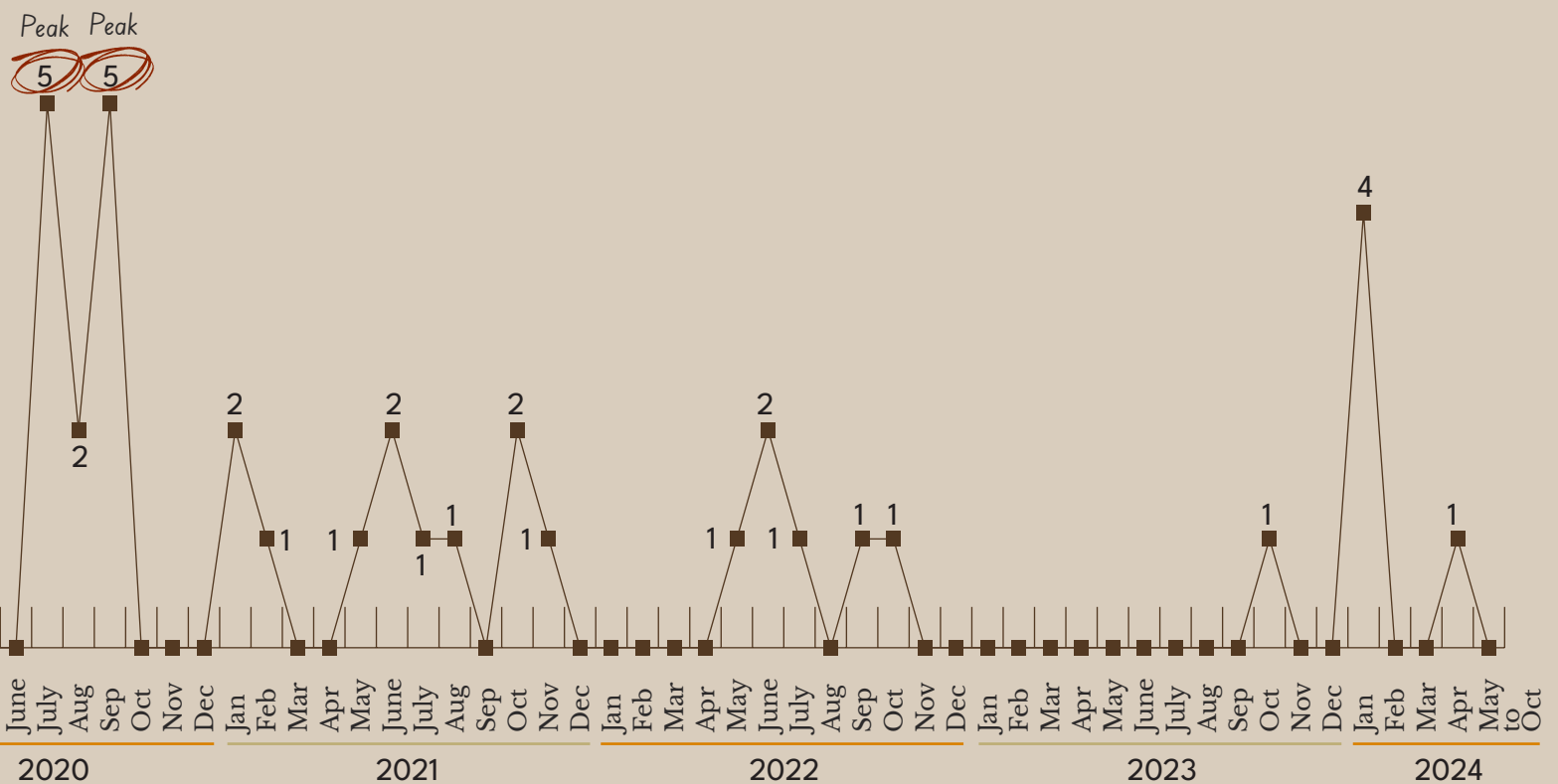
Demographics, Patterns, and Modalities of Human Rights Violations



1 When were the EJK victims killed?



On March 15, 2020,
the whole country was
placed on lockdown due
to COVID-19.





