

President Duterte's war on drugs: Thousands attend funeral for slain Philippine teenager

Sunday 27 August 2017, by [SUBINGSUBING Krixia](#) (Date first published: 27 August 2017).

More than 1,000 mourners attended a funeral procession in Manila for a high school student, whose killing last week by anti-drug officers has caused rare public outrage over the country's war on drugs.

Crowds chanted for "justice" on Saturday in the Philippine capital in what became one of the biggest protests in the country against President Rodrigo Duterte's anti-drug drive.

Kian Loyd Delos Santos was dragged by plain-clothes policemen to a dark alley in northern Manila, before he was shot in the head and left next to a pigsty, according to witnesses whose accounts appeared to be backed up by CCTV footage.

The death of the 17-year-old has drawn domestic attention to allegations by activists that police have been systematically executing suspected users and dealers, a charge the authorities deny.

"I came to support the family. I want justice for Kian and all victims - including my son," Katherine David, 35, whose 21-year-old son was shot dead by police with two other men in January.

Mourners carried placards reading, "Stop the killings," "Police, murderers" and "Justice for Kian" as they marched for about five kilometres from a church near Delos Santos' house to the cemetery where he was buried.

The parents and lawyers of Delos Santos filed a murder complaint against the three anti-narcotics policemen on Friday.

"Kian was a very good son," Saldy Delos Santos said in a message at the last mass for his son. "The entire community knew him as a good person ... He was begging for his life ... They [the killers] probably have no heart."

'Huge backlash on war on drugs'

Richard Heydarian, political science professor from Manila's De La Salle University, said public anger had exploded because of Delos Santos' young age.

"This is a second coming of Duterte's war on drugs and what happened this time is not about the killing of a likely innocent person, but we're talking about the minor who was killed, and the killing of the minor was caught on CCTV," he told Al Jazeera. "That is why you see a huge backlash against the war on drugs."

Public support for the anti-drugs drive had until recently been strong.

"The number one concern for people here is not against Duterte himself, but they feel like he is relying on the wrong agent, which is the national police of Philippines to wage this war," said Heydarian.

"You cannot wage a holy war with unholy men, so what people want here is to clean up the police force and to make sure that within the police forces there is accountability and discipline."

Reporting from Manila, Al Jazeera's Jamela Alindogan said that there might be a chance that this case, out of the more than 10,000 drug-related killings, would be solved.

"It remains to be seen whether this will change the approach of the president when it comes to his so-called war on drugs," she said, "or if it even will lead to reform within the police institution in this country."

"We march today to bring Kian to his final resting place and to support the call for justice for all victims of Duterte's fascist drug war," said Renato Reyes, secretary-general of left-wing activist group Bayan (Nation), said in a statement.

Bayan criticised the campaign for corrupting the police force "through a system of quotas and financial rewards for police officers".

"We call for accountability of the police officers directly involved in the killings as well as accountability of the commander-in-chief who sanctioned the killings," Reyes said.

Bloodiest week

Delos Santos was among more than 90 people killed in the bloodiest week in Duterte's anti-drug war since he took office on June 30, 2016.

The case has highlighted the allegations of abuse by police in the anti-drug war, in which at least 3,500 people have been killed over the last year.

Duterte has assured the public that police officers involved in Delos Santos' death would go to jail if found guilty.

"If it was really a rubout, they (police officers) have to answer for it. They have to go to jail. I'm sorry," he said.

Duterte has vowed in the past to protect the police against legal cases filed against them.

Al Jazeera and news agencies

*

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/thousands-attend-funeral-slain-philippine-teenager-170826063150450.html>

Cry in Kian burial: Stop the killings

The hundreds who joined the funeral march for Kian delos Santos on Saturday came from different sectors, but had a common rallying cry: Stop the killings.

The 17-year-old, whose shooting by police on Aug. 16, drew public outrage and sparked a Senate

inquiry, was buried Saturday afternoon in a small niche at La Loma Cemetery amid intermittent rains.

"The heavens wept," Caloocan Bishop Pablo Virgilio David said in his homily during the funeral Mass, comparing the grief of Delos Santos' parents to that of the Virgin Mary who had to bury her son. And like Jesus, the bishop said, Kian was beaten up and killed despite being innocent.

Leading the funeral march were members of the Church, ecumenical human rights group and several militant organizations who described the boy's death as proof of the government's failure to address the drug problem.

The killing has electrified the country and galvanized what had previously been limited opposition to President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs. Thousands of people have been killed since the President took office 14 months ago.

Police said they shot Delos Santos in self-defense after he opened fire on them during the "One-Time, Big-Time" antidrugs operation conducted by Police Community Precinct 7 lawmen in Barangay 160, Caloocan City.

But Erwin Lachica, 37, a welder who witnessed the shooting said that the Grade 12 student was standing outside the family's store when the police, who were not in uniform, grabbed and started punching and slapping him before they put him in a headlock and dragged him away. No gunbattle took place, Lachica said.

