

The Unheard Stories of the War on Drugs in the Philippines

There's no rage, but we hear the whimper

Saturday 29 October 2016, by [BALLARAN Jhoanna](#), [CABIGAO Fernando Jr.](#), [CERVANTES Rizza](#), [GONZALES Juni](#), [REYES Ana Maria](#) (Date first published: October 2016).

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EACH morning since the May 9 elections, we woke up watching the news that a drug suspect was killed overnight somewhere in some dark alleys of Metro Manila. Who killed him? We were not sure. And why? The dead, according to the police, was either a known user or a known pusher in an area the government seemed to have completely forsaken.

By ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group

PART I: 'Cops gun down suspects begging for their lives'

It was about 11 p.m. Tuesday, July 5, when a team of at least eight men in motorcycles swooped down on the barang-barang of Roberto Dominguez in Poblacion, Caloocan City. He was sleeping beside his one-year-old daughter.

The heavily armed men moved swiftly into his room, woke him up, and aimed their long firearms at Dominguez. Bewildered, he told the men: *"Ser, wag niyo naman ho akong barilin kasi andito anak ko."*

This was how Dominguez's mother, Teresita Dominguez, recalled how her son died in the hands of the policemen. He was begging for his life until she and her neighbors heard some four gunshots

from the room, she said.

On Wanted List

Teresita would learn later that the policemen gunned her son down on suspicion he was a drug peddler.

Dominguez, 40, was on a list prepared by Barangay 15 of suspected peddlers of prohibited drugs, she was told. Teresita admitted her son had been hooked in drugs and was charged with illegal possession of drugs in 2009.

Neighbor gave him away

A caller had informed the police that Dominguez was selling drugs to another man inside his home, one of the tightly-knit shanties located a few meters away from the railroad in the barangay, prompting the police operation.

In no time, the eight members of the Caloocan City Police Station Anti-Illegal Drugs unit, in full battle gear, arrived, inching through a labyrinth of dark alleys at around 11 p.m. looking for the house of Dominguez.

Behold one's child

Once they found the target, the men zoomed in, kicked the door twice to open it, and found a woman and a baby girl sleeping on the floor. They were Dominguez's live-in partner and another daughter, one-month old.

They dragged her and the child outside the house without explanation. They rummaged through the room, throwing away anything they could get hold of—clothes, plates, tables, and chairs. They turned everything upside down. They found Dominguez and the first baby upstairs.

Next door, Dominguez's mother heard her daughter-in-law and granddaughter crying and shouting. She walked closer, but policemen prevailed upon her.

"Misis wag na po kayo lumabas, madadamay kayo, isara niyo yung pinto, isara niyo," she quoted one of them as telling her.

Behold one's mother

Minutes later, a gunshot echoed through the neighborhood. Teresita was horrified. Was it her son? In between, she heard someone calling: *"Nay! Aray ko nay! Aray ko!"*

Her son has died, she was told later.

Her son died of multiple gunshot wounds. *"Yung isa po dito, tagos po dito sa p'wet,"* Teresita said, theorizing that the police fired upon her son while he was down on his knees. *"Yung dibdib ng anak ko, hati ito. Ang laki ng sugat."*

By then, police came in and out of Dominguez's door, and there emerged the dead man's one-year-old daughter, wailing, biting her nails out of fear.

Teresita heard some more gunshots. She also heard something she couldn't believe.

Son fought back

"Lumalaban ka pa ah! Tang ina mo ka buti hindi pumutok," she heard another policeman talking.

Did my son fight back? How could he? He had no gun, she said.

Teresita and her daughter, Marites, had gone hysterical, drawing the ire of the police. Marites was brought inside the police car to silence her.

"Galit na galit 'yung isang pulis kasi salita ng salita 'yung anak ko," Teresita said. *"Sabi niya: 'O, bakit kayo nagpapaputok dito? Maraming bata rito.' Sabi naman nung isang pulis, 'Putangina mo! ang ingay ingay mo! Posasan niyo nga yan.'"*

Dominguez was one of the 50 slain drug criminals whose cases an ABS-CBN Investigative and Research team revisited between August 1 and September 9.

The team interviewed police and barangay officials, and families, friends, neighbors of the 50 drug suspects killed in police operations in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Rizal, Laguna, and Cavite between May 10 and July 27.

Certified users, peddlers

Based on these interviews and police records, 46 of the 50 dead had been involved in illegal drugs, either as user or peddler, or both.

Thirty-one of them, including Dominguez, were included in the anti-drug watch list of the barangay and the police.

One victim's involvement could not be determined because of conflicting statements of the family and the police.

Dying in sleep

But relatives of 43 of the 50 suspects said the dead did not fight back. Of the 43 slain victims, about 16, Dominguez among them, were heard begging for their lives before they were shot to death.

Many of these victims were even sleeping before they were killed, contrary to the police version that they were the subject of buy-bust operations.

Relatives of five other slain suspects made similar claims but could not provide supporting details.

Only 2 fought back

Only two of the 50 appeared to have clearly fought back—Brian Oliveros, 40, of Taguig City and George Oliveros, 36, of General Malvar, Cavite—if only because of the police casualties recorded, official police reports and witnesses showed. (The two Oliveroses were not related).

Collateral damage

The ABS-CBN team also located relatives of 13 other victims but they refused to grant a formal interview out of fear. Some have abandoned their homes for good for the same reason.

Families of at least three dead said their relatives were merely collateral damages in the war on drugs.

Male and poor

These were Julius Dizon, 25, of Muntinlupa City; Joel Galang, 30, of Calamba City, Laguna; and Jerome Garcia, 23, of Sta. Rosa City, Laguna. They were caught in the company of the police target at the time they were killed, their families and official records said.

Almost all of the victims were poor, lived in the slums and outskirts of the provinces. They were unemployed or last employed either as construction workers, drivers, or porters. Many were breadwinners, while some were providing a bit of support to their families. They were all male.

They had police record

Thirty of them had previous brushes with the law and been jailed, but were later released, according to their families: 17 of them were charged with drug related cases, eight with non-drug related cases, and five of them were charged with both drug and non-drug related crimes.

Duterte's war

Thousands have been killed in President Duterte's war on drugs since he decisively won in the May 9 elections. US President Barack Obama and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, and local and international human rights groups have criticized the President, saying the war has violated the human rights of the drug suspects.

In the monitoring of the ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group, a total of 1,756 have been killed from May 10 to September 26.

Of this number, 1,031 of these were killed in police operations, 592 were killed by unidentified assailants, and 133 bodies were found away from the crime scene.

But official figures were much higher, which means that there were many unreported and explained deaths on top of those reported in media.

2,500 die; 700,000 yield

As of September 18, the Philippine National Police has conducted 18,467 operations in the war on drugs nationwide.

About 714,803 have surrendered, clogging detention and rehabilitation centers, a phenomenon that even surprised the Duterte administration on the extent of the nationwide drug menace.

The PNP operations also resulted in the death of 1,140 drug suspects.

But outside the police operations, there were 1,571 other reported deaths as of September 14 that even the police could hardly explain; the deaths allegedly perpetrated either by so-called vigilantes or other members of drug syndicates eliminating people who might testify against them.