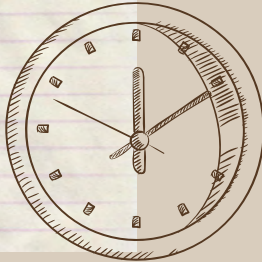
Time of Killing

00:00- 5:59 AM: **74**

6:00- 11:59 AM: **15**

12:00-5:59 PM: **42**

6:00-11:59 PM: **93**



Time of killing for 31 victims could not be determined.

The informants said that killings mostly happened at night due to the lack of potential witnesses, as most of the people are sleeping.



Distribution of Documented Killings by City/Municipality

217 (85.10%)

of the victims were killed and were found dead within the cities/municipalities where they resided.

Similar to the geographic clustering of the victims' place of residence, most of the acts of killing were perpetrated in impoverished areas such as the informal settlements of Tondo (Manila), Malabon, Navotas City, relocation sites of Navotas City, and San Jose del Monte City and Bocaue in Bulacan. In Caloocan City, Bagong Silang and Tala are the hotspots for killings.

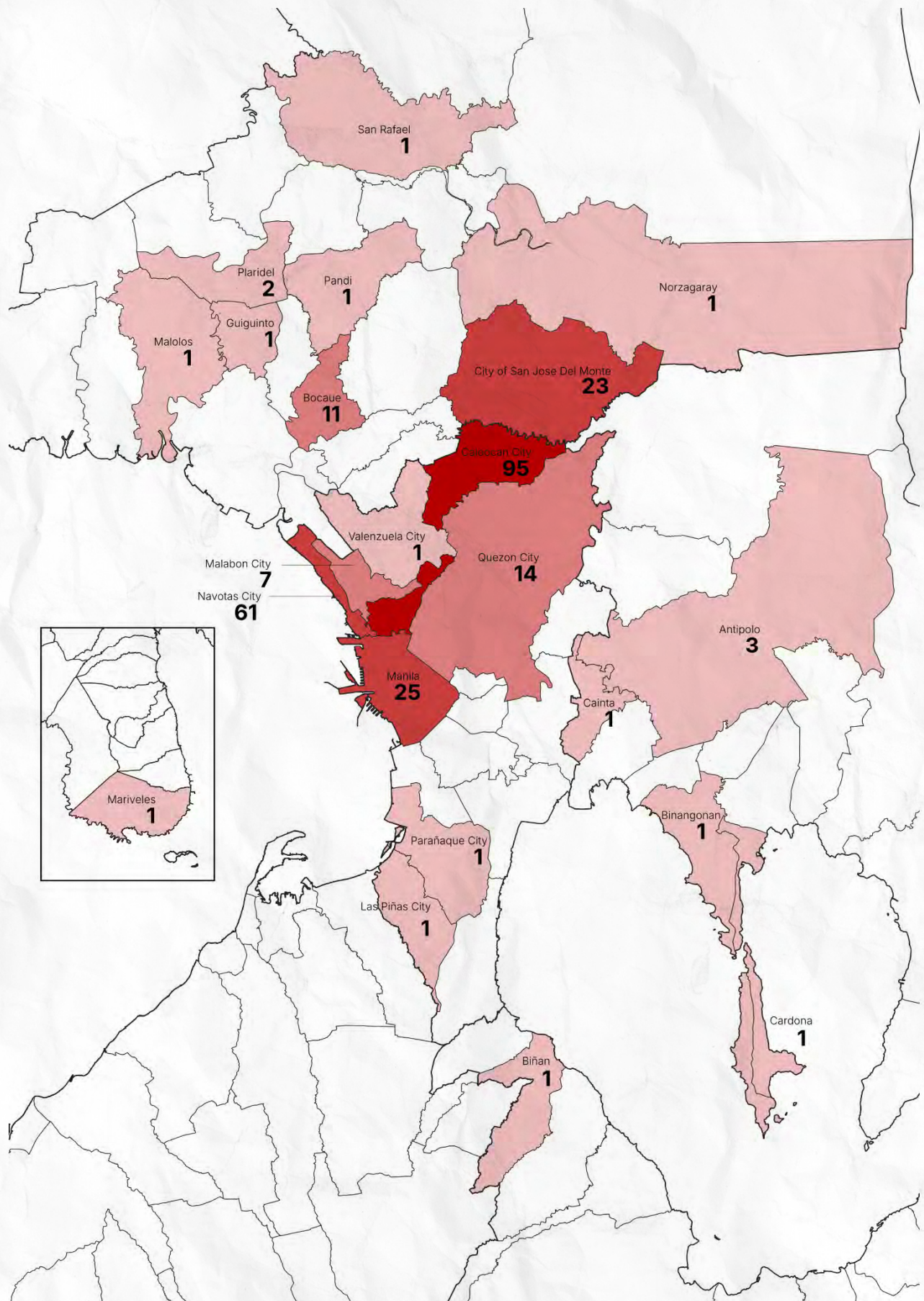


Figure 1. Map of Distribution of Documented Killings by City/Municipality (2016-2024)

A. How many were killed?

(as per PhilRights documentation)

From August 15, 2017 to October 2024, PhilRights fully documented 255 victims of alleged extrajudicial killing (EJK) under the so-called drug war.

August- December 2017	- 26
2018	----- 65
2019	----- 69
2020	----- 16
2021	----- 8
2022	----- 36
2023	----- 16
2024	----- 19
Total	----- 255

B. Demographics

Sex, Gender, and Age



Most of the drug war EJK victims were male adults.

239 were males (two of whom identified as members of the LGBTQIA+)

133 young adults (18-35 y/o)

107 adults (35-59 y/o)

9 children (below 18 y/o)

5 senior citizens (60 y/o and above)

1 with no information on age

Victims of the drug war were mostly male adults within the productive age range, family breadwinners, low- and irregular-wage earners from the informal sectors of the economy, of low educational attainment, and residents of urban poor communities.

Php393.13

daily income with
single income source



Php450.78

daily income with
multiple income source

Occupation and Income

