Covid-19 (Philippines) – The Duterte doctrine: every man for himself

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The operative policy of the Duterte gang when it comes to Covid-19 vaccination is it's every man for himself. Screw the absence of FDA authorization of a vaccine before it can be used in the country. Screw the prioritization by the IATF of frontline health workers, seniors, and the poor.

Despite faint denials, it's likely the president has also had himself vaccinated.

Scandalous End to a Scandal-Filled Year

2020 is the year that the administration's incompetence, rank hypocrisy, and corruption rose to the surface in all its stinking glory.

In March, the administration adopted an anti-Covid-19 policy that relied on coercing citizens instead of seeking their cooperation. This reliance on the threat of the use of force was captured in dramatic TV footage that showed Duterte bellowing his order to policemen to "shoot them dead" if people violated lockdown rules.

Not surprisingly, relying mainly on guns to stop the virus did not work. Even as neighboring countries brought Covid-19 under control with citizen cooperation, the Philippines rose to No 21 in the world in terms of Covid-19 infections by mid-year.

Corruption at PhilHealth

Corruption never rests, not even during Covid-19, so it was no surprise when the PhilHealth scandal broke out showing how the agency, headed by an ex-general, had lavished Covid-19 funds on well-connected private hospitals. The general and his top aides were fired, but the man who knew what was going, was vested with command responsibility, and was probably in on the game, Secretary of Health Francisco Duque, was personally kept in place by Duterte.

In the meantime, when it came to pursuing its priorities, the administration exhibited marvelous efficiency. It brutally stripped ABS-CBN of its franchise. It had its minions in Congress pass the Anti-Terrorism Law in record time. It launched a red-tagging campaign that was ostensibly aimed at destroying the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army but whose main intent was to silence the broad opposition.

AWOL during the Typhoons

Nature, however, intervened in the form of three devastating typhoons in October and early November that exposed once again the utter inability of the administration to deal with disasters. The absence of coordination among agencies led to water releases from dams that contributed to

massive flooding, especially in the Cagayan Valley. The shutting down of ABS/CBN provincial affiliates eliminated a valuable source of early warning and rescue and relief operations. In the weeks after the typhoons, the national government was AWOL, leaving it to resource-poor LGU's to deal with the after-effects of the calamities.

It is fitting that this year ends with yet another scandal, one which shows the utter cynicism of a government that does not hesitate to violate the rules set up by its own Inter-Agency Task Force on Covid-19. Duterte himself exposed his administration's mischief at a televised meeting of the IATF, an indication of how confident he is that he can tell people he has conned them and get away with it.

A Silver Lining?

The only silver lining to this scandal is that the vaccine the VIPs received is apparently one made by a Chinese pharmaceutical company, Sinopharm, with a terrible safety record, including inoculating hundreds of thousands of babies in China, with a defective vaccine. In their rush to board the train to salvation, the Duterte gang may have outsmarted themselves and instead brought themselves closer to eternity.

Please Just Go

The Filipino people, however, cannot wait for the possibly lethal effects of the Chinese vaccine to take hold. They should unite and tell this incompetent, hypocritical, cynical, and murderous administration to do the one thing that the country really needs, and that it for its officials to go, resign, disappear.

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