No warrant, no mercy

The ABS-CBN team's investigation showed a seeming hallmark in the way the police conducted their operations, some of these bordered on the brutal and inhumane, if the families and witnesses were to be believed.

As pieced together by the ABS-CBN team, police operatives would arrive in target site, numbering anywhere between 10 and 30 men, some in plainclothes and masks, and barge inside a home without warning before shooting the victim. They showed no warrant, not even an iota of respect to the

homeowner.

They were usually members of the police's Station Anti-Illegal Drugs unit, Special Operations Task Group, and the Station Intelligence Branch.

Standard procedure

Even when the victim was with other people at the time of the operation, the authorities would forcibly pull all the people out of the house.

The police would not just contain the victim's family, but also the whole community.

A policeman would guard each house to prevent the rest of the neighborhood from leaving their own homes.

But because the neighborhoods where the operations happened were mostly tightly-knit slums, residents would hear what was happening.

In many cases, they heard the police fired warning shots and shout at the victim as if he was resisting, before they would fire another round.

No signs of struggle

Witnesses said they did not hear any commotion or struggle and in several cases, the victims—like Roberto Dominguez—were heard surrendering or pleading for their lives right before they were killed.

"Sabi niya: 'nay! Aray ko nay! Aray ko!'" Teresita said, wiping her tears. *"Humingi pa ng saklolo yung anak ko bago namatay."*

In some cases, the police's Scene of the Crime Operatives would arrive as fast as 15 minutes to as late as three hours—like in the case of Dominguez—to examine the crime scene and gather the pieces of evidence, ranging from packets of suspected methamphetamine hydrochloride, also known as shabu, to a .38-caliber revolver loaded with bullets, and fired cartridges.

All-too familiar tale

Dominguez had four shots: one in the hand and the belly, and two in the chest, Teresita said, showing pictures of her son's body from the morgue.

Nearly all of the police records of 46 out of 50 victims obtained by ABS-CBN News narrated an all-too familiar scene: The drug suspect, after either sensing that he was transacting with a policeman or seeing an approaching policeman, would draw his gun and shoot, prompting the authorities to strike back, shoot him in the most vital body part, killing him instantly, reminiscent of several scenes in Erik Matti's film *On the Job* showing the struggle between the police and a villain.

Death came in his sleep

A total of 29 victims were killed in buy-bust operations, where the police entrap the criminal in the act of committing an offense. There must be an initial contact between the poseur-buyer and the pusher, the offer to purchase, the promise of payment, and the consummation of the sale of the illegal drug.

A buy-bust is usually carried out without warrant of arrest because the offender is expected to be

caught in the act, in flagrante delicto.

But many of the families interviewed by the ABS-CBN team said that it was impossible for the police to conduct such operation because the victims were sleeping, eating, or simply hanging out in their homes right before they were killed.

Sick fought back

Such were the cases of Eduardo Remodaro, 66, and his son, Arcy, 42, who were killed while sleeping inside their ramshackle house in Morong Dulo, Tondo, Manila on July 8.

One of Eduardo's relatives told an ABS-CBN news team that he and Arcy were together before the operation. Eduardo felt weak nursing his asthma and rheumatism, she said.

She said no buy-bust operation took place.

"Natutulog lang po sila. Napakatahimik dito noon," she said.

Police's version

The police report dated July 9 showed otherwise.

Members of the Manila Police District Station 7 reported they successfully bought a sachet of suspected shabu worth P1,000 before Eduardo and Arcy drew and fired their guns at the authorities.

A similar thing allegedly happened eight days later in Barangay Malanday, San Mateo, Rizal. Henrico Lautá alias Inlek, 47, was sleeping beside his live-in partner and son at around 1 a.m. when the police crashed into his home.

Eloisa Lautá, daughter of Herminio Lautá

Lautá's eldest daughter Eloisa, 22, said she heard the police fire from inside the room *"para magmukhang nanlaban [ang tatay ko.]"*

A few seconds later, after Lautá's wife and son were forced to leave the house, they heard another shot. By then, her father lay dead.

"Pinalabas po nila kasi, buy-bust operation," Eloisa said. *"Kumatok daw sila. Hindi po iyon totoo. Nandito po sya, nakahiga. Naka-brief pa nga po siya noon e."*

Policeman's runner

Eloisa said her father was doing errands for a drug-pusher policeman in San Mateo. He had planned to surrender to the barangay the next Monday.

But that Saturday night, the police prevented him from doing so. She and the rest of the family believed that Lautá was killed because he knew a lot about drug dealings in the town.

Lautá died of a gunshot in his head, his death certificate showed.

Jhoanna Ballaran, ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group

PART II: ‘They surrendered—and got killed’

Surrender and die

Under Chapter III, Article 13, Paragraph 7 of the Revised Penal Code, one’s criminal liability is mitigated if the offender voluntarily surrenders to a person in authority or its agents.

But 16 of the victims were killed despite submitting themselves to the police, according to the accounts of families and witnesses.

One of them was suspected drug pusher, Eric Caliclic, 37, who was killed in his shanty under a bridge in Binondo, Manila on July 20.

Three neighbors interviewed by ABS-CBN News said they heard Caliclic pleading to the police not to shoot him.

Who are your friends?

They said that about 10 members of the MPD’s Station Anti-Illegal Drug Special Operation Task Unit and Intelligence Unit barged into Caliclic’s home at around 4 p.m. and first sent his live-in partner Evangeline Pinera outside.

The police interrogated Caliclic on the whereabouts of another pusher, but Caliclic refused to divulge anything because the pusher might kill him.

Two of his neighbors said they heard Caliclic wanting to surrender but one of the policemen instead shot him.

“Sabi niya susuko na siya,” said one of neighbors, *“pero bakit pa pinatay nila?”*

Caliclic died of multiple gunshot wounds in a buy-bust operation after firing at the police, the spot report dated July 20 showed.

There was no official report that would reinforce suspicions that he was shot in the mouth. By August, his body had been kept in a morgue. No relative has come forward to claim it.

No room to swing a cat

Thirty-three of the victims died in the confines of their homes that were so enclosed there was no room to swing a cat inside, so to speak.

Some were as small as about five square meters, like the house of Carlito Santos alias Kalbo, 43, in Balintawak, Quezon City.

Santos’ sister, Evelyn, showed ABS-CBN News the room where he was killed. It was part of the strip of shanties that stood at the back of the Balintawak Public Market made of scrap wooden boards. The boards looked so fragile a strong wind could crumble it anytime.

The room was too small that only a single-sized bed could fit. The walls were used as cabinets, with clotheslines connected from one end to another. Not even Evelyn, who stood about less than five feet, could stand up straight or stretch her arms wide inside.

No room to fight back

"Lalaban ba yung kapatid ko ang liit-liit nung tao, ilang pulis ang sumugod?" she said.

But the police record in Quezon City showed a police team was conducting a One-Time, Big-Time Operation and Oplan Kapak (QC's version of Oplan Tokhang) when Santos saw them and fired at them. The police retaliated, killing Santos on the spot.