- 230 known earners and most of them had low-earning jobs
- 157 had variable incomes
- 63 were earning fixed incomes
- 10 no information
- 5 senior citizens (60 y/o and above)
- 1 with no information on age

The mean daily income of victims with a single source of income was around Php393.13, usually earned after engaging in grueling jobs for eight hours or longer. The mean daily income of victims with multiple sources of income (i.e., multiple occupations) was around Php450.78. Most of the victims—especially those who were construction workers, carpenters, house painters, porters, and electricians—worked on a seasonal basis, earning only when assigned to a project or task.

Single-Income Source:

- 56 Construction Workers / House Painters/ Carpenters / Electricians / Linemen
- 50 Transport Workers (Drivers / Driver's Assistants / Dispatchers / Cargo Workers / Boat Workers)
- 22 Vendors
- 23 Fisherfolk / Fishport Workers
- 12 Garbage Collectors / Scavengers
- 5 Child Laborers
- 4 Porters / Kargador
- 2 Law Enforcers
- 27 Other Occupations (e.g., junk shop staff, house caretaker, messenger, mechanic, appliance and gadget repair technician, security guard, rice mill worker, manicurist)

Multiple-Income Source:

- 29 Multiple Occupations (e.g., porter and fisherfolk, errand boy and tricycle driver, dishwasher and fish vendor)

Non-wage Occupation:

- 7 Students
- 3 Housewives
- 9 Unemployed

There is no information on the occupation, income, and variability of income of six victims.

104 (45.22%)

of the 230 victims with known income were primary income earners, who contributed more than 50% of the total household income.

On average, the victim contributed around 62.02% of the household income.

Those who were self-employed (vendors, tricycle and jeepney drivers, scavengers, manicurists, boatmen, repair persons, independent fisherfolk, clothes washer) had fluctuating incomes, ranging from Php 70.00- 800.00 a day, depending on their sales, fish catch, or number of trips made in the case of public transport drivers.

