

Philippines Drug War: New killing of 17-year-old student spree sparks outrage

Thursday 24 August 2017, by [Al Jazeera](#), [FONBUENA Carmela](#), [Philippine Daily Inquirer](#), [SOTELO Yolanda](#), [YEE Jovic](#)
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‘Please stop!’

Brutal killing of a student in Philippines drug war sparks nationwide anger

Three government bodies have opened investigations into the murky police killing of Kian Delos Santos and president admits police may have abused law.

The killing of a 17-year-old student in the Philippines has sparked nationwide protest and multiple government investigations, moves which many hope could signal a reassessment of the country’s war on drugs that has left an estimated 5,500 people dead.

Kian Delos Santos was dragged from his home in Caloocan [1], on the outskirts of Manila, and allegedly murdered by police under the guise of a raid on drug pushers.

His last words, pleading with officers hours before he was found lying dead on 16 August, were, “Please stop. Please stop. I have a test tomorrow,” according to a witness [2].

An autopsy report showed he was shot twice in his head and once on the back.

The killing has sparked mass protests and triggered several government agencies to launch investigations.

Now even the architect of the violent crackdown, the president, Rodrigo Duterte, has said that something was wrong with the police operation after viewing CCTV footage showing two men dragging the defenceless student along the street.

The footage of Santos alive in custody throws serious doubt on police claims that police shot the teenager after he drew a gun to fight back arrest.

Police seen on CCTV dragging Kian Delos Santos down the street

“I saw the tape on TV and I agree that there should be an investigation. Should the investigation

point to liabilities by one, two, or all, there will be a prosecution, and they have to go to jail if convicted,” Duterte said at a hastily convened press conference on Monday.

It was an uncharacteristic admission coming from a president who, last year, referred to children and innocents killed in his crackdown as “collateral damage”. One week ago, when police killed 32 people in the bloodiest night of raids, Duterte immediately gave his approval. “That’s good,” he said.

A turning point

Since the former mayor of Davao city became president last July, government figures show police have killed close to 3,500 “drug personalities”. More than 2,000 other people have been killed in drug-related crimes and thousands more murdered in unexplained circumstances, according to official data.

Duterte has lashed out at any criticism. He warned the European Union not to “fuck with us” after the European parliament passed a resolution expressing “grave concern over credible reports” that Philippine police were engaged in extrajudicial killings, a claim officers strongly deny.

Despite the criticism, Duterte has remained a popular leader and polls have shown continued domestic support for his war on drugs.

But the death of Santos appears to be a turning point. Three government bodies, the department of justice, the senate, and the Commission on Human Rights, launched investigations.

Santos’s last words have become viral on social media and on Monday protesters gathered at the People’s Power Monument in Manila to voice their outrage.

The locations of the demonstration was symbolic – the People’s Power Revolution overthrew dictator Ferdinand Marcos who, like Duterte, had used martial law. The movement began 34 years ago following the killing of a former senator, Benigno Aquino.

Aquino’s nephew, also a senator, was among those at the rally calling for a congressional investigation into the death of Santos.

“We expect that our filed resolutions will be consolidated so we can get to the bottom of these extrajudicial killings together and reassess the government’s strategy in addressing the drug problem,” Paolo Benigno Aquino IV told the *Guardian*.

“There is a need to attain justice for [Santos] and other victims of abuse by the state in the hands of our law enforcers and authorities,” he added.

A former government official and anti-martial law activist, Teresita Deles, said she hoped that the death of Santos – like the death of Aquino in 1983 – will open more eyes to the brutality of Duterte’s rule.

“I think it’s a start. I think the president and the people around him better think if the impunity continues,” Deles said.

The injustice of Santos’s case, she says, is undeniable.

“For the first time, you’ve got witnesses. You’ve got stories of the last moments ... Knowing how he begged to the cops, ‘Stop it. I have a test tomorrow.’ I mean this is obviously a boy who is trying to do something with his life,” she added.