Santos was said to be No. 2 in the La Loma Police Station's Most Wanted Drug List.

Evelyn said her brother bore gunshot wounds in the right part of his neck and chest. His death certificate did not show the cause of death. The family failed to get the autopsy report from the funeral services.

One man, 10 gunshot wounds

Many of the victims, according to their death certificates and autopsy reports, were shot multiple times—in the head, chest, and upper parts of their bodies. Some suffered as many as eight to 10 shots; the people they left behind called it "inhumane killing."

Suspected drug pusher Florentino Santos, 44, suffered 10 gunshot wounds in his body, mostly in the trunk, said one of his relatives who saw him first at the morgue.

"Hindi tama iyon, kasi isang [beses] lang, mamamatay na tao e," he said. *"Kagaya noon, malapitan, binaril mo rito [sa harap] tagos doon [sa likod]...kaya sampu ang butas [sa katawan] e."*

Santos was found dead in a nearby village a few hours after he left his house in Barangay Tiaong, Guiguinto, Bulacan.

Santos had been under surveillance for two weeks. Police assets had successfully bought shabu from him twice on July 18 and 20.

In a spot report of Guiguinto police dated July 21, a poseur-buyer was about to buy shabu from Santos, but Santos shot the buyer upon sight. It would have been the third time.

Santos died of gunshot wounds in the trunk and left upper extremity, his death certificate showed.

Overkill

Yolanda Sentorias, mother of alleged drug pusher Eduardo Sentorias, also lamented how her son was liquidated. It was overkill, she said.

Sentorias, 33, was killed on July 8 in an Oplan Tokhang by joint teams of the Don Bosco Police Community Precinct and officials of Barangay 107, Tondo, Manila.

According to the autopsy report, the suspect was shot four times: one in the right forehead that exited through the left portion of the back of the head; two in the trunk; and one in the left hand.

One dead, two different reports

The ABS-CBN team obtained two spot reports from the MPD Raxabago-Tondo Police Station 1 and the MPD-Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit. They had different versions of his death.

The Station 1 reported that after the authorities knocked on the door, Sentorias came out of the house and opened fire, prompting the police to retaliate and kill him.

The CIDU reported it was Sentorias' partner Vanessa Mandia, who came out of the house, and the police got from her a sachet of shabu. The operatives then went into the house, but Sentorias greeted them with bullets.

But in reality, the police dragged Mandia and her two-year old child out of the house, leaving Sentorias alone inside, Sentorias' mother Yolanda said, quoting Mandia.

"Hinaltak siya [Mandia] ng pulis palabas, tapos yun na, wala na, pinatay na 'yung anak ko."

Dead man had no gun

Some of the victims could not have fought back, according to their relatives, because they didn't have guns.

Like Sentorias' mother, Roberto Dominguez's mother raised doubts about her son fighting back. How could my son engage the police in a gunfight if he had no gun? she asked.

Teresita Dominguez said it was impossible for her son, eldest of her nine children, to own a gun because he was scared of it.

Police recovered from Dominguez a .38-caliber loaded with three bullets and two fired cartridges and five sachets of suspected shabu.

"Kutsilyo pwede pa, kasi nagkakatay ng baboy yun," she said.

Police recovered from 30 other slain suspects .38-revolver each, records showed. Until 2011, a .38-caliber revolver was once the police service firearm.

In a 2011 report, the PNP said it had to replace the .38-caliber service firearm because of its unreliability: it often misfires and unlike semiautomatic pistols, revolvers' six cartridges had to be replaced individually.

It was said to be the drug dealers' weapon of choice because it could easily be obtained in the black market for as low as P3,000.

Where the gun came from

But relatives of 38 victims said the dead did not own a gun. Most of the fatalities only lived by the day and did not have the means to buy such firearm. And if they ever had one, they would have had pawned it to buy food for their families.

"Paano magkakabaryl yan eh pambili nga ng gatas ng anak niya wala e, baril pa kaya?" said one of Carlito Santos' neighbors.

A neighbor of suspected drug peddler Celso Guites alias Picos, 48, said she saw members of Airport Police Community Precinct place a gun beside the victim inside his house in Barangay 193, Pasay City, shortly after Guites was gunned down.

The usual suspect

Guites had been in and out of the prison thrice for drugs possession. He was released on bail the last time in February, according to his family.

Guites had changed his ways, the family said, but the police didn't believe it.

"Sir, nagbago na ko Sir. Di na ko (tulak) ng droga, ang asawa ko lang po," the neighbor quoted Guites telling the police.

A policeman then took out a .45-caliber gun and told him to hold it. He refused and instead raised his hands in the air. In response, the policeman shot him dead.

"Nagmamakaawa na si Picos," the neighbor said. *"Sir, sir,' hindi nila talaga pinakinggan... Wala silang awa. Walang kalaban-laban."*

In a report dated July 17, the Pasay City police said Guites was killed in an Oplan Tokhang after refusing to surrender.

He was shot multiple times in the trunk, the death certificate showed.

In handcuffs

But seven of the 50 cases had guns, according to the families of the victims.

One of them was Rio Awa alias Dodong, 31, of Sta. Ana, Taytay, Rizal.

Awa had a gun, but his family expressed doubts that he was able to use it at all because his hands were handcuffed from behind.

On the morning of July 24, members of the Rizal PNP's Provincial Intelligence Branch and Special Operations Unit apprehended Awa while he was walking on the street. He was handcuffed, witnesses said, and brought inside his shack where he was killed minutes later.

"Paano yun nanlaban? Eh kitang kita namin dito nakaposas sa likod," a witness said.

Awa was shot in the head, his death certificate showed. His sister, Marianne Awa, said his neck bore a slit.

"Okay lang naman sana kung binaril lang," Marianne said. *"Pero nakita ko parang may [hiwa] pa dito sa leeg. Yun yung hinanakit ko nung pagkatingin ko. Sumigaw talaga ako eh."*

According to the spot report, Awa was killed in a buy-bust operation. Awa reportedly drew his gun and fired at the operatives who, in turn, shot and killed him.

Marianne said he should have been given a second chance to turn his life around. He was just new to the illegal drug trade, around six months, she said, and he was not the big-time peddler like the authorities said he was.

"Dapat naman kasi sana kinilala muna nila yung isang tao na kung talagang totoong big time," Marianne said.

Fighting the police

Many of the families interviewed by ABS-CBN News wanted to sue the police for depriving their relatives of their right to due process.

Still, many felt heavily burdened trying to prove and sustain the suits. Where would they get the money? What if they get killed, too?

These were the questions running through Niolyn Garcia's mind.

When an ABS-CBN News team arrived at her home in Sta. Rosa, Laguna on August 26 for an interview, Niolyn thought the news team was the answer to her prayers.

Her son, 23-year-old Jerome Garcia, was killed in an alleged shootout on July 1 with a team of Sta. Rosa policemen wanting to serve an arrest warrant on his companion Ryan Roy Barroga, a murder suspect.

"Araw-araw pinagdadasal ko na sana isang araw may kakatok diyan sa pinto namin, tetestigo at sasabihin kung ano talaga ang nangyari sa anak ko," the mother said.