Educational Attainment



- 110 completed elementary education but did not finish high school
- 60 did not finish their elementary education
- 50 completed high school education but did not complete college
- 7 college graduates
- 2 underwent Alternative Learning Systems (ALS)
- 3 did not have any formal education

The educational attainment of four victims could not be determined. Of the college graduates, three graduated from vocational programs and four had bachelor's degrees.

Dependents

On average, a victim had three dependents.



Among those left behind, at least 350 children lost at least one of their parents. Three children lost both parents.



Civil Status

- 97 with common-law spouse
- 92 single
- 54 married
- 5 separated
- 2 widowed

The civil status of five victims could not be determined.

Place of Residence

- 65 Informal settlements
- 48 Relocation sites
- 13 Houses of relatives and friends
- 3 On streets



Most of the documented victims lived in Caloocan City (36.47%), Navotas City (28.24%), and Manila (10.98%). Caloocan and Manila are also the cities with the highest incidents of alleged extrajudicial killings according to the figures released in July 2018 by the Ateneo Policy Center (APC), based on media and online data they collected (Manila, 23.2% of all media-reported extrajudicial killings in the country; and Caloocan, 18.7%). Outside Metro Manila, the City of San Jose del Monte in Bulacan tops the list in the number of victims documented.

Most of the victims documented were residents of urban poor communities and did not own their dwelling. Most of them (50.59%) resided in informal settlements, relocation sites, houses of relatives and friends, and public thoroughfares (streets).

