



## End Duterte's Dirty Deeds - Support Human Rights in the Philippines

September 2018

17-year-old Kian Delos Santos was dragged from his home by three police officers in the Philippines on 16 August 2017. He was accused of being a drug courier by an unconfirmed rumour on social media. Police claim he pulled a gun on them and they were forced to shoot him. This story was a lie. CCTV caught the three officers dragging Kian from his home. Three eye-witnesses, two of them children, say he was punched by police and begging for his life on his knees when the police officers murdered him.

President Duterte of the Philippines has vowed to continue his "war on drugs" that has resulted in the mass murder of thousands of people at the hands of police and death squads, including human rights defenders and church leaders.

The Philippines National Police acknowledge that 4,075 people have been killed by their officers in the war on drugs so far, and 87 police officers have also been killed. However, the real death toll is much higher. The Commission of Human Rights in the Philippines notes the government reported 16,355 murders under investigation between 1 July 2016 and the end of 2017 in the Philippines, with an unknown number being extrajudicial killings. Human Rights Watch has reported over 12,000 deaths under the "war on drugs" and our partner church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and *The Australian* newspaper putting the number of unsolved murders at around 23,000. According to a media report, the Children's Legal Rights and Development Centre has recorded 74 children and teenagers amongst the dead.

Three Catholic priests have been gunned down by assassins since December 2017. President Duterte has frequently publicly criticised the Catholic Church in response to it being vocal against the campaign of mass murder being carried out by the Philippines police. President Duterte has even turned his criticism towards God, saying on national television "Who is this stupid God? This son of a whore is then really stupid."

Human Rights Watch and other human rights groups have found evidence of police officers routinely murdering people and then planting evidence such as drugs and weapons to justify the murders. Most of the murders have happened in impoverished areas.

On 8 February 2018 the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court announced she would conduct a preliminary investigation into the government the Philippines, to examine the level of alleged extrajudicial killings by Filipino police since 1 July 2016. The Duterte Administration submitted to the UN on 17 March 2018 that it would be seeking to withdraw from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. The withdrawal will become effective on 17 March 2019. However, the court will still be able to consider any crimes committed prior to the withdrawal taking effect.

The \$82 million a year Australian aid program to the Philippines has a focus on economic development, education, improving governance and seeking peace in Mindanao, with a focus on Muslim minority groups on that island. While these are worthwhile activities, there is no public mention of any support to local human rights organisations that are working to challenge the campaign of mass murder being orchestrated by the Duterte Administration.

### **What you can do**

Write a polite and respectful letter to:

**Senator The Hon. Marise Payne**

Minister for Foreign Affairs

PO Box 6100

Senate

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep concern that the Duterte Administration is behind a campaign of mass murder that has claimed thousands of lives, including human rights defenders and local religious leaders.
- Ask what actions the Australian Government is taking to address this human rights crisis in the Philippines.

Also write to (a letter to the Netherlands will require a \$3 stamp):

**Mrs Fatou Bensouda**

Office of the Prosecutor

International Criminal Court

PO Box 19519

2500 CM The Hague

The Netherlands

E-mail: [otp.informationdesk@icc-cpi.int](mailto:otp.informationdesk@icc-cpi.int)

Thank her for conducting a preliminary investigation into the campaign of mass murder being carried out in the Philippines under the banner of a “war on drugs”. State that you look forward to this moving to a full investigation with a view to bringing those responsible for being the architects of the mass murder to justice.