In the spot report, the Sta. Rosa City Police said that Garcia fired at them while they were serving the warrant. Both Garcia and Barroga died on the spot.

Good guy, bad company

But Niolyn said her son was merely a collateral damage—Jerome was never involved in drugs. He was a pedicab driver trying to help her and her husband make both ends meet for their family of seven, she said.

He was just too friendly, she added, that he tagged along with people, even those he barely knew, like Barroga.

No witness, no case

The absence of witnesses against the police made their ordeal worse. Some told her that they saw her son pleading and surrendering before getting killed—but when she asked them to help them file a case, they turned it down out of fear.

"Gusto naming [malaman] kung sino talaga yung nakakita, ano ba talaga ang totoong nangyari, kaso walang makapagsabi sa amin," she said.

Like Niolyn, questions still lingered in the mind of Cristina Francisco, two months after her son, Henry Francisco, 37, was killed in a buy-bust operation in Bagbaguin, Valenzuela City on July 20.

Death at her doorsteps

Francisco never thought she would ever worry about things happening around her, especially the government's war on drugs, the casualties and effects of which could only be seen on television, she said.

Until it happened to her own son.

"Apektado na ako," she said. *"Noon ko lang naisip sabi ko, bakit diyos ka ba, Presidente Digong, at kukunin mo yung buhay ng anak ko?"*

No chance to change

If the victims had, indeed, committed crimes, then they should have been rehabilitated and reintegrated into society, Francisco said.

They could have turned their lives around if only they had been allowed to, she said. But how could these people change now they are dead?

For the families of the thousands killed in the war on drugs, change would never come.

Jhoanna Ballaran, ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group

PART III: War leaves too many widows, orphans

INSIDE a house under a bridge in Barangay Banaba in San Mateo, Rizal, a little boy kept himself busy one Monday morning in August by folding paper planes. He is six years old.

One of the paper planes bore his and his father's name with a message written in careful strokes: "Papa, I love you. I miss you." He threw it into the air hoping it would reach Heaven, shouting: "Papa Jesus, *ayan na si papa. Salubungin mo na!*"

The boy's father, Joel Parungao, was a drug pusher in their barangay, according to the police. He was killed in a buy-bust operation last June 20 in a nearby house that a neighbor said was a drug lair.

"Siguro nastress ako. Natahtag paroo't parito. Pagkalibing niya, kinabukasan nakunan ako. Kulang-kulang isang linggo ako sa ospital. Nilakad ko 'yung mga papel niya, tapos pina-cremate namin siya."
- Former partner of Joel Parungao (killed on June 20, 2016)

Nine drug suits

In his time, Parungao was charged nine times with drug-related offenses, according to his former live-in girlfriend: One in 1999 where he posted bail and eight more under the new law that made drug-possession no longer bailable.

He was acquitted in the eight cases in 2010 after being detained, in and out, over eight years since 2002. Over this period, his relationship with his girlfriend was going on the rocks. He was held anew in August 2015 and was freed in March 2016 for lack of evidence. By then, they had already parted ways.

Poor lover, good father

All this time, he remained attached with his three children, especially the six-year-old boy, the youngest, despite the separation.

Regaining his freedom, Parungao temporarily stayed in a friend's house neighbor later tagged as drug lair. And then the buy-bust came, then the killing.

User, not pusher

The former girlfriend said Parungao was only a drug user, no longer a pusher, at the time of his death.

"[Noon] involved talaga siya sa pagtutulak," she said. "Kaya lang, matagal na. Acquitted nga siya sa lahat ng kaso niya e. Wala nga siyang pending case. Kaya lang, itong paglayang-paglaya niya, sa tagal ng panahon na nakulong siya, parang nag-lie low na rin. Ayun, gumagamit talaga siya [pero] hindi na po siya nagtutulak. Wala na po siya doon."

Parungao's six-year-old son would know nothing about all these things. To him, he was the father he loved.

"Dito ko siya nilalagay sa heart ko e kasi hindi ko na siya nakakatabi."

- Six-year-old son of Joel Parungao (killed on June 20, 2016)

Boy misses pa

The boy has been greatly affected by Parungao's death. He often woke up in the middle of the night, telling his mother: *"Mama, si papa hinawakan niya yung dibdib ko. 'Wag daw akong masasaktan."*

He visited his father's ashes kept in the house of the deceased's eldest son, lighted a candle, and prayed for him every day.

Parungao's was one of the 50 cases of slain drug suspects the ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group revisited between August 1 and September 9, several months after President Duterte declared war on drugs.

As of September 21, the ABS-CBN News has monitored 1,674 drug-related deaths.

Duterte has made the anti-illegal drugs war campaign his priority program. Addressing the police force in his victory party on June 4, 2016 in Davao City, he said: "In an arrest, you must overcome the resistance of the criminal... And if he fights, you can kill him... Only if your life is in danger, *at lumaba't may baril, may kutsilyo, barilin mo*. And I'll give you a medal."

What about the orphans

Since the government went full blast in its drive against prohibited drugs in June, drug-related killings hogged the headlines, detailing the names of the suspects and why they were killed; on the bodies of some victims, the killer left a cardboard that said: "Drug pusher! Huwag tularan."

But nothing has been said of the parents, brothers, sisters, wives, and children the drug suspects left behind.

The ABS-CBN team went around and checked on them the past weeks.

Based on the team's findings, almost all of 50 suspects and their families are poor and live in the slums. Only two of the 50 killed suspects live in modest residential areas.

82 minors

Thirty-two of the 50 slain drug suspects had children below 18 years old. Parungao's six-year-old boy is just one of them.

The children, all 82 of them, lost their fathers who provided food on the table, took care of their schooling, and other bills. In fact, 20 out of 50 killed drug suspects were breadwinners. The sudden

loss pulled their families down into an abyss of despair.

Consider the family of Danilo Dacutana, a 29-year-old drug suspect included in the drug watch list of Valenzuela City police.

One suspect, 100 cops

He was killed during a “One-Time, Big-Time” police operation in Valenzuela City. In the PNP Manual on Managing Police Operations of 2015, OTBT is an operation where at least 100 police personnel are deployed to a target problem area to conduct various police operations aiming to reduce crime.

A police report later said Dacutana fired at the police while trying to escape, forcing the police to retaliate. The police wounded Dacutana in the process. He was brought to a nearby hospital but died upon arrival.

“Wala na po. Eto, aasa na lang po ako sa magulang ko.”

- Juvy, partner of Danilo Dacutana (killed on July 13, 2016), on her plans on how she will raise their three children

Pusher, no gun owner

Dacutana’s live-in girlfriend, Juvy, was beside herself with grief and desperation when an ABS-CBN team chanced upon her in Barangay Marulas in Valenzuela City.

Yes, Dacutana was a drug pusher, she said, but he wasn’t a user. And he didn’t own a gun, she added.

“Wala pong baril ang asawa ko... Nabalitaan ko na lang po sa TV sabi .38 daw po. Wala namang ganun yung asawa ko,” Juvy said.