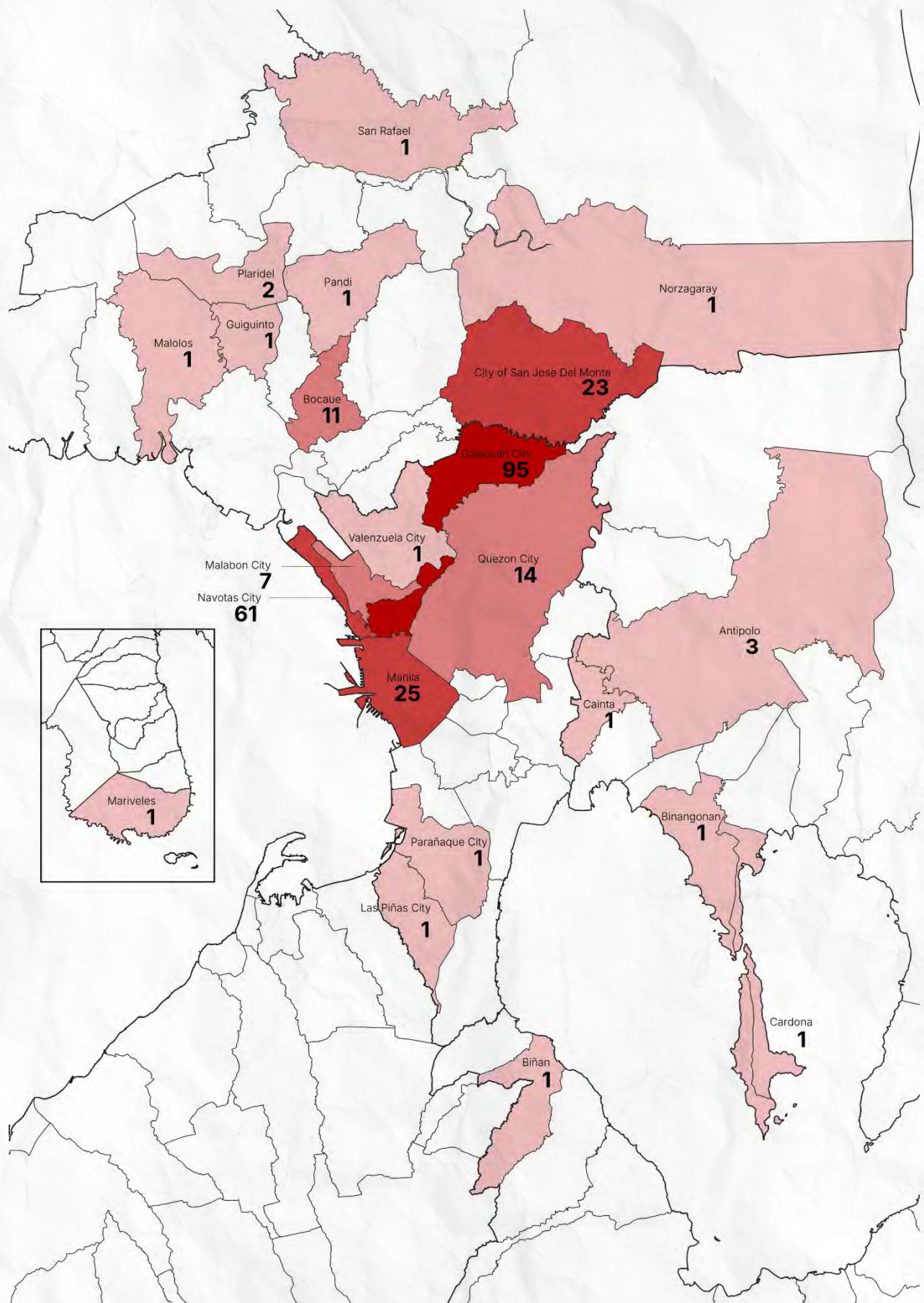


Figure 2. Map of Victims' Places of Residences



IV

PART 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

This report summarizes the findings of monitoring and documentation work in known hotspots for human rights violations committed under the so-called war on drugs of the Philippine government. Beyond the numbers, PhilRights has endeavored to capture the multidimensional impacts of the program on the victims and the families left behind.

The case studies reported here are but glimpses of the deep trauma and socioeconomic deprivation experienced by the thousands of families of victims of the drug war. Their stories, painful and brutal and distressing, are harrowing reminders of the drug war's devastating human impact which continues to reverberate over many years and through multiple facets of the families' daily lives. Their stories also underscore several urgent truths about the so-called war on drugs; among them:

1. Profound Socioeconomic Displacement

From its inception, the so-called war on drugs enforced under the administration of Rodrigo Duterte and continued under Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has overwhelmingly targeted impoverished communities. PhilRights' documentation work reveals a victim demographic that is majority male adults within the productive age range, who were family breadwinners with low and/or irregular wages from the informal sectors of the economy, of low educational attainment, and were residents of urban poor communities.

The financial collapse triggered by the deaths of primary income earners caused immediate and significant decreases in the quality of life of those left behind. The destabilizing effects of losing access to the majority income are felt in food and housing insecurity, dwindling funds for children's continuing education, physical and mental health issues, and alienation from communities of support due to the stigma of being branded a TokHang family.

These effects are also gendered; much like Carmel, Kate, and Gina, women and girls are thrust into multiple roles as breadwinners and emotional anchors for their traumatized loved ones—their own trauma, notwithstanding. Women also tend to take the lead in restoring a semblance of normalcy in their households, in seeking support for the family's immediate needs, and in pursuing justice and accountability.

Apol, like many young girls and boys left impacted by the drug war, has had to navigate difficult circumstances that negatively affect their crucial developmental stages. Many are forced to



take on adult responsibilities, take a step back from or fully abandon their schooling, or find themselves in even more vulnerable situations where they are exposed to abuse and exploitation. They carry with them a deep sense of loss and anxiety about the future while having little to no access to material and emotional support. Their struggles demand urgent attention, shedding light on the deeply underexamined intergenerational effects of the drug war.

2. Entrenchment of Violence and Impunity

The so-called war on drugs has normalized violence to the point of structural impunity and societal numbness. For years now, law enforcement agencies have for the most part been shielded from accountability due to a dysfunctional justice system and unequivocal support from the highest officials of the land, emboldening them to disregard rules of engagement and due process.

At its height, the shock and awe approach and the sheer scale of operations have fostered a climate of fear that remains palpable, especially in killing hotspots. As with Kate's family, many also experience multiple violations, where two or more family members become victims of illegal arrests and detention, torture, or extrajudicial killings.

The fear of reprisal is deeply felt by families left behind, which has prevented many of them from seeking justice, reinforcing a culture of impunity. Concerns about State actors retaliating are grounded in real experience; reports of harassment, surveillance, and explicit threats have been reported from all of PhilRights' documentation sites. This pervasive fear not only silences families left behind but also entrenches a culture where violence is tacitly accepted as a tool of governance.