“By this time, I think most people are only two to three degrees removed from knowing somebody killed in the war on drugs. You don’t have to look far to see what’s happening.”

Carmela Fonbuena in Manila

* Carmela Fonbuena is a senior reporter at Rappler.com

* The Guardian. Wednesday 23 August 2017 01.38 BST Last modified on Wednesday 23 August 2017 04.39 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/23/please-stop-brutal-killing-of-a-student-in-philippine-s-drug-war-sparks-nationwide-anger>

New killing spree sparks outrage

A new wave of killings in the government’s antidrug campaign that has left at least 80 people dead in Metro Manila and a nearby province this week has raised alarm and outrage from both critics and allies of President Duterte.

Presidential spokesperson Ernesto Abella on Friday defended Mr. Duterte, saying the public has welcomed the “safer” streets that resulted from the war on drugs spearheaded by the Philippine National Police.

“The perspective of the President has been very clear from the very beginning. This is not a reckless exercise of bloodletting. There is a rhyme and reason in the police operations,” Abella said.

The outrage was sparked by the killing of 17-year-old Grade 12 student Kian Loyd delos Santos in Caloocan City on Tuesday night. Officers said he had pulled a gun on them, forcing them to shoot him. However, closed circuit television (CCTV) footage appeared to show they already had the boy in custody before he was killed.

Commenting on the boy’s killing, Abella said: “That incident, happily, I think is isolated.”

A revised transcript of his statement to Malacañang reporters replaced the word “happily” with “haply,” meaning by chance or accident.

“This is not to exonerate everything that happens, but to put context in what government is doing. It is addressing what is happening on the ground to stop something that is destroying the country,” Abella said.

The Northern Police District reported 24 were killed, including 13 in Caloocan City, on Thursday and Friday in its antidrug campaign.

Several senators allied to or generally supportive of the President’s policies were jarred by the spike in the death toll and the Caloocan boy’s killing.

“It’s worrisome, to say the least, coming even from somebody who in his previous lifetime as a law enforcer was a natural suspect in violating human rights of crime suspects that we used to pursue,” Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a former PNP chief, said in a text message.

Lacson, chair of the Senate committee on public order, warned that the Senate would exercise its oversight authority with an inquiry of its own if investigations by the PNP Internal Affairs Service (IAS) and the Department of Justice were found to be a cover-up.

Abella said the campaign was meant to target street peddlers to destroy the distribution network and addressed both the demand and supply of illegal drugs.

The PNP chief, Director General Ronald dela Rosa, said the recent spike in the number of deaths “is normal because these are massive police operations.”

“I don’t think it should be alarming,” he said.

Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Senate blue ribbon committee, advised Mr. Duterte “as a friend” to refrain from making pronouncements that would “put pressure” on the police.

The President had said it was a “good” thing that 32 alleged drug offenders in Bulacan province had been killed earlier this week and added that if that number were the daily toll, the country could be rid of the drug menace.

“You cannot fight the drug menace by just killing,” Gordon said. “You must go to the source.”

Sen. Joseph Victor Ejercito condemned the boy’s killing and said he was worried that rogue officers were taking advantage of the President’s promise to protect them.

Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian called for a Senate investigation of the killing “to establish the true facts.” He said he wanted “to ensure that police impunity will never become the status quo in the Philippines.”

Sen. Sonny Angara also said the Senate needed to look into the killings as the body count was reaching “alarming levels” and “to ensure that we are not creating killing machines.”

The CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts showed the police officers involved in the killing of Delos Santos were “not only abusive, they are killers and criminals,” according to Sen. Francis Escudero.

Detained Sen. Leila de Lima, one of Mr. Duterte’s sharpest critics, said the President had a “deranged mind” for wanting 32 suspected drug offenders killed daily.

“They are demonic executioners,” a fuming De Lima told reporters at the Muntinlupa Regional Trial Court where her arraignment on drug charges had been deferred anew.

Another critic, Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, said the killings were “too much [and] very wrong.”

“I cannot, in conscience, let this pass. The senators should have a united stand to stop this,” he said.