Single parent, 3 kids

Dacutana left behind three children aged six, four and two.

Juvy was set to move away to another place to look for a job so she could fend for her three kids. In the meantime, she hoped her parents could help her support the children.

Other orphans, other widows

The slain suspects were often labeled as social cancer but behind these people were children longing for a parent, widows bearing enormous responsibilities, and parents grieving after the loss of their precious child.

Other orphans and other widows have the same story to tell. And it was not the same story after another, it was the same story told over and over again.

In another barangay in Valenzuela City, Cristina Francisco felt the government has deprived her family of so many things.

Her 37-year-old son, Henry, was shot and killed by anti-drug police officers during a buy-bust operation last July 21, 2016. He left behind four children, aged 15, 12, 8, and 5. One of them has cerebral palsy.

A police report said her son was a pusher and, when a police agent tried to buy from him, he shot

the poseur buyer but missed. The agent and his companions turned the tables, hitting the suspect on the right portion of his chest. He died on the spot.

Tall tale

Francisco said the police were telling a tall tale about her son. She said her son could not have engaged the police in a gun fight.

“Kasi nakahiga siya e,” she said. “Paano makakabaryl pa yun? Noong tinadyakan ng pulis yung [pinto] sabay baril. Hindi na nga siya nakabangon. Paano mo sasabihing lumaban?”

Family tragedy

Now that her son is no longer around, Francisco felt she should share the burden of taking care of her grandchildren, now staying with their mother. Henry and his wife were separated even before the family tragedy.

“Sino magpapakain niyan doon sa apat na anak niya? Kung may kasalanan, dapat parusahan, hindi dapat patayin,” Francisco said.

Youngest murder witness

The youngest possible witness to one of the police operations could be one-year-old Leah, daughter of Roberto Dominguez, a drug suspect killed in an operation in Caloocan City.

According to Teresita, mother of the deceased, Baby Leah was beside her father when policemen barged into his room where both father and daughter were sleeping.

“Nung nilabas yung ama na patay na, umiiyak yung bata,” Teresita said. “Kasi nakita nung bata, wala pa namang malay ‘di ba. Isang taon lang yan e.”

No baby in tragedy

Baby Leah seemed to have vivid recollection of the tragedy. When asked about her father, she would innocently mimic the sound of a gun: “Bang! Bang!”

“Humingi pa ng saklolo yung anak ko bago namatay. Sabing ganon, ‘Ser, huwag niyo naman ho akong barilin, kasi may anak ho akong kasama.’”

- Teresita Dominguez, mother of Roberto Dominguez (killed on July 5, 2016)

But the presence of the child during the operation was not indicated in the police report.

In fact, the details of the report didn’t match the account of the family of Dominguez. According to the police report, Dominguez opened fire first upon sensing the presence of the operatives. The suspect allegedly sustained multiple gunshot wounds in the body that caused his death.

Violence breeds violence

Eilek Manano, deputy director of Children’s Rehabilitation Center, said all the violence could have far-reaching negative effects on the lives of the orphans.

She said the lack of due process may cause distorted concept of justice and acquired hatred towards the people behind the killings. Another effect is strong desire for vengeance.

"Posibleng magkaroon siya ng pakiramdam na gustung-gusto niyang maghiganti," she said.

"Posibleng hindi siya patungkol doon sa mismong pumatay sa kanyang mga magulang...Yung tinatawag namin na aggression, galit siya na hindi nae-express productively so ang nangyayari, sa iba't ibang paraan niya ipinapahayag yung kanyang galit."

Manano said there were possible ways to help the children recover from the trauma caused by the sudden loss of their parents.

"Immediately para sa mga orphans, yung psycho-social processing, " she said.

"Hinahayaan natin yung mga bata na magpahayag ng kanyang pakiramdam, pagtingin sa nangyari... At syempre yung pagbibigay sa kanila ng oportunidad na magkaroon ng makabuluhang partisipasyon at maibahagi kung anong pwede nilang maibahagi: talento, kakayahan."

Wanted: Helping hand

All these families obviously need a helping hand to get through the night of their lives.

Vilma Cabrera, secretary for Operations and Programs Group-Protective Programs of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, said that they were fully aware of the unusual phenomenon caused by the campaign on war on drugs.

Wanted: Counsellors

Although she admitted that the department has no specialized program for the orphaned children of the slain drug suspects, she said that the current programs of the DSWD could be fully utilized to give support to the families, widows and children left behind.

"Yung Local Social Welfare and Development Officers, sila yung may primary responsibility for providing," Cabrera said.

"First, comfort-giving for the children na talagang nawiwitness yung pagkapatay nung kanilang mga magulang or kung anong, kung sinong miyembro ng pamilya nila. Kung sa amin nai-refer, meron kaming trained social workers or even meron kaming mga psychologists na trained talaga on psycho-social support provisions for the children. Kasama na doon yung debriefing, we even go into counselling not only for the children but whoever are taking care of them," she said.

Burial assistance

As of this writing, DSWD has not yet received any request for assistance concerning specifically the children affected by the war on drugs.

"So far wala pa kaming natanggap na ngangailangan ng ganoon. But kung sakaling yung mga pangangailangan, we can readily provide augmentation staff na talagang trained for psycho-social debriefing or mental health and psycho-social support," she stated.

Nevertheless, DSWD has provided burial assistance to some of the families left behind by the slain suspects in the war.

"Yung aming maximum amount is 75,000. Depende sa punerarya or service provider na nagbigay ng serbisyo. It ranges e... Kasama na yung, hindi lang yung burial or kabaong, pati na yung serbisyo, sa pag-embalmo, at yung during the wake," she said.

Different folks, different strokes

The orphans have different ways of dealing with their respective situations. Some families chose to move to a new place and start anew.

Other families originally planned on filing a case but did not push through with it because of financial difficulties and fear for their safety. There are others who prefer to just forget the terrible incident and just continue with their lives.

The unexpected death of their loved ones caused a detour in their lives but these families were left with no choice but to move on.

But should the government just leave them alone? The orphans felt betrayed and forsaken.

ANA MARIA REYES AND RIZZA CERVANTES, ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group

PART IV: 'Oplan Tokhang': From tagging to killing

HOW do they fight the war on drugs? Let the police as well as the relatives of the slain drug suspects count the ways.

Celso Guites, also known as Picos, was sipping a cup of coffee on the morning of July 16 when five policemen came to his house in Barangay 193, Pasay City. They had suspected the 48-year-old man of selling prohibited drugs.

Cops in uniform

All five policemen were in uniform except for one who was wearing a black jacket, according to a witness who refused to be identified.

The policemen arrived, according to a post-operation report, to explain "Oplan Tokhang," an operation where police knock on a drug suspect's door to invite him for a lecture on drug abuse.

Fatal gunfight

Picos instead opened fire, the police said, prompting them to retaliate, severely wounding him. He died in the hospital.

The report said the police recovered from Picos a .45-caliber pistol, one magazine assembly loaded with ammunition, five empty cartridge cases, a deformed bullet, six sachets of suspected shabu, drug paraphernalia, and some cash.