3. Suppression of Evidence and Legal Barriers

Families of victims encounter systemic obstacles when seeking justice. These include altered and falsified death certificates, questionable waivers that enjoin relatives to refrain from the filing of complaints or requests for investigations, and restricted access to police reports. Community-sourced pieces of possible evidence such as CCTV recordings of incidents from the barangay or establishments in the area are often erased, compromised, or hidden from families who sought them.

These practices, documented in this report, illustrate a coordinated effort to suppress evidence and the families' access to accountability mechanisms, further allowing perpetrators to evade accountability.

These conditions also exacerbate mistrust in public institutions and further isolate the affected families, significantly impacting their resolve to not only seek justice but also demand redress for the negative impacts on their quality of life.

4. Lasting Psychosocial and Developmental Harm

Children who lose parents to the drug war bear the brunt of its long-term consequences. Apol and other children orphaned by the so-called war on drugs are facing heightened poverty, displacement, and interrupted education—all of which contribute to a hostile environment for their growth and development. Many suffer from psychological trauma and mental health challenges, the effects of which are compounded by social stigma and the lack of access to support. These psychosocial effects risk creating a generation haunted by the so-called war on drugs, reinforcing the perpetuation of cycles of poverty and instability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Carmel, Apol, Kate, and Gina. Their stories offer a bitter and ongoing rebuke to the delusion that the drug war intended to address social ills related to illegal drugs. What the so-called war on drugs did achieve is trigger a large-scale, systemic, and multidimensional assault on the human rights and dignity of Filipinos. It has precipitated a human rights crisis that causes widespread suffering and will have manifold impacts in the years to come.

The administration of President Marcos Jr. may claim to employ a softened approach but the underlying structures that perpetuate fear, harassment, socioeconomic deprivation, and continued violence remain in place.

With this in mind, we put forward the following recommendations:

1. Recognition and Accounting of Drug War-Related Human Rights Violations

To date, the Philippine government has yet to fully recognize the enormity and scale of human rights violations committed under the so-called war on drugs. Sparse acknowledgments of lapses in implementation and overreach by law enforcement are nothing but empty gestures in the face of continued harm committed against the families left behind. Meanwhile, the modalities of violations committed against new victims and their families continue to evolve under the guise of a so-called softened approach. Worse, the continuing absence of substantive evidence collection and investigation on thousands of police and vigilante-linked violations committed since 2016 will make it even more difficult to establish justice-seeking efforts.

The Philippine government must issue a clear acknowledgment of the systemic nature of the perpetration of human rights violations related to its drug war, categorically end the existing anti-drug policy that enables the commission of thousands of violations to occur from 2016 up until the present, and commit to dismantles the structures that allow the continuation of this culture of violence.

Equally urgent, the Philippine justice system must be mobilized to its fullest to begin the immense task of gathering information and evidence on all confirmed cases of human rights

violations. In the same vein, the Philippine government needs to be an active and transparent participant in the ongoing investigation by the International Criminal Court on alleged crimes against humanity committed under Duterte's administration.

2. Adoption of a Human Rights-Based Approach

Governance that puts at the center the rights and dignity of all citizens should be the default. To say that the Philippines has a long way to go in this area would be an understatement. Still, the path forward is clear: Adopt policies that reflect the principles of participation, accountability, nondiscrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment, and the rule of law. This shift carries immense weight and requires the full commitment from the country's leaders to bear fruit.



3. Provide Community-Based Support to Families Left Behind

Families left behind grapple with the realities of socioeconomic deprivation and security fears daily. This is on top of carrying the profound loss that is yet to be processed through grief and trauma support. These needs are urgent and multifaceted. A concerted effort between government agencies and civil society, along with support from the Filipino public and the international community, will go a long way in helping thousands of families left behind to rebuild and take on the many challenges they face every day. More than ever, the power of community-based interventions, including grassroots organizing, must be harnessed. As repeatedly expressed by families documented by PhilRights, support networks are a vital source of strength by helping foster solidarity and collective resilience. Carmel, Apol, Kate, Gina and the thousands of families left behind need our help more than ever. Let us not fail them.