Kneeling face down

CCTV footage from a neighborhood security camera shows two men marching someone, his head bowed, through a nearby basketball court, while a third man follows. The boy's body was later found nearby, kneeling face down, and dumped near a pigsty.

The police officers, identified as PO3 Arnel Oares, PO1 Jeremias Pereda and PO1 Jerwin Cruz, told the Senate hearing on Thursday that they were bundling away a police informant, not Delos Santos. Multiple witnesses, however, said they recognized the youth.

Two autopsy reports, gunpowder tests, eyewitness testimonies and the CCTV footage also belied the police claims.

On Saturday, Delos Santos' emotionally charged funeral march had mourners clad in white shirts and black ribbons chanting "Justice for Kian, justice for all!"

Fr. George Alfonso, Sta. Quiteria, Caloocan, parish priest, prayed that the police would "salve the ailment of drug addiction in the country, not with guns, but with prayers and promise of reform."

Comforting Saldy and Lorenza delos Santos, Bishop David pointed to the family members of some 20 other minors killed in the drug war who had come to offer their condolences.

"Only parents whose children's lives were snuffed in the prime of their lives would be able to wholly comprehend your grief," David said, singling out in his homily 19-year-old Raymart Siapo from Navotas, who was killed by vigilantes two months ago. He was told to run, but couldn't because he was born with clubfeet.

"You know what Raymart's mother's name was? Luzviminda. Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao—the three island regions of the Philippines. Through her, the Philippines also lost a child [in Raymart]," David

said.

‘Cruel war’

Personnel from the Department of Justice’s witness protection program flanked the Delos Santos family, who, apart from occasional emotional outbursts, were silent and refused to talk to the press.

Among the mourners were Public Attorney’s Office chief Persida Acosta, La Salle president Bro. Armin Luistro and Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes.

United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, Agnes Callamard, also tweeted: “My heartfelt condolences to Kian family and to all families victimized by this cruel war. #Makehisdeaththelast #Philippines.”

Callamard earlier described Delos Santos’ death as murder and said all unlawful deaths must be investigated.

The mourners were joined by members of militant groups Anakbayan, Bayan, ACT Teachers, Migrante International; ecumenical group Rise Up for Life and for Rights; and students from different schools and universities.

An emotional Saldy spoke fondly of his favorite son, describing him as the diligent shopkeeper of the family’s small school supplies store.

“Sometimes, I ask [Kian], ‘Why you, of all people? You know, we worked hard so that he could study and become a good citizen ... But now he is no more,’” he said through tears.

He said he hopes the officers involved in Kian’s death did not have children so they would not have to experience what they had gone through.

‘Beg forgiveness’

“I hope you’d go to Church as soon as possible. It’s not too late to beg for forgiveness,” he said, addressing the three policemen.

“I think those who stood on the streets for Kian were not just onlookers; they were genuinely sympathetic to him and what he stood for,” said running priest Fr. Robert Reyes, who had been at the forefront of protest actions for Delos Santos.

Reyes even likened the boy’s funeral procession to that of the late Sen. Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino Jr. in 1983, which drew a huge crowd. “ ... The only difference was there was no social media in Ninoy’s time. Now, while the procession was taking place, people all over the world know exactly what was happening,” he said.

The boy’s killing has fueled longstanding public anxiety about the drug war’s brutal methods, and could generate wider opposition to a campaign whose critics have so far been largely limited to priests, activists, lawyers and a handful of prominent politicians.

Still, Duterte remains popular, said Ramon Casiple, executive director of the Manila-based Institute for Political and Electoral Reform.

Vulnerable

“It’s not really a tipping point,” he said of Delos Santos’ killing. “But Duterte is vulnerable. His

popularity will take a hit.”

By the time the funeral march of about 2,000 people reached northbound Edsa, the mourners had occupied four of five lanes of the highway, with militant groups decrying the President’s “fascist” rule on a megaphone. Delos Santos’ friends briefly took over to rap to a song they had composed for him: “*Wala kang kasalanan, wala kang kasalanan, inosente ka, Kian!* (You are innocent, Kian)!”

“We no longer have our joker,” said one of Delos Santos’ friends, Sharmaine Joy Adante, 15. He liked joking around and didn’t do drugs, she said. He had wanted to join the police so that his mother, who works in Saudi Arabia, could afford to live in her own country, the girl added.

Reyes said he hopes the people’s call to end the killings does not get buried alongside Delos Santos.

“We should ask everybody not to let this day pass without praying that the Lord (would) make us understand what Kian had done for us, and what He wants us to do for Kian and the other victims,” he said. “Kian is no longer just a 17-year-old boy. He means something more than just one life.”
—With a report from Leila Salavaerria and the wires

Krixia Subingsubing

@inquirerdotnet

* Philippine Daily Inquirer / 07:30 AM August 27, 2017:

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/925887/war-on-drugs-kian-loyd-delos-santos-drug-killings-extrajudicial-killings#ixzz4qxVXTGS6>

Follow us: @inquirerdotnet on Twitter | inquirerdotnet on Facebook