Different version

A woman witness, however, told a different version of the story.

"Hindi lumaban si Picos," said the witness. "Nagmakaawa 'yung tao sa kanila. Hindi nila pinakinggan."

She said that Picos neither owned a gun nor engaged the authorities in a gunfight. She heard him say: “‘Sir, nagbago na ako. ‘Di na ako [tulak] ng droga, ang asawa ko lang po.”

Picos was pleading for his life, she said; his hands raised in surrender while his back was at the police when three gunshots were fired. And then Picos slumped on the ground.

In surrender

“Patalikod na siya,” the witness said, recalling the precise moment he was gunned down. “Alam na niya ‘eh, nakatingin siya sa akin ‘eh. Si Picos, nakatingin talaga sa akin.”

If the witness’ account were to be believed, then the police might have done something outside their own rules. Based on the Revised Criminal Investigation Manual of the Philippine National Police, the use of force should be avoided during the conduct of operations.

Reasonable force

The police may only use reasonable force when they “(have) probable cause to believe that the suspect poses an imminent danger of death or serious physical injury to the police or other persons,” the manual said.

“(It) is justifiable only by virtue of the Doctrines of Self-defense, Defense of Relative, and Defense of Stranger,” it added.

PNP spokesperson Dionardo Carlos

No shoot-to-kill order

In an interview with ABS-CBN news team, PNP spokesperson Dionardo Carlos said PNP Chief Ronald dela Rosa had not issued any shoot-to-kill order in handling drug suspects.

Rather, the policemen were told to look out for one another and ensure each other’s safety.

“We use the use of force continuum,” Carlos said. “When a little force is used against the police officer, a little force will be used against the criminals.”

Cops face danger

“(When suspects) put in danger the lives of our police officer, we will defend ourselves,” he said.

But if the people had any information against the police operation, Carlos said, they are free to go to the higher police authorities.

“Sabi ni Chief PNP, hindi namin i-to-tolerate ‘yung mga mali,” he said. “If they are saying there are irregularities in the conduct of police operations, let us know, sign the affidavit, we will make sure that these policemen will answer for their mistakes o kung mayroon pang kriminal na kasong puwedeng isampa, sasampahan ho natin ‘yan.”

Known drug pusher

According to the police, Picos was a known drug pusher in the area affiliated with Edgardo Enriquez, a top drug personality and the leader of drug syndicate Eagle Drugs group in Pasay City.

According to his relatives, Picos was detained in 2009 and 2016 for drug-related cases. Although

they were not sure if he still used drugs, they were certain that he stopped selling drugs.

They also said that Picos had surrendered under the Oplan Tokhang prior to his death.

House-to-house visit

Based on PNP Command Memorandum Circular No. 16-2016, Oplan Tokhang is part of the Project Double Barrel, an anti-illegal drug campaign of the Philippine National Police launched on July 1, which “involves the conduct of house visitations to persuade suspected illegal drug personalities to stop their illegal drug activities.”

Tokhang is the lower barrel approach while the upper barrel is called the High Value Target, which is focused on “targeting illegal drugs personalities and drug syndicates.”

Drug list

Under Tokhang, drug suspects are primarily identified through the watch list submitted by the Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council to the police. The police then validate the list with their own.

According to some barangay chairmen interviewed by ABS-CBN news team, the lists of drug pushers and users were gathered through reports of their concerned constituents.

Some chairmen said they regularly created a list of drug users and pushers even before Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte was elected president in May 2016.

Police verification

Upon validation of the BADAC’s list, the police then visit the houses of these alleged drug suspects. Some barangays, on the other hand, post an announcement in common areas regarding when the drugs users and pushers can surrender.

Upon surrender at the barangay, they are asked to fill-up a prepared personal sheet and sign a “voluntary-surrender” form. They are also asked to take an oath promising to stop their involvement in illegal drug activities.

Continuous monitoring

After the surrender, the police monitor these individuals to determine if they have indeed stopped or have continued their involvement in illegal drug activities. The monitoring conducted by the police is a continuous surveillance that does not end after a specific period of time.

According to Carlos, Tokhang has not only reduced the illegal drug activities on the ground, but it has also brought about an impact on the high-value targets and drug syndicates.

“If there are no people pushing on the streets, there are no drugs going to the street level, maapektuhan ‘yung sa taas. Mawawala yung business niya... We disrupt the business, the drug trade, the nefarious illicit activity,” he said.

Six-month deadline

A few months before Double Barrel was launched, Duterte promised to suppress crime and illegal drugs in just a span of three to six months, encouraging the police force to focus on the war on drugs.

“Ang utos ko, patayin? Bakit?” Duterte said during a speech in Tagaytay City on January 31.

“Well, if you are committing a crime in my presence, sabihin ko sa pulis, ‘wag na yang surrender, surrender. ‘Pag sa loob ng bahay, sugurin ninyo yung bahay at kapag hindi pa nakahawak sa baril, bigyan mo ng panahon makahawak ng baril at todasin mo. Ako ang bahala. Ako ang mananagot.”

Anti-drugs operations

These anti-illegal drugs operations vary from Oplan Tokhang to One Time Big Time Operation, to buy-bust operations.

These are often carried out by the Anti-Illegal Drugs Operations Task Groups, Special Operations Unit, Special Weapons and Tactics, and the Intelligence branch of regional, provincial, city, and municipal police stations as well as the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

How others died

While Picos was killed under Oplan Tokhang, others were killed in buy-bust operations.

Buy-bust operations differ from Tokhang; it is classified as a “caught- in-the-act” operation, which refers to “an entrapment technique employed by a Peace Officer as an effective way of apprehending a criminal in the act of committing an offense.” These are “subject for warrantless arrest, search, and seizure and classified as an unplanned operation.”

Surveillance operations

Those who are targeted in buy -bust operations are individuals who are involved in illegal drug activities based on the surveillance conducted by the intelligence unit of police.

A buy-bust operation team is usually composed of a leader, assistant leader, poseur buyer, arresting officer, an investigator-on-case, seizing/inventory officer, back-up security, and recorder.

How many cops in raid

Carlos said that the number of operatives involved in buy-bust operations depends on the circumstances and availability of PNP personnel.

“Pag known to be armed and dangerous, then we put enough force to overwhelm the target. Due to the nature of the operation, the operatives, including the poseur buyer and back-up security are not required to be in uniform,” he added.

Rommel Parsaligan, alias Omeng, 30, was among the fatalities in the series of buy- bust operations conducted during the intensified anti -illegal drugs campaign in Barangay Tumana, Marikina City.

Begging for life

His younger cousin Jonah recalled that more than 30 police officers, including PDEA and SWAT, took part in the buy-bust operation. Some police officers were in uniform while others were wearing civilian clothes.

Jonah said that the police just barged into their house and shot Omeng at around 3pm of July 24. Omeng’s mother, Lester, was trying to protect him when the police entered their house, but the police slapped her and forced her outside of the house. Just when his mother turned her back, the cousin said, the police shot him.