PART 5

An Open Letter from Kristine

Sa lahat ng makababasa,

May kasabihan tayong libre lang ang mangarap. Walang bayad kaya't gandahan at lakihan mo na.

Ito sana 'yung gusto ko lang dati. Pamilyang buo, maayos, masaya, at masagana. Pero sadyang mapagbiro ang tadhana, dahil hindi natin batid ang bukas. Ang bukas na kailangang harapin kung saan ang buo dati'y ngayon ay kulang na.

Ngunit ito ring bukas na ito ang nagmulat sa aking mga mata na kailangan kong maging matatag at matalino sa kabila pa ng mga sakit, lungkot, galit, at nais na paghihiganti. Kaya naman buong puso kong niyakap ang dilim na umaasang may liwanag pa rin. Natagpuan ko ang aking sarili sa mga tulad ko ring ninakawan ng karapatan at hustisya na dapat. Mga tulad ko ring nangakong magpapatuloy at pilit babangon, hindi para sa sarili kundi para sa trauma at sakit na nararamdaman namin. Ito ang nagpapatapang sa akin.

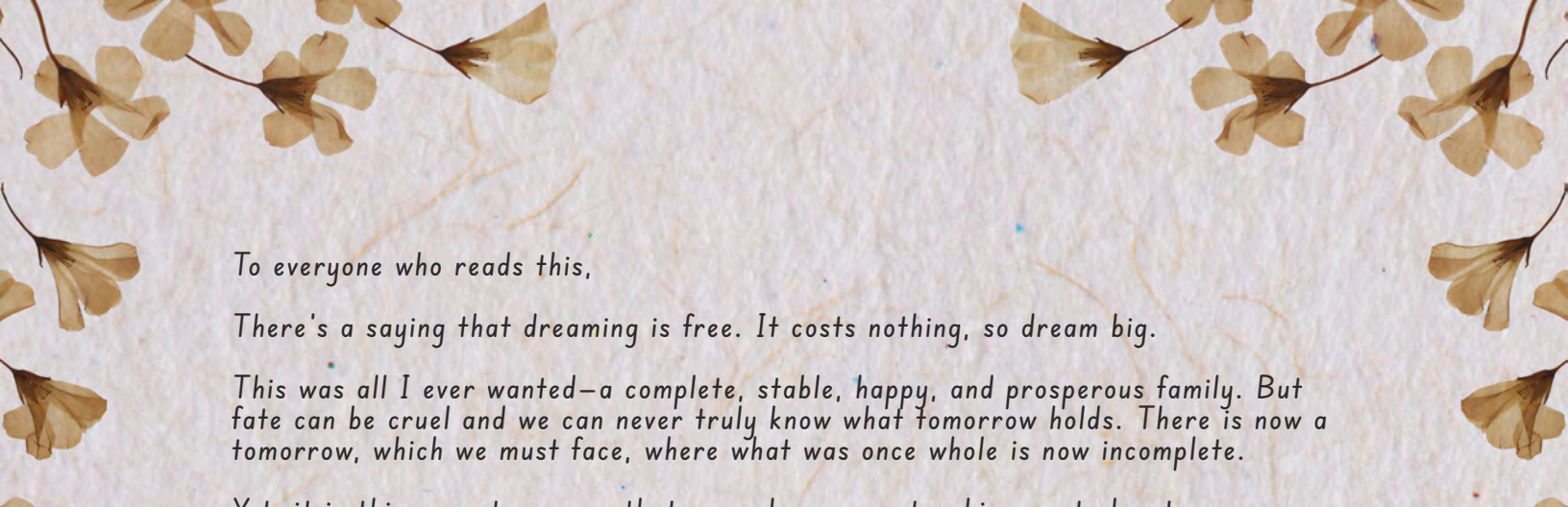
Ang pagdinig ngayon ng Quad Committee ay aming babantayan at susubaybayan upang matimbang namin kung totoo ba at nasa puso nila ang ginagawa nilang pagdinig. Napansin at napanood ko nang unang humarap sa pagdinig ang dating pangulong Duterte. Dismayado ako sa naging daloy ng pagtatanong dahil tila naging perya ang proseso kung saan walang respeto sa mga taong nasa loob ng pagdinig. Nakalulungkot isipin at makita ang mga pamilya ng mga biktima ng giyera kontra-droga ay parang kinasangkapan lamang ang kanilang pagharap at pagsasalita upang masabi lang na "Heto na ang mga pruweda."

