

Human Rights: Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte says he personally killed criminals

Thursday 15 December 2016, by [HOLMES Oliver](#) (Date first published: 14 December 2016).

Controversial leader - who has endorsed extrajudicial executions of drug offenders - says he killed to show police officers 'if I can do it, why can't you?'

Rodrigo Duterte has announced he personally killed suspected criminals when he was mayor of his home city of Davao in the Philippines, cruising the streets on a motorcycle and "looking for trouble".

The country's president made the comments in a speech late on Monday night as he discussed his campaign to eradicate illegal drugs, which has seen police and unknown assailants kill around 5,000 people since he became president on 30 June.

"In Davao I used to do it personally. Just to show to the guys [police officers] that if I can do it, why can't you," he was quoted as saying by AFP, talking of his two decades as mayor of the southern city of 1.5 million people.

"And I'd go around in Davao with a motorcycle, with a big bike around, and I would just patrol the streets, looking for trouble also."

"I was really looking for a confrontation so I could kill."

On Wednesday the justice secretary of the Philippines, Vitaliano Aguirre II, said Duterte often exaggerated his rhetoric to get a message across to criminals. "The president always resorts to hyperbole; he always exaggerates just to put his message across," Aguirre told reporters.

The former mayor was nicknamed "Duterte Harry", after the fictional and ruthless police inspector played by Clint Eastwood, for his support for vigilante death squads that killed hundreds of suspected criminals.

Duterte previously has both denied and acknowledged his involvement in the Davao death squads.

Since taking his bloody anti-crime campaign to the nation level, he has been criticised by the United States and United Nations, whose concerns have drawn only angry rebukes.

"If they say that I am afraid to stop because of the human rights and guys ... including Obama, sorry, I am not about to do that," Duterte said in English during his speech at the presidential palace this week.

Duterte has a better relationship with US president-elect Donald Trump, who he said had praised his war on drugs during a phone call this month. This was not confirmed by Trump's team.

As president Duterte has publicly encouraged civilians to kill drug addicts and said he will not prosecute police for extrajudicial executions. But he has also said he and his security forces will not

break the law.

In October Duterte compared himself to Adolf Hitler and said he would be “happy to slaughter” three million drug addicts.

He later apologised for the Hitler reference but said he was “emphatic” about wanting to kill the millions of addicts.

Since his election, police have reported killing 2,086 people in anti-drug operations. More than 3,000 others have been killed in unexplained circumstances, according to official figures.

Often masked assailants break into homes and kill people who have been tagged as drug traffickers or drug users. Human rights groups have warned of a breakdown in the rule of law with police and hired assassins operating with impunity.

A report by the *Guardian* in October cited a senior officer in the police force who claimed he led one of 10 special operations teams, each with 16 members, tasked with killing suspected drug users, dealers and criminals.

The officer claimed the hit squads are composed of active police officers and that the murders are conducted in such a way as to make them appear to be perpetrated by “vigilantes” to deliberately obscure police involvement and preclude investigation.

The report was later denied by the chief of police. Duterte has insisted police are killing only in self-defence while gangsters are murdering the other victims.

But he has also said he will not allow any police officers to go to jail if they are found guilty of murder in prosecuting his war on crime.

Oliver Holmes and agencies

Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

* The Guardian. Wednesday 14 December 2016 05.32 GMT:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/14/philippines-president-rodrigo-duterte-personally-killed-criminals>

Rodrigo Duterte’s allies press for senator critical of drug war to be charged

Criminal complaint against senator Leila de Lima is the latest government action against her since she led an inquiry into extrajudicial killings.

Allies of Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte have filed a criminal complaint against a senator who has been an outspoken critic of a surge of extrajudicial killings unleashed by the president’s campaign against drugs.

The legal complaint against senator Leila de Lima, who was justice minister in a previous administration, is the latest government action against her since she led an inquiry into the killings.

She has denounced the government attacks on her as “madness” and “harassment” and she has appealed to Duterte to stop the string of bizarre accusations and insults.

Senators loyal to Duterte ousted her from the leadership of the investigation in September.

Congressmen then accused her of disrespect in connection with criticism she made of her treatment and the fate of the inquiry. That led to a criminal complaint.

“Senator de Lima has shown disrespect to the House of Representatives,” said congressman Reynaldo Umali, head of the lower house’s justice panel.

“We cannot allow this incident to pass, how can we earn the respect of the people when a senator insults us by calling the inquiry a sham and a kangaroo court.”

De Lima is on an official trip to the United States and Europe and was not available for comment.

Duterte’s war on drugs, the key plank of his campaign for a May election, has claimed about 5,000 lives since 1 July.

The high toll and mysterious circumstances of some of the killings have alarmed rights groups, the United States and United Nations, whose concerns have drawn angry rebukes from Duterte.

Umali said de Lima faced imprisonment of up six months if found guilty.

A small group of opposition politicians in congress said the case against de Lima would have a chilling effect on critics of Duterte’s war on drugs.

Reuters

* The Guardian. Tuesday 13 December 2016 06.29 GMT:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/13/rodrigo-dutertes-allies-press-for-senator-critical-of-drug-war-to-be-charged>