"Isang putok pa lang po nagmamakaawa na yung kuya ko sabi sa kanila, na hindi naman daw po siya lalaban. Susuko siya. Tapos ang sinigaw po ng pulis 'Magsitago kayo nanlalaban'. Ganun yung sinigaw nila," she said.

The police, she added, fired around six shots.

Killed in front of grandma

Omeng died in front of his 67-year-old grandmother who could not leave the area because she was bedridden. She suffered from a stroke nine months ago.

She said her grandson could have been still alive had the police listened to her when she asked them to bring him to the hospital, "as he was still alive for thirty minutes." It was already too late by the time the paramedics arrived, she added.

Contrary to the police report, Omeng did not own a gun, the cousin said.

Guns and shabu

But police said they recovered from Omeng a .38-caliber revolver and three plastic sachets containing suspected shabu.

In the middle of the buy-bust operation, police said Omeng drew his gun and opened fire upon noticing that the buyer was a policeman.

According to one officer, the poseur buyer did not carry a gun as part of their standard operating procedure, which left him defenseless.

Gun didn't fire

Luckily, Omeng's gun malfunctioned and the back-up policemen came to the rescue and were able to return fire, the officer said.

Just more than a month after Duterte assumed the presidency, from July 1 to September 29, a total of 1,276 drug suspects were killed during police operations, according to PNP. In addition to this, 725,791 drug users and pushers voluntarily surrendered while another 19,907 were arrested.

No motive to kill

Picos and Omeng were only two of the thousands of reported fatalities since Duterte's war on drugs began.

"These 1,000-plus (suspects)," Carlos said, "we don't want them dead; however, they fought it out."

Omeng left three children behind, his nine-year-old twin daughters and a five-year-old daughter. He used to work as a tricycle driver and as a part-time construction worker. He had difficulty in finding a job for the past two months and thus ventured into drugs, the cousin said.

No second chance

Picos wanted to start his life anew, a life away from prohibited drugs, before he was killed in an anti-illegal drugs operation.

The PNP aims to hit 70-percent or 1.2 million of the 1.8 million drug users before the end of six-month promise of Duterte.

And there lies the problem, according to Ellecer Carlos, spokesperson of human rights group iDEFEND.

“Ang panganib dito, itong napatay na ito, pumirma na ito doon sa form at sinabi na siya ay pusher o drug dependent. Ginagamit tuloy siya na dahilan ng ating kapulisan para masabi na nag strike one na itong tao na ito o nag strike two na kaya siya napatay,” he said.

“Kasi kung binibigyan mo ang sarili mo ng deadline, binibigyan mo ng quota ang ating kapulisan. Pinepressure mo sila to produce results and if you pressure our law enforcement agency, nanganganib na sila ay mag-commit ng kalabisan.”

Duterte’s promise

It appeared that the police were not planning to slow down.

“We’re focused on the six months given,” PNP spokesperson Carlos said. “If it’s going to be another six months or a year, we’ll still stay focused. If it’s going to be six years, we will do our part in enforcing the law.”

Based on the results of the police’s anti-drugs operations, Duterte might be able to keep his promise to suppress illegal drugs in just three to six months, albeit at a bloody price.

JUNI GONZALES AND FERNANDO CABIGAO JR., ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group

PART V: ‘No cop should die fighting drugs’

IT WAS A message she didn’t want to receive.

In the wee hours of September 16, 2016, a chatbox popped up on the screen of Aidilee Mandapat’s phone. It was a message from the head of the Caloocan City Police asking for her phone number.

When the call arrived, she dreaded the words she heard.

“Ma’am, huwag po kayong mabibigla,” she recalled being told. Instinctively, she knew something had gone wrong to her husband, PO1 Romeo Mandapat. “Paano po nangyari?” was all she could ask.

PO1 Mandapat was part of a 50-man team that conducted a police operation in Camarin, Caloocan. Dubbed Oplan Sama-Sama, the operation was an extensive crackdown on drug suspects in the area.

Team leader

PO1 Mandapat led a team of policemen serving an arrest warrant against a drug suspect.

His batchmate, PO1 Florencio Petang, recalled him and PO1 Mandapat and other colleagues entering a dark alley. As they were to open a door, they heard some shots.

"Unang putok, walang tinamaan. Pangalawa yung tumama kay PO1 Mandapat," he said.

The bullet hit Mandapat on the side that tore through his chest. He was rushed to the Commonwealth Hospital and Medical Center by some of his colleagues but he died upon arrival.

Gunman shot dead

The rest of the police team zeroed in on the gunman. He tried to escape, but was eventually cornered by the police, and gunned down when he resisted arrest.

Mandapat's death left PO1 Petang shaken. Like Mandapat, Petang has only been a policeman for two years. It was the first time he got involved in a shootout and the first time he lost a batchmate.

"Masakit sa amin, namatayan kami. Ginagawa lang naman namin trabaho namin," he said.

Diligent policeman

Mandapat's immediate superior, Police Senior Inspector Alan Apa, said Mandapat was a diligent and dedicated policeman.

"Di ako makapaniwala, 'yung gusto ko paggising ko iba. Ayoko pa ring paniwalaan hanggang ngayon kahit hindi na ako masyado umiiyak kasi naiisip ko lalaki ang mga bata walang ama ang hirap paniwalaan. Parang kahapon lang kasama namin mga bata nagse-celebrate, birthday ng second baby namin, 'yun pala 'yun na last video namin, last bonding namin."

- Aidilee Mandapat, wife of PO1 Romeo Mandapat who was killed in an encounter with drug suspects in Caloocan City on Sept. 16, 2016

"Nandun talaga sa kanya ang potensyal bilang intelligence officer," Apa said.

Apa handpicked Mandapat from the Mobile Patrol team to lead the operation.

Mandapat's death was a huge loss not only for the Caloocan Police, said Apa, adding it was the first time he lost one of his men in his 17 years in service.

Father of two

But the loss was more painful to Mandapat's wife, Aidilee. They were sweethearts since college. They have two children—a three-year-old boy and a girl who turned two last month.

Aidilee said the boy quipped when he saw his father the first time inside a coffin: "Sleep si daddy, mommy?" She replied: "'Oo, 'wag mong gisingin kasi masakit ang ulo. So naiiyak ako kasi di ko alam kung paano i - explain sa kanila na wala na silang tatay paglaki nila."

Aidilee said her husband had long wanted to join the police force.

"Sabi nya: 'PNP, hindi nag- i-istand ng Philippine National Police kundi Pulis Ng Panginoon. Hindi matitigil ang karahasan kung puro barilan, kailangan may isa doon na magsasabi kung papaano sila maliligtas para matigil lahat," she said.

13 cops killed

Mandapat was one of the 13 police killed during anti-drug police operation, according to data from the PNP.

Thirty-six others were wounded from July 1 to September 29.

All these could have been prevented if they were each issued a protective gear.

"Kung armado s'ya ng baril, s'yempre pangontra mo, baril. Kung baril na 'yan, 'wag mo na antayin na kakalabitin pa 'yan. Kasi 'pag tinamaan ka, wala namang take 2. You have to defend your life. Ilan na sa aming kasamahan ang nadisgrasya, nagbuwis ng buhay dahil sa police operations. So 'pag nakita mong there's a clear and present danger on your life at 'yung other officers who are with you, then you have to do what is right. And that is to defend yourself."