Ang hangarin ng kumite na ilantad ang mga kamalian at katiwaliang naganap kaugnay ng giyera kontra-droga ay natatabunan ng pamumulitika at paghahari-harian ng mga taong may pinakamalaking pananagutan sa mga biktima at sa aming mga pamilya. Tanong ko ngayon sa ating lahat, may kapupuntahan nga ba ang hinaing naming mga pamilyang naiwan?

Para sa akin, kulang ang mga pagdinig sa Kongreso at maging sa korte upang managot ang maysala; gusto ko rin maiparamda m sa kanila ang poot at hinagpis na aking naramdaman nang malaman ko ang ginawa nila sa asawa ko. Sa ngayon ay umaasa pa rin at hindi nauubusan ng pag-asa. Kasama ko ang aking mga anak at ang Panginoon na tangi kong sumbungan na darating ang araw ay matatapos din ang lahat at mabibigyan ng katarungan ang pagkamatay ng asawa ko at ng lahat ng biktima ng giyera kontra-droga.

Sa aming patuloy na pagsusulong ng hustisya para sa aming mga mahal sa buhay, hangad namin ang agarang tugon sa aming hinaing. Bagama't walang katiyakan ang adhikaing ito, sa aming pakikibaka ay mailalantad kung sino-sino talaga ang may malasakit at may puso para sa amin. Nawa ay maging tunay na kakampi nga namin kayo.

Kristine dela Cruz
Nobyembre 29, 2024



To everyone who reads this,

There's a saying that dreaming is free. It costs nothing, so dream big.

This was all I ever wanted—a complete, stable, happy, and prosperous family. But fate can be cruel and we can never truly know what tomorrow holds. There is now a tomorrow, which we must face, where what was once whole is now incomplete.

Yet, it is this same tomorrow that opened my eyes, teaching me to be strong and wise despite the pain, sadness, anger, and desire for revenge. That's why I wholeheartedly embraced the darkness, hoping there is still light ahead. I found myself among others like me, robbed of our rights and the justice we deserve. I see others like me who vowed to carry on, to rise again—not for ourselves but for the trauma and pain we've endured. This is what gives me strength.

We will watch and closely follow the Quad Committee hearings to determine whether they are truly sincere in their investigation. I observed the former president Duterte during the initial hearing. I was disappointed with how the questioning went; it seemed like a circus where there was no respect for those present. It's also disheartening to see and think that the families of the victims of the war on drugs were merely used, their testimonies heard just to say, "Here is proof."

The committee's intention to expose the errors and corruption related to the war on drugs is being overshadowed by politicking and the domineering of those most responsible for the victims and our families. My question to all of us now is, will our cries for justice lead anywhere?

For me, congressional and court hearings are not enough for the guilty to be held accountable. I want them to feel the anger and grief I felt when I learned what they did to my husband. For now, we remain hopeful, with my children and God, whom I confide in, believing that one day justice will prevail for my husband and all the victims of the war on drugs.

As we continue our fight for justice for our loved ones, we hope for an immediate response to our plea. Although this goal is uncertain, our struggle will reveal who truly cares for us. May you stand as genuine allies.

Kristine dela Cruz
November 29, 2024

PANTAO REPORTS

KAMING MGA NAIWAN:

Mga Kuwento ng Pamilya ng mga Biktima ng Giyera Kontra Droga

Trans.: We the Left Behind: Stories of Families of Victims of the War on Drugs

Findings of the 2017-2024 Documentation of Extrajudicial Killings (EJKs) and other Human Rights Violations Committed Under the So-Called War on Drugs

Philippine Human Rights Information Center (PhilRights)