Magdalo Rep. Gary Alejano, a former Marine captain, called on the police to defy illegal orders from the President in the war on drugs, reminding them of their duty to serve and protect the people.

“You are not the private army of Duterte,” Alejano said.

Commission on Human Rights Chair Chito Gascon said “the pace and scale” of the killings were “unprecedented,” adding that the President’s statements have “emboldened the security forces” to commit abuses with impunity.

ACT Teachers Rep. France Castro said the killing of Delos Santos was proof of a “fascist, antipoor

tool in the guise of an antidrug campaign.”

“This so-called war on drugs is actually a war against the people, mostly the poor, who are being killed on mere suspicion and say-so of police,” Castro said.

Fr. Jerome Secillano, executive secretary of the committee on public affairs of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, said the police actions “already border on insanity” and that the killings cast doubts on the capability of law enforcers to do their jobs rationally and professionally.

Malolos Bishop Jose Oliveros urged the government to give higher priority to drug rehabilitation because drug addiction was “more a sickness rather than a crime.”

“We do not know the motivation of the police why they had to do the killings ... maybe to impress the President who wanted more,” he said.

“God’s commandment tells us, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ For this reason we condemn such killings,” he added. —*WITH REPORTS FROM LEILA B. SALAVERRIA, DJ YAP, JOCELYN R. UY, JODEE AGONCILLO, JEANNETTE I. ANDRADE, JULIE M. AURELIO, JHESSET O. ENANO AND DEXTER CABALZA*

* Philippine Daily Inquirer / 07:30 AM August 19, 2017:

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/923863/war-on-drugs-president-duterte-drug-killings-kian-loyd-delos-santos#ixzz4qcP5r7Ww>

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Kian Loyd Delos Santos, 17, killed in drug crackdown

Three police officers suspended as witnesses claim unarmed 17-year-old boy was framed by officials.

Philippine police are under pressure to explain the killing of a 17-year-old high school student, who has become the latest victim of President Rodrigo Duterte’s ruthless war on drugs.

Kian Loyd Delos Santos died on Thursday night in the capital Manila amid allegations that he was framed by three police officers, who witnesses said forced the teenager to hold a gun, fire and run.

CCTV footage from the Manila suburb of Caloocan showed Delos Santos being carried by two men to a place where his body was later found, raising doubt about an official report that said he was shot because he fired at police officers first.

According to the police report, Delos Santos ran when he saw the officers approaching him. He then pulled out a gun and opened fire at the policemen, who shot back.

Witnesses told local media that the teenager was unarmed.

National police chief Ronald dela Rosa said that if the Grade 11 student did not pose a threat, the officers who shot him on Thursday night would be held accountable.

"I will not allow any police officer to just kill a 17-year-old boy for no reason at all," he told reporters. "Are they that heartless?"

Dela Rosa added: "Just think about it, he is just a kid. If that happened to your sibling? We will investigate it, I assure you."

Metro Manila police chief Oscar Albayalde said the three policemen involved had been relieved of their duties and an investigation would be launched.

Several senators, including known allies of Duterte, expressed outrage about Delos Santos' death and called an investigation on Friday into a spike in the killings of drug suspects in recent police operations.

"The Philippine National Police, on its misguided war on drugs, is now terrorising our communities and collateral damage is unacceptable," said Representative Edgar Erice.

"Killing the poor and powerless is not the solution to the drug problem when tons of methamphetamine are smuggled in," Senator Francis Pangilinan said in a statement.

'Bloody week'

Police killed at least 27 people in Manila on the third night of a new push in Duterte's war on drugs and crime, taking the toll for one of the bloodiest weeks so far to 94, according to officials.

Philippine police 'dumping bodies' of drug war victims

Earlier in the week, 67 people were shot and nearly 250 arrested in Manila and provinces adjoining the Philippines capital, in what police described as a "One-Time, Big-Time" push to curb drugs and street crime.

President Duterte hailed the recent killing of 32 drug suspects in a 24-hour police crackdown, the highest death toll in a single day in his administration's anti-drug war.

"That's beautiful. If we can only kill 32 every day, then maybe we can reduce what ails this country," Duterte said on Wednesday.

According to police statistics, more than 3,000 suspects have been killed in anti-drug operations since Duterte became president on June 30, 2016.

News agencies

* Al Jazeera. 18 AUGUST 2017:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/kian-loyd-delos-santos-17-killed-drug-crackdown-170818131943660.html>

Thousands demand end to killings in Duterte's drug war

President admits 'abuses' in war on drugs as demonstrators say death toll has now reached

13,000.

Thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets of the Philippine capital of Manila to denounce President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs, as they marked the death anniversary of one of the country's pro-democracy heroes.

Human rights advocates, youth groups, and religious communities on Monday defied a tropical storm that brought steady rain to gather at the memorial of the 1986 people power revolution to call for an end to the killings in Duterte's war on drugs.

Amid public pressure, Duterte said on Monday there could have been abuses in his anti-drug war policy.

"There is a possibility that in some of police incidents there could be abuses. I admit that," Duterte told reporters in Manila. "These abusive police officers are destroying the credibility of the government."

READ MORE: Duterte says 'bloodiest' day of war on drugs 'beautiful'

Al Jazeera's Jamela Alindogan, reporting from Manila, said at least 4,000 people joined in the rally, adding that a separate protest was also held in another part of the city.

Protesters are demanding an independent investigation into the summary executions and police operations that left thousands of people dead. They said the president should be held accountable for the deaths.

Demonstrators waved Philippine flags and carried banners that read: "Resist the Fascist!", "Stop the Killings!", and "We will fight" among others.

Monday marks the 34th anniversary of the assassination of democracy icon Benigno Aquino, who fought the 20-year dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Marcos was overthrown in 1986 in a peaceful protest, which saw Aquino's widow, Corazon, become president. Duterte is an avowed supporter of Marcos.

Leaders of Monday's protest said the death toll in Duterte's war on drugs has now reached 13,000 - surpassing the number of deaths of anti-government activists during Marcos' two decades in office.

Government figures show that since Duterte took office last year, an estimated 3,451 "drug personalities" have been killed in gun battles with police up to July 26, 2017.

Another 2,000 more died in drug-related homicides, including attacks by motorcycle-riding masked gunmen and other assaults, while 8,200 homicide cases are "under investigation".

17-year-old student killed

At the rally, demonstrators also expressed outrage over the death of 17-year-old student, Kian delos Santos, who witnesses said was falsely accused of being a drug dealer and summarily executed by police earlier this week.

In another part of Manila, hundreds of marching neighbours and activists lit candles near the spot where delos Santos was shot dead during a mass raid that left at least 80 people dead in three days.

"Please be fair," the student's father, Zaldy delos Santos, told police. "We are the victims here. We

are the ones you should help.”

Another child dies in Duterte’s war on drugs

He made the appeal after authorities went on the offensive to defend the police action, saying there was information indicating the boy was a drug courier and addict.

But initial forensic evidence showed there was no gunfight, and the three bullet wounds indicated the student was shot at close range in the back of the head.

According to reports, there have been at least 30 minors killed in the drug war since June 2016, when Duterte took office.

On Monday, Duterte ordered the police to take custody of officers who were involved in the killing of delos Santos, saying he would not condone abuses, and that the police officers would have to face the consequences of their actions if that is the recommendation of a formal investigation.

The head of the Public Attorney’s Office, Persida Acosta, told reporters she was recommending murder charges against the officers involved based on the initial autopsy report.

“Murder charges will most likely be filed because of the location of the entry wounds,” Acosta said in a television interview.

Neighbours, teachers and classmates of the boy also vouched for his good character. The education ministry issued a statement condemning the police action.

Al Jazeera and news agencies

* Al Jazeera. 21 AUGUST 2017::

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/thousands-demand-killings-duterte-drug-war-170821124440845.html>

Before Kian, there were Danica Mae, Oman, Rowena, etc.

Before the killing of Kian delos Santos, 17, during a police operation in Caloocan City last week, youngsters in Pangasinan province had met violent deaths in President Rodrigo Duterte’s war that’s supposed to rescue them from the drug menace.

Those incidents that left victims as young as Danica Mae Garcia, 5, remain unsolved. She was felled by bullets meant for her grandfather, Maximo, at Barangay Mayombo in Dagupan City, exactly a year ago today. Along with her cousins, she was then preparing to attend her afternoon classes in a nearby public school.

The children were behind the curtain that separated the dining room that also served as a living room from their bathroom, where they were either brushing their teeth or taking a bath.

No CHR assistance

Maximo, seated on a wooden bed, managed to escape. He was on the police list of suspected drug pushers and was supposedly the target of the gunman.

Danica Mae was hit in the head and died in her grandmother's arms, one of the youngest victims in the drug war.

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) offered financial aid, but nothing has come of it, according to Danica Mae's grandmother, Gemma.

Based on police records, 1,269 of 1,364 villages in 43 towns and four cities in the province were drug-affected at the start of Mr. Duterte's campaign last year.

As of June 15, 1,088 villages, five towns and a city had been declared drug-cleared soon.

The government's antidrug campaign also resulted in the arrest of 1,577 drug users and pushers.

Thirty-three people were killed when they shot it out with the police. The deaths of 66 others were under investigation, including that of Danica Mae.

Classmates

The unsolved cases include that of Roman Clifford Manaois, 20, and Rowena Tiamson, 22, who were classmates in a university until he transferred to another school. They both dreamed of building a house for their parents.

The two were killed on the night of July 19, 2016, when gunmen went on a rampage, attacking suspected drug users and pushers.

But Manaois and Tiamson were neither addicts nor drug traffickers, their parents, relatives and friends insist. They were at the wrong place at the wrong time, and perhaps, with the wrong company, when hit men killed them.

Oman

Manaois, nicknamed "Oman," was fetching water when he was asked by John Mark Serrano de Vera, a neighbor, to accompany him to an eatery in Dagupan City to buy "kaleskes," a kind of soup.

Manaois hopped on the back of the tricycle which De Vera owned. On their way to the eatery, they picked up one Zaldy Abalos.

At 2 a.m. the next day, De Vera's father rushed to the Manaois' house in Barangay Carael, crying out, "Go to barangay [Lucao] hall. Oman was shot," said Dennis, father of Manaois.

"We thought Oman was only hit in the leg," Dennis recalled, his eyes getting red. But when Dennis and his wife arrived at the barangay hall, they were told to proceed to a morgue where they found their son.

Abalos, the hit men's apparent target, was also killed, but De Vera was able to run.

The parents of Manaois were at first angry with De Vera whom they blamed for his death until they learned that he, too, was hit, although not fatally.

After the hooded gunmen shot Abalos, they trained their guns on Manaois and De Vera. They started to run when a bullet struck the back of Manaois, piercing his heart. De Vera tried to help Manaois

get up but the young man told him to run for his life.

"[Manaois] was a good son," Dennis said. "He was a big help in the house. He cleaned the house, cooked food. He had no vices at all, let alone drugs."

Rowena

Graduation did not come for Rowena Tiamson, who was killed also on July 19, 2016. She would have finished her mass communication course at Colegio de Dagupan in October last year. A school choir member, she also sang at two restaurants in the city to earn money.

At 10 a.m., Tiamson headed for school, which was just a walking distance from her house on Arellano Street, according to her mother, Teresita, 57.

"But at 5 p.m., she was not back home yet so I texted her to ask where she was. She said she went with her friends, a girl from Barangay Mayombo and a boy from Manaoag. At 9:40 p.m., I was already worried and called her up. Her telephone rang three times, then there was silence. I could not contact her anymore," Teresita said.

The next day, the Tiamson family learned of Rowena's death from a TV newscast.

Teresita said, "The newscaster asked if anybody has a missing daughter who has a tattoo of a musical note on her wrist, as a body of a girl was found in Manaoag."

The family went there and found Tiamson. Her head was wrapped with packaging tape. Her body bore bullet wounds. A cardboard was strung around her neck with the words: "Don't emulate, she is a pusher."

The families of Manaois and Tiamson have realized they would not be able to find justice for the murder of their children, at least, not under the present administration.

"We cannot fight them. Duterte backs the police and the killers, to whom would we turn to?" Teresita asked.

Yolanda Sotelo - Correspondent / @yzsoteloINQ

* Philippine Daily Inquirer / 07:28 AM August 23, 2017:

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/924840/before-kian-there-were-danica-mae-oman-rowena-etc#ixzz4qcNgMH00>

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Protesters gather on EDSA to condemn bloody war on drugs

Hundreds call for 'impartial' probe of death of 17-year-old Kian Loyd delos Santos.

On a rainy Monday, hundreds of protesters trooped to the People Power Monument to condemn the Duterte administration's bloody and brutal war on drugs and to call for an "impartial" investigation on the killings that they said has reached "a tipping point" with the death of 17-year-old Kian Loyd

delos Santos.

Shamah Bulangis, secretary general of Akbayan Youth, said that the multi-sectoral gathering, attended mostly by the youth, was not only a way for them to show sympathy to the Delos Santos family but also to “show our outrage to what is going on” in the country.

Bulangis said that the government should immediately stop its war on drugs and go back to the drawing board, as the “youth are already being killed” – the sector that President Rodrigo Duterte sought to protect as he launched his brutal anti-drug campaign last year.

She noted that while countless others had died in the war on drugs, even as young as four years old, the death of Delos Santos death was the tipping point.

“He has become a central figure because his death is the only one that has evidence [against the police],” Bulangis told the *Inquirer*. “It gives us more balls to say that this government is corrupt in its war on drugs.”

Bulangis said that the rampant killings showed the need for an “impartial, credible and independent investigation” to be launched in order for criminal charges to be filed against abusive police officers.

The groups at the rally, composed of the Millennials Against Dictators, Block Marcos, Youth Resist, Student Council Alliance of the Philippines and The Silent Majority, among others, also condemned the apparent “kill-only” policy on the war on drugs.

They said that more than a year into the Duterte administration, it should already look at the drug problem as a mental health issue.

Bulangis said that Duterte should also “be held accountable” as he was the one “who instigated the war on drugs.”

Several placards at the rally brought by protesters showed the difference between the allegations of drug involvement thrown to the poor and influential people, such as Davao Vice Mayor Paolo Duterte.

One of them said that due process is afforded to the rich while death is given to the poor.

“Due process is not a privilege but is a right,” Dakila artist group’s Tasha Kintanar said.

As of 7 p.m., police estimated that the crowd at the People Power Monument numbered at 400. Organizers, however, said there were around a thousand protesters who braved the rain.

One of them was 26-year-old Isabel who was not part of any group, but came on her own.

She told the *Inquirer* that it was part of her “civic duty” to take a “moral stand” to what had been happening in the country.

“We don’t have any political clout. What we can only do is to stand up against injustice with the hope that someone will listen,” she said.

Given the chance to speak to Duterte, the University of the Philippines alumna said that she would want to tell the President “to realign his morals and rethink his policy.”

She pointed out that gatherings such Monday’s was essential to put a stop to the senseless killings.

“If he doesn’t stop now, he will not stop in the next five years,” he said. “That’s why rallies matter. Hopefully, the people’s criticism will change his mind.” /atm

Jovic Yee - Reporter / @jovicjeeINQ

* Philippine Daily Inquirer / 09:45 PM August 21, 2017:

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/924450/protests-against-war-on-drugs-rodrigo-duterte-kian-loyd-delos-santos#ixzz4qcOORyxD>

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Footnotes

[1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH6YRhRjtE0>

[2] <http://news.mb.com.ph/2017/08/19/tama-na-po-may-test-pa-ako-bukas/>