- PSSupt. Lorenzo Holanday Jr., Chief of Police, Marikina City

No bullet-proof vest

When Mandapat was killed, Aidilee said he was not wearing a bullet-proof vest.

PNP Spokesperson Dionardo Carlos said the PNP Chief Director General Ronald dela Rosa has acknowledged the need to provide protective gear to police officers. Only SWAT and special units, he said, were issued one, with each unit costing not less than P20,000, he said.

The government's intensified campaign against drugs has led to more and more anti-drug operations.

Said Petang: "Di maiwasan ang takot. Parang naalala ko ang nangyari sa kaibigan ko."

"If you're shooting at me and you're trying to kill me, how do you want me to apply my commensurate force? If one is shooting at you, they will fire back. Commensurate 'yun eh. Hindi na...binabaril ako ng adik at ako ay sisigaw lang, 'Tama na! Tama na!' That's not a commensurate force. We may ask him to stop but we will apply a commensurate force. We use the use of force continuum. When a little force is used against the police officer, a little force will be used against the criminals."

- PSSupt. Dionardo Carlos, Chief PIO and PNP spokesperson

More police operations

Still, Petang and his colleagues would like to join more anti-drug operations.

"Ipagpapatuloy namin laban sa krimen at trabaho."

Said Apa: "Huwag tayong ma-low morale, huwag tayong panghinaan ng loob."

Mandapat's wife also wanted to continue what her husband has started. "Kay General Bato, tuloy lang, di natin kailangan matakot sa mga kriminal."

Wife wants to join police

She planned to take the criminology board exams this October. "Parehas kami ng sinimulan, natapos na yung sa kanya, ako magpapatuloy pa lang," she said.

After PO1 Mandapat was laid to rest on September 25, those he left behind hope he would be the last policeman to die in the war against drugs.

"Trabaho namin 'to. We do our job without rewards. The country needs to get rid of drugs and drug dependents so gagawin namin ang aming trabaho."

- PSSupt. Lorenzo Holanday Jr., Chief of Police, Marikina City

PART VI: Thousands have died, thousands more to follow?

LIKE NO OTHER, Rodrigo Roa Duterte has indeed pursued his campaign promise to wage war against drugs with as much passion as when he did so in Davao City, where he was its mayor for more than 20 years.

Three months into the presidency, Duterte's all-out war caused the surrender of 731,839 suspected drug pushers and users, congesting jails and rehabilitation centers way, way beyond their capacity.

Over 22,000 drug suspects have also been arrested.

But the number of surrenders and arrests took the back seat when the number of the slain drugs suspects started coming in from across the country.

From July 1 until October 2, 2016, the war on drugs has resulted in the death of 1,360 drug suspects in police operations, all because the suspects engaged the police in a gunfight, according to PNP records.

Thousands more have died outside police operations and authorities couldn't name the killers yet as these were all under investigation.

Cops, soldiers die, too

The same war has killed 13 policemen and three soldiers over the same period. Many more policemen and soldiers have also been wounded. The body bags continue to pile up, the question now is, how should one measure the success Duterte's war on drugs? When will he ever stop, if at all?

Less drugs, less crimes

If the police were to be believed, the rising number of the dead, arrested and surrendered has all scared criminals away.

The Philippine National Police has claimed victory in the war on drugs, citing a telling decrease in crime statistics across the board.

S/Supt. Dionardo Carlos, PNP spokesman, said the intensified campaign, including buy-bust operations and Oplan Tokhang, has been able to "paralyze" the drug trade and effectively cut down the crime rate considerably.

The PNP has claimed crime incidents decreased by 49 percent during the first month of the anti-illegal drug campaign, with less illegal drug dependents and peddlers roaming the streets.

"There are less people being raped," Carlos said. "There are less people being robbed. There are less people being mugged. There are less petty crimes happening on the streets. Ang mga gumagawa nito ay mga drug addict at 'yung drug pusher din."

"Mukhang tuloy-tuloy na tayong mabubulok. Mahuhulog na tayo sa balon ng kapariwaraan if we will not do things the legal way, the right way."

- Former Senator Rene Saguisag

War anti-poor

But the bloody and violent method the government has been employing to implement the campaign against drugs has drawn flak. One of its critics was former Sen. Rene Saguisag, a long-time human rights lawyer. He said the government was doing the right thing, but it was not doing it right.

Saguisag said the government was merely scratching the surface of the problem. What the government needed was a more comprehensive plan and long-term solution to address illegal drugs, not a campaign that seemingly affected the poorer segments of society the most, he said.

"You can minimize it," he said, "but you cannot boast na, give me six months and I'd eradicate this problem. Ang in-e-eradicate niya—mga pobre e, riffraff, mga hampaslupa. E kung ang tinepok niya dyan ay isang senador, isang taipan."

No case vs big fish?

Until now, he added, the government has not filed a single case against suspected big-time druglord Peter Lim and against the five alleged narco-police director generals.

Quoting news reports, Saguisag said majority of those killed and arrested in police operations were poor.

"Ilang biktima, buried like paupers," he said. "In other words, ang pamilya walang pantubos. E, talagang 'yung mga pobreng pobre. Pero'pag pumunta pa sa (rich men's)enclaves, "Tao po, tao po." Meron po ba kayong shabu yan. They are gentle."

Hardline policy

Saguisag said the hardline policy against drugs has never been a success anywhere in the world.

"Many living personalities have concluded, the hardline policy is a failed one and should be replaced by another policy," he said. "Ang attitude sa Portugal ay nagdadrugs ka, hindi ka masamang tao e. Hindi ka criminal. You're sick, they are not imprisoned. They are treated in rehab clinics." "Kaya to me, dapat we sit back and review kung it's really the way to go: (It's) kill, kill, kill! To me naman, heal, heal, heal. We are one family," he said.

Forgotten children

For the Child Rehabilitation Center, an organization that helps young victims of violence, the government should also address why some children got addicted to drugs at an early age.

Most of these children and their parents, according to Eilek Renes Manano, CRC deputy director, were involved in the illegal drug trade because of poverty.

"Halimbawa ang mga nagraruugby, bakit ka nagraruugby? Kasi pampalipas gutom 'to," Manano said.

"Bakit may gutom? Bakit kailangan niya magbenta ng droga? Marami sa kanila walang economic opportunity," she added.

'Do it the legal way'

Saguisag said the government should review the way it has been trying to combat illegal drugs and ensure that the rule of law is upheld. "Si PNP chief Bato naghahamon pa ng duel: drug lord, duel tayo. Illegal yun. Sinabi pa niya: "Burn the houses of the drug lords, arson yun. If you're a law enforcer and you are a law breaker, mali yun," he said.

"Mukhang tuloy-tuloy na tayong mabubulok. Mahuhulog na tayo sa balon ng kapariwaraan if we will not do things the legal way, the right way," he added.

CAROLYN BONQUIN, ABS-CBN News

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* <http://news.abs-cbn.com/war-on-drugs/part1#